

# The Future of World Politics

Robert Jervis

Will It Resemble the Past?

History usually makes a mockery of our hopes or our expectations. The events of 1989, perhaps more welcomed than those of any year since 1945, were unforeseen. Much of what analysts anticipate for the 1990s is unpleasant. Nevertheless, it is clear that we are entering a new world, and I present three lines of argument about it. First, I discuss why prediction is so difficult in world politics. Among the reasons: multiple factors are usually at work, actors learn, small events can affect the course of history and, most importantly in this context, many well-established generalizations about world politics may no longer hold. This leads to the second question of the ways and areas in which the future is likely to resemble the past and the sources, areas, and implications of change. It appears that while international politics in much of the world will follow patterns that are familiar in outline although unpredictable in detail, among the developed states we are likely to see new forms of relations. In this new context, my third argument goes, the United States will face an extraordinarily wide range of policy choices and must therefore address fundamental questions that were submerged during the Cold War. Freed from previous constraints, the United States has many goals it can seek, but there are more conflicts among them than are sometimes realized.

## *Why Prediction Is So Difficult*

We all know that it is difficult to predict the course of international politics.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is useful to note eight reasons why this is so.<sup>2</sup> First, social

---

*Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Relations at Columbia University and a member of its Institute of War and Peace Studies. His most recent book is *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 1989), for which he received the Grawemeyer Award.*

---

A preliminary version of this paper was delivered as the Grawemeyer Award Lecture at the University of Louisville. I would like to thank students and colleagues there, at the University of Pittsburgh, and at MIT for suggestions and John Mueller for extensive comments.

- 
1. The literature on this subject is very large. See the summary in Nazli Choucri and Thomas Robinson, eds., *Forecasting in International Relations* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1978).
  2. This is not to imply that prediction rather than understanding is the goal of social science: see Stephen Toulmin, *Foresight and Understanding: An Inquiry Into the Aims of Science* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

---

*International Security*, Winter 1991/92 (Vol. 16, No. 3)  
© 1991 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

scientists have only a limited stock of knowledge to rely on and there are few laws whose validity is uncontested. Take, for example, the polarity of the international system, which different scholars define differently (for some, pre-World War I Europe was bipolar, in the eyes of others it was multipolar). Following Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer argues that bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar ones; this provides the foundation for his pessimistic predictions about the future of Europe.<sup>3</sup> But the logic of Waltz's position is open to dispute (indeed, it suffers from internal contradictions).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, even if the arguments for or against this position were more compelling, they might not be true. Politics has the nasty habit of not always behaving as even the most plausible and rigorous theories suggest it should.

Second, only rarely does a single factor determine the way politics will work out. Even the best propositions are couched in terms of conditions and probabilities. Thus, I doubt that we would ever learn that either bipolarity or multipolarity is always more stable than the other. So even if multipolar systems usually are less stable than bipolar ones, this does not mean that the future will be less stable than the past. Other factors could cancel out this effect or interact with polarity in a way that makes an overall judgment about the influence of the latter impossible. The most obvious factor, as Mearsheimer and Waltz note, is the presence of nuclear weapons: perhaps in the non-nuclear era multipolar systems were less stable than bipolar ones, but today the reverse could be true.

Third, learning about international politics can act as a self-denying prophecy. Although we should not exaggerate the influence of scholarship on world politics, actors may pay attention to academic theories and alter their behavior in ways that render them incorrect. For example, if scholars find that actors who make their threats in public rather than in private are rarely bluffing, then bluffers can choose to make public threats. Or, if theorists convince statesmen that regional integration is characterized by spill-over processes in which small steps toward economic coordination lead to much greater integration than was originally envisioned, then those who do not want to reach this end may refuse to take the initial steps. Furthermore,

---

3. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.

4. These are discussed in Jervis, *Systems and Interactions* (unpublished manuscript), chapter 2.

when actors are seeking advantage over others, generalizations may be particularly short-lived as each uses any new knowledge to estimate how others will behave and to outwit them.<sup>5</sup>

Fourth, unless national behavior and international outcomes are entirely determined by the external environment, there is significant room for choice by publics and statesmen. Since the United States is the most influential power in the world, to predict the future of world politics requires us to predict the future of American foreign policy. To the extent that the latter will be strongly influenced by the values, preferences, and beliefs of particular presidents, the enterprise is particularly questionable. To the extent that broader but still changeable domestic sources shape American foreign policy, the task is not much easier.

Even if the external environment is dominant, there now is a fifth obstacle to prediction: the current world situation is unprecedented. While each era appears unique to those living through it, my guess is that even later generations will view the 1990s as unique. World politics has rarely been re-ordered without a major war. In fact, from looking at the behavior and condition of the Soviet Union, one could infer that it had just lost a war. And the enormous domestic failure is the equivalent of a major military defeat. But this is a war without another country or coalition that acts like a winner, ready to move into the power vacuum and structure a new set of rules to guide international behavior. Although the United States remains the most powerful country in the world, its mood—and perhaps its economy—do not fit this position, even after the triumph of the Gulf War.

The future is also unprecedented because while the Soviet Union is economically and politically weak, it remains the only country that could destroy the United States. Other states that are America's economic rivals (as well as its economic partners) are its close allies (and even its friends). This configuration is so odd that we cannot easily determine the system's polarity. Is it unipolar because the United States is so much stronger than the nearest competitor, bipolar because of the distribution of military resources, tripolar because of an emerging united Europe, or multipolar because of the general

---

5. Many Realist scholars develop arguments that are both descriptive and prescriptive. They claim not only to analyze the way the world works, but also to guide statesmen. However, they often pay insufficient attention to the question of whether their theories will be accurate if statesmen do not accept them (and if statesmen do, then prescription is unnecessary) and the possibility that if their truths were generally believed, the patterns of behavior would be altered.

dispersion of power? Thus even if polarity were a major determinant of world politics, it would be hard to tell what we should expect.

To the extent that external forces are not only important, but truly constitute a system, there is a sixth difficulty in making predictions. When elements are tightly inter-connected, as they are in international politics, changes in one part of the system produce ramifications in other elements and feedback loops. Thus international politics is characterized by unintended consequences, interaction effects, and patterns that cannot be understood by breaking the system into bilateral relations. For example, a stable (if bloody) balance of power can be produced by a system in which all the major actors want to dominate or in which the relations among many pairs of countries are very bad.<sup>6</sup> With complex interaction and feedback, not only can small causes have large effects, but prediction is inherently problematic as the multiple pathways through which the system will respond to a stimulus are difficult to trace after the fact, let alone estimate ahead of time.<sup>7</sup>

It is tempting but a mistake to imagine that world politics will continue on its current trajectory, with the obvious and large exception of the drastic diminution of Soviet-American tensions. This way of proceeding is tempting because, although still very difficult, it is relatively manageable. It is an error, however, because in a system the alteration of one element will lead to multiple changes as states react. If some of the anticipated consequences of the end of the Cold War are undesired, actors will try to counteract them, although of course such efforts may produce results that are very different from the intentions. For example, it is possible that the developed countries, believing that the end of the Soviet threat will increase tensions among them, will redouble their efforts to work together and minimize frictions. But, of course, if any one state realizes that this is what the others are doing, it can seek to turn their reasonableness to unilateral advantage.

The final two arguments as to why prediction is so difficult are more controversial. The flow of international politics is, in significant measure, contingent or path-dependent.<sup>8</sup> History matters. Particular events can send world politics down quite different paths.<sup>9</sup> Stephen Jay Gould makes a similar

---

6. Inis Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 40–51; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 102–128.

7. For a further discussion, see Robert Jervis, "Systems Effects," in Richard Zeckhauser, ed., *Strategy and Choice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, forthcoming).

8. Path-dependence is one of the themes of the new institutionalism. See, for example, James March and Johan Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

9. This argument has a hopeful side to it: the possibility of contingent predictions. That is, we

argument for evolution. The operation of natural selection does not preclude a large role for chance and accidents. Had certain life forms been destroyed or others survived eons ago—and there are no general principles or scientific laws that precluded this—life would have evolved very differently.<sup>10</sup>

If international politics fits this pattern, then in order to know what the world will be like twenty years from now, we would have to know what will happen next year, an extremely difficult requirement. While proof is of course impossible, several actual or hypothetical events can illustrate the plausibility of this claim. For example, the history of the world after 1918 was crucially affected not only by the fact that World War I occurred, but that it was a war that took place at a particular time with certain countries on each side. Even if some sort of world war was inevitable during that decade, it is hard to argue that there had to be a war in the summer of 1914. And had it occurred earlier or later, much else about it could have been different in a way that would have produced a different postwar world. The aftermath of the war was also influenced by accidents. The United States might have joined the League of Nations had Wilson's personality been different or had his judgment not been impaired by his stroke.<sup>11</sup> Without the Korean War, many of the characteristics we associate with the Cold War—high defense budgets, a militarized NATO, great Sino-American hostility, and American security commitments throughout the world—probably would not have developed.<sup>12</sup>

Looking to the future, the war in the Persian Gulf may similarly influence aspects of the post-Cold War era. Turning the clock back to August 1990, or even to October 1990 or January 1991, one can imagine a variety of policies and outcomes, each of which would have produced a quite different world. A world in which Iraq's aggression was allowed to stand would have been quite different from one in which economic sanctions forced a retraction,

---

can and should focus on saying what we expect to happen, *given various conditions*. This is worthwhile, especially for the intellectual discipline that it imposes. But if there are a large number of important variables that many states can assume and if the variables build on each other as time passes, then we cannot expect the exercise to produce many practical benefits.

10. Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: Norton, 1989).

11. For the more extreme argument that Wilson would have taken a different position had a bizarre incident involving a low-level British diplomat not led him to refuse to hear the advice of Sir Edward Gray, the British special ambassador, see Charles Mechling, Jr., "Scandal in Wartime Washington: The Craufurd-Stuart Affair of 1918," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 1990), pp. 357–370.

12. For further discussion see Robert Jervis, "The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 1980), pp. 563–592.

which in turn would have been different from the world that emerged in the aftermath of the Gulf War. Even more clearly, the future of world politics will be shaped by whether the Soviet Union manages to stay together, whether it dissolves peacefully, or whether it is shattered by a civil war. This, in turn, may be influenced by what happens in Yugoslavia: perhaps if that country's civil war intensifies before events in the Soviet Union are determined, the object-lesson may decrease the chance of large-scale violence among the successor republics.<sup>13</sup> Less dramatically, the long-run state of U.S.-Japanese relations may be permanently influenced by the way in which the next trade crisis arises and is worked out. Furthermore, the way in which the U.S.-Japan trading relationship develops will strongly influence the world-wide international economic system.

It can be argued that these claims exaggerate the role of contingency because they underestimate the power of the structure of the international system and other deeply imbedded influences. While events like the Gulf War cannot be predicted, neither do they send the world along radically different paths. Instead, politics resembles roads that intersect rather than diverge.<sup>14</sup> Shocks may push the world in one direction or another, but eventually the underlying factors will exert themselves and return the world to something like what it would have been without the earlier "deviant" events. In international politics, however, such an argument seems plausible only if the international structure determines most behavior. One can perhaps claim that this was the case during the more competitive years of the Cold War; it is not likely to be true for many aspects of world politics in the current era.

The final reason why prediction is difficult brings us closer to the question of how different the new world will be. Even if we knew what generalizations held in the past and even if they were not sensitive to details and idiosyncracies, this knowledge would not provide a sure guide for the future if the generalizations themselves are no longer valid. In *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*, Stephen Jay Gould discusses schools of thought about geology in terms of their basic orienting metaphors. One school sees the large-scale history of

---

13. A KGB study reportedly examined recent developments in Yugoslavia and warned against similar disintegration in the Soviet Union. Serge Schmemmann, "Report by Soviets Expresses Fears of Following the Path of Yugoslavia," *New York Times*, October 4, 1991, p. A4.

14. See Jon Elster, *Logic and Society: Contradictions and Possible Worlds* (New York: Wiley, 1978), pp. 177-178; John Gaddis, "Nuclear Weapons and International Systemic Stability," Occasional Paper No. 2, International Security Studies Program, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, January 1990; and Philip Nash, "The Use of Counterfactuals in History: A Look at the Literature," *SHAFR Newsletter*, Vol. 22 (March 1991), pp. 2-12.

the earth in terms of cycles in which there is change from one phase to another but the phases themselves recur through regular cycles; the other sees geology as revealing constant unidirectional change.<sup>15</sup> Each perspective can have an element of truth, as Gould argues is the case for the earth's history, and we should be suspicious of any unqualified answer. But the question of the extent to which and the ways in which international history resembles a cycle or an arrow is a useful one.

If our laws are not timeless—if history resembles an arrow—some of what we have learned will not help us understand the future. For example, many commentators have pointed out that alliances last only as long as there is a common enemy and so they have concluded that NATO will soon dissolve. But even if the historical generalization is correct, the projection of it into the future may not be, if the roles and motivations for alliances have changed. Similarly, even if previous eras of multipolarity were characterized by instability, a future multipolar world might not be. We need to understand why certain generalizations held true in the past and see whether basic impulses of international politics may work themselves out differently in a changed environment.

In some cases generalizations will no longer hold even though the basic laws that generated them remain valid. Statesmen presumably will continue to be guided primarily by considerations of national security, but their behavior will be different if there are changes in the problems they face and the solutions they see. It probably is still true that states are more likely to be pushed into war by the expectation that they will suffer grave losses unless they fight than they are pulled into war by the attraction of opportunity and expected gains.<sup>16</sup> But this law will work itself out differently if there are changes in the magnitude and kinds of threats that states confront. It is also possible that the import of a pattern may change as conditions do: for example, it may always have been the case that liberal democracies did not fight each other, but now this generalization yields a much more peaceful world than was true in the past because so many of the powerful states are democratic. More extreme changes are also possible, although less likely: that is, the nature of the basic connections between variables—i.e., the laws

---

15. Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

16. See Robert Jervis, "Loss Aversion in International Politics," *Political Psychology* (forthcoming); Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Choices, Values, and Frames," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (April 1984), pp. 341–350; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Stein, "Beyond Deterrence," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter 1987), pp. 5–17.

themselves—could change. Thus statesmen might no longer place as high a priority on security as they did in the past. Of course if we make our theories sufficiently general—e.g., people seek to maximize their expected utilities—we may find they have not changed, but this will not be particularly significant if the utilities and beliefs about how to reach them have changed.

### *What Is Constant; What Has Changed*

Cyclical thinking suggests that, freed from the constraints of the Cold War, world politics will return to earlier patterns.<sup>17</sup> Many of the basic generalizations of international politics remain unaltered: it is still anarchic in the sense that there is no international sovereign that can make and enforce laws and agreements.<sup>18</sup> The security dilemma remains as well, with the problems it creates for states who would like to cooperate but whose security requirements do not mesh. Many specific causes of conflict also remain, including desires for greater prestige, economic rivalries, hostile nationalisms, divergent perspectives on and incompatible standards of legitimacy, religious animosities, and territorial ambitions. To put it more generally, both aggression and spirals of insecurity and tension can still disturb the peace. But are the conditions that call these forces into being as prevalent as they were in the past? Are the forces that restrain violence now as strong, or stronger, than they were?

The answers may be different for different regions of the world. Even where fundamental changes have not occurred, the first seven impediments to prediction remain in place; but there we can at least say that the variables and relationships that acted in the past should continue. Where time's arrow predominates, on the other hand, our first task may be negative: to argue that some familiar patterns are not likely to re-appear. On some questions we may be able to discern at least the outlines of the new arrangements; on others, what will emerge may not yet be determined.

#### THE DEVELOPED WORLD

Time's arrow is most strikingly at work in the developed world: it is hard to see how a war could occur among the United States, Western Europe, and

---

17. A good example is Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future."

18. The best critique of the utility of theorizing based on the assumption of anarchy is Helen Milner, "The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 1991), pp. 67–85.



Japan, at least in the absence of revolutionary domestic changes, presumably linked to severe economic depression. Indeed, peace among these countries is over-determined: there are many reasons, each of which is probably sufficient, why they should remain at peace.<sup>19</sup> One indication of the profound change is that although Britain's primary aim always was to prevent any power from dominating the continent of Europe, even those Britons who opposed joining the European Community or who remain opposed to seeing it develop political sovereignty would laugh at the idea of going to war to prevent its formation. The United States, too, fought to prevent Germany from dominating Europe, but sponsored European integration during the Cold War and still looks on it with favor, even though Germany is its leader.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, if international politics in the West had not changed, in the absence of bipolarity it would be hard to understand how the United States would not now fear the French and British nuclear forces which, after all, could obliterate it. A test of whether the standard logic of international politics will continue to apply among the developed states will be whether this fear will emerge. A parallel—and more disturbing—test will be whether Germany and Japan, freed from the security and constraints of the Cold War, will seek nuclear weapons, following the previous rule that great powers seek the most prestigious and powerful military weapons available even in the absence of a clear threat. (A decision to “go nuclear” would not prove the point, however, if it was motivated by fear of the Soviet Union or China.)

These dramatic breaks from the past and the general peacefulness of the West are to be explained by increases in the costs of war, decreases in its benefits and, linked to this, changes in domestic regimes and values. Earlier I argued that specific events sometimes send history into a different path. But these changes in the developed world are so deep, powerful, and interlocked that they cannot readily be reversed by any foreseeable event.

THE INCREASED COSTS OF WAR. The costs of war among developed states probably would be enormous even if there were no nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup> But

---

19. See Stephen Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 7–57; and Richard H. Ullman, *Securing Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

20. George Bush states that the “United States has deemed it a vital interest to prevent any hostile power or group of powers from dominating the Eurasian land mass,” but in fact neither the United States nor Britain was willing to trust the benign intentions of any state that seemed likely to control the continent. George Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States, 1990–1991* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1990), p. 5.

21. This point is stressed in John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

such weapons do exist, and by increasing still more the costs of war, they also increase the chances of peace. This much is generally agreed upon. Many analysts believe that mutual deterrence means not only that each nuclear power can deter a direct attack, but also that nothing else can be deterred—i.e., that allies cannot be sheltered under the nuclear umbrella and that “extended deterrence” is a fiction. As I have argued elsewhere, however, both logic and the historical record indicates that this position is not true.<sup>22</sup> Because inadvertent escalation is always a possibility, a conventional war that involves a nuclear power—or that could draw in a nuclear power—could lead to nuclear devastation.

During the Cold War the risks of escalation meant that the United States could protect Western Europe even if the West had neither a first-strike capability nor an adequate conventional defense; in the current era it means that the European states gain some of the deterrent advantages of nuclear weapons even if they do not own them. Because statesmen realize that any European war could lead to a nuclear conflagration, aggression and even crises will be discouraged. This sharply decreases the incentives for proliferation: nuclear weapons are not necessary to ensure the security of European states like Germany that lack them, and would not greatly help such countries realize expansionist aims if they should develop them. Because the French and British nuclear forces increase the chance that any fighting in Europe could escalate, they decrease the likelihood of war and so, far from threatening the United States, should continue to be welcomed by it.

THE DECLINING BENEFITS OF WAR. Because the expected costs of armed conflict among the developed countries are so high, only the strongest pressures for war could produce such an outcome. Yet it is hard to conjure up any significant impulses toward war. The high level of economic interdependence among the developed states increases not only the costs of war, but the benefits of peace as well. Even in the case that shows the greatest strain—U.S.-Japan relations—no one has explained how a war could serve either country’s interests.<sup>23</sup> The claim that a high degree of integration prevents war by making it prohibitively costly for states to fight each other has often been incorrectly attributed to Norman Angell’s *The Great Illusion*, and

---

22. Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), chapters 5 and 6; Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), chapter 3.

23. For an unconvincing attempt, see George Friedman and Meredith LeBard, *The Coming War with Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990).

the outbreak of World War I a few years after this book was published is cited as proof of the error of the position. But the title of Angell's book gives its actual argument: it is an illusion to believe that war will provide economic gain.<sup>24</sup> The argument was as much prescription as description, and the former would not have been necessary had the latter been self-evident. The implications for today are obvious: while the objective facts of interdependence are important, one must also ask how they are viewed by the general public, elites, and statesmen.

Not only the degree but also the kinds of interdependence matter. If statesmen examine the situation with any sophistication, they will be concerned not about the size of the flows of trade and capital, but rather with what will happen to their states' welfare if these flows are halted.<sup>25</sup> Thus the fact that levels of trade are higher among the developed countries today than they were in 1914 may be less significant than the fact that direct foreign investment is greater and that many firms, even if they are not formally multinational, have important international ties.<sup>26</sup> It would be harder for states and firms to arrange for substitutes if conflict or war severed these financial ties than would be the case if it were only goods that were being exchanged.

The other side of this coin is that continued high levels of economic intercourse may significantly increase each state's wealth. This, of course, is the foundation of the argument for the advantage of open international economic systems, and the postwar history of the developed world is strongly consistent with it. Even those who call for some protection do not doubt that trade is necessary for prosperity. Most importantly for a consideration of the political relations among the developed countries, no one in any of these states believes that his or her country can grow richer by conquering any of the others than it can by trading with it, in part because the techniques of controlling an occupied country are not compatible with

---

24. See the discussion in J.D.B. Miller, *Norman Angell and the Futility of War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986).

25. See the discussion of vulnerability and sensitivity interdependence in Richard Cooper, *The Economics of Interdependence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); and Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977); as well as the pathbreaking study by Albert Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of International Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980 [originally published in 1945]).

26. Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), chapter 7; Helen Milner, *Resisting Protectionism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

making a post-industrial economy function well.<sup>27</sup> People in each country can believe, sometime with good reason, that their own fortunes would improve more if others do less well or may attribute their difficulties to extreme—and unfair—economic competition, but this does not mean that they believe that they are likely to thrive if their partners suffer significant economic misfortune.

The belief that one's economic well-being is linked to that of others is not sufficient to bring peace, however. Many values are more important to people than wealth. High levels of economic interdependence have not prevented civil wars, although it may have inhibited them; perhaps more internal conflicts would have occurred had countries not been fairly well integrated. This could help explain why modern countries rarely experience these bloody disturbances. Alternative explanations are possible, however, and the Spanish Civil War and current unrest in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union at minimum show that a higher level of economic integration than that which characterizes the current international system does not prevent armed conflict.

In international politics it is particularly true that wealth is not the primary national goal. Not only will states pay a high price to maintain their security, autonomy, and the spread of their values, but the calculus of economic benefit is affected by the international context. While economic theory argues that the actor should care only about how the outcome of an economic choice affects him, those who fear that they may have to fight need to worry about relative advantage as well as absolute gains.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, states that be-

---

27. Stephen Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1990), p. 5; Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," pp. 14–16; Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete? A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), pp. 53–57.

28. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Arthur Stein, "The Hegemon's Dilemma: Great Britain, the United States, and the International Economic Order," *International Organization*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 355–386; Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (April 1988), pp. 334–336; Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 485–507; Michael Mastanduno, "Do Relative Gains Matter? America's Response to Japanese Industrial Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 73–113. Of course even in purely economic exchanges, actors must be concerned about relative gain if getting a smaller share now means that their absolute as well as relative gains will be less in the future. This is one of the concerns of strategic trade theory. For an exposition and application see Helen Milner and David Yoffie, "Between Free Trade and Protectionism: Strategic Trade Policy and a Theory of Corporate Trade Demands," *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 237–272; and J. David Richardson, "The Political Economy of Strategic Trade Theory," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Winter 1990),

come more dependent on others than others are on them will be vulnerable to pressure, as the Balkan states discovered before World War II.<sup>29</sup>

Both the fear of dependence and concern about relative gains are less when states expect to remain at peace with each other. Indeed, expectations of peaceful relations were a necessary condition for the formation of the European Common Market; the growth of interdependence in the developed world is as much a symptom as a cause of the basic change in international politics. Had the Europeans thought there was a significant chance that they would come to blows, they would not have permitted their economies to grow so interdependent. The price of greater wealth would have been excessive if they felt their security would be endangered, and so it is not surprising that other regions have not imitated the successful European experience.

When states fear each other, interdependence can increase conflict.<sup>30</sup> Thus there is at least an element of reinforcing feedback in the current situation: interdependence has developed in part because of the expectations of peace, and the economic benefits of close economic relations in turn make peace more likely. The political implications of the economic situation were very different in the early twentieth century when Britain and Germany, although trading heavily with each other, each feared that economic endeavors that strengthened the other would eventually weaken its own security. As one British observer put it after an extended tour of Germany: "Every one of these new factory chimneys is a gun pointed at England."<sup>31</sup> The growth of another state's political and economic power now is worrisome only if it causes harm to the first in some direct way; it is no longer automatically seen as decreasing the first state's ability to protect its interests in the next war. Samuel Huntington argues that the answer to the question of why Americans are so concerned about the Japanese challenge is straightforward: "The United States is obsessed with Japan for the same reason that it was once obsessed with the Soviet Union. It sees that country as a major threat to its

---

pp. 107–135. The broader dynamic in which a small relative advantage leads to much greater absolute (and relative) gains later is the heart of the argument in E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (New York: Pantheon, 1968); and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974–88).

29. Hirschman, *National Power*.

30. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 151–160.

31. Quoted in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1980), p. 315.

primacy in a crucial arena of power."<sup>32</sup> But it is far from clear that one state's economic progress constitutes a threat to another unless the two are likely to fight, the former's relative advantage will diminish the other's absolute wealth, or the former will gain leverage it can use in important political disputes. The first condition does not hold in the U.S.-Japan case, and it is certainly debatable whether either of the other two do. Rivalry is different in its meaning and implications when it is conducted with an eye to future fighting than when the interactions are expected to be peaceful.

CHANGES IN DOMESTIC REGIMES AND VALUES. The change in relations among the developed states is partly a result of a shift in basic outlook and values. As John Mueller has noted, war is no longer seen as good, or even as honorable, in anything less than desperate circumstances.<sup>33</sup> No Western leader would speak—or even think—in terms like those expressed by Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke in a letter to his wife during the 1911 Moroccan Crisis:

If we again slip away from the affair with our tail between our legs and if we cannot bring ourselves to put forward a determined claim which we are prepared to force through with the sword, I shall despair of the future of the German Empire. I shall then resign. But before handing in my resignation, I shall move to abolish the Army and to place ourselves under Japanese protectorate; we shall then be in a position to make money without interference and to develop into ninnies.<sup>34</sup>

These sentiments seem archaic: we may now be seeing, among developed states, the triumph of interests over passions, as Angell and Joseph Schumpeter foresaw.<sup>35</sup>

As the Gulf War reminds us, it is not as though developed states do not feel a sense of pride, or even self-identity, in asserting themselves abroad.

---

32. Samuel Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests," *Survival*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January/February 1991), p. 8.

33. Mueller, *Retreat From Doomsday*. For a discussion of changes in values among Europeans on matters of domestic society and ways of life, see Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); and Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990). For a rebuttal, see Harold Clarke and Nitish Dutt, "Measuring Value Change in Western Industrialized Societies," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (September 1991), pp. 905–920.

34. Quoted in V.R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (New York; St. Martin's, 1973), p. 97.

35. Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion*, 4th ed. (New York: Putnam's, 1913); Joseph Schumpeter, "The Sociology of Imperialisms," in *Imperialism and Social Classes* (New York: Kelley, 1951). The phrase is borrowed from Albert Hirschman (although the story Hirschman tells is much more complex), in *The Passions and the Interests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

But the impulse is more episodic than it once was, is not directed against other democracies, and is more often exercised in the service of economic values than counterposed to them. Part of the explanation for this change is the waning of nationalism, perhaps in the sense of pride in the achievements of one's nation, and certainly in the sense of a belief that one's country is superior to others and should dominate them. The progress toward West European unification both facilitated and is made possible by a weakening of the attachment to one's nation as a source of identity and personal satisfaction. The residual feelings may be sufficient to prevent Europe from completely unifying, but the process never could have moved this far had nationalism remained even at the level of the fairly benign late 1920s, let alone of any other era. I doubt if we will see a return to these periods: reduced nationalism is now closely associated with economic and political gains and has been embodied in institutions that have become the focus of power and perhaps loyalty. Nationalism was discredited in some European states (although not Germany) after 1918, but this was because it had brought failure, not because being less nationalistic had produced success.

Change in values is also evident from the absence of territorial disputes. Germans no longer seem to care that Alsace and Lorraine are French: The French, who permitted the Saar to return to Germany in a plebiscite, are not bothered by this loss, and indeed do not see it as a loss at all. The Germans did feel sufficient Germanness to seek the unification of their country, but the desire to regain the "lost territories" to the east seems extremely low. Furthermore, unification was not accomplished against the will of any other country and, unlike manifestations of more disturbing nationalism, did not involve the assertion of the rightful domination of one country over another.

Equally important, the developed states are now democratic and it appears that liberal democracies rarely, if ever, fight each other.<sup>36</sup> Here too values play a large role. What would one democracy gain by conquering another? The United States could conquer Canada, for example, but why would it want to do so when much of what it would want to see there is already in place? Neither security considerations nor the desire to improve the world would impel one liberal democracy to attack another.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGED RELATIONS AMONG THE DEVELOPED STATES. In summary, war among the developed states is extremely unlikely because its

---

36. Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs," Part 1, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer 1983), pp. 205–235; and Part 2, *ibid.*, No. 4 (Fall 1983), pp. 323–353.

costs have greatly increased, the gains it could bring have decreased, especially compared to the alternative routes to those goals, and the values states seek have altered. Four qualities of these changes are particularly important. First, they are powerful determinants of behavior: compared to these factors, the influence of the polarity of the international system is slight. Even if multipolar systems are less stable than bipolar ones and even if the future world will be multipolar, it is hard to see how the overall result could be dangerous. The forces for peace among the developed countries are so overwhelming that impulses which under other circumstances would be destabilizing will not lead to violence.

Second, the three kinds of changes interact and reinforce each other. The high costs of war permit economic interdependence by reducing each state's fear of armed conflict with others. The joining of economic fates reciprocally gives each state a positive stake in the others' well-being, thus limiting political conflict. But these developments would not have had the same impact were it not for the spread of democracy and the shift of values. These changes in turn support the perceived advantages of peace. If hyper-nationalism and the belief that one's country was destined to rule over others were rampant, then violence would be the only way to reach state goals. If statesmen thought expansion brought national honor, they might risk the high costs of war as an instrument of coercion. So focusing on any one of these elements in isolation from the others misunderstands how and why the world has changed.

Third, many of the changes in West European politics and values were caused in part by the Cold War. The conflict with the Soviet Union generated an unprecedented sense of unity and gave each state an important stake in the welfare of the others. To the extent that each was contributing to the anti-Soviet coalition, each reaped political benefit from the others' economic growth and strength.<sup>37</sup> Since the coalition could be undermined by social unrest or political instability, each country also sought to see that the others were well-off, that social problems were adequately managed, and that sources of discontent were minimized. It would then have been costly for any country to have tried to solve its own domestic problems by exporting them to its neighbors. Indeed, since the coalition would have been disrupted if any country had developed strong grievances against others in the coalition,

---

37. Joanne Gowa, "Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and Free Trade," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 1245-1256.



each had incentives to moderate its own potentially disturbing demands and to mediate if conflicts developed between others.

But the end of the Cold War will not bring a return to the older patterns. Rather, the changes are irreversible, especially if the developed countries remain democratic, which is likely. The ties of mutual interest and identification, the altered psychology, whereby individuals identify less deeply with their nations and more with broader entities, values, and causes, the new supra-national institutions, and the general sense that there is no reason for the developed countries to fight each other will remain.

Finally, these changes represent time's arrow: international politics among the developed nations will be qualitatively different from what history has made familiar. War and the fear of war have been the dominant motor of politics among nations. The end of war does not mean the end of conflict, of course. Developed states will continue to be rivals in some respects, to jockey for position, and to bargain with each other. Disputes and frictions are likely to be considerable; indeed the shared expectation that they will not lead to fighting will remove some restraints on vituperation. But with no disputes meriting the use of force and with such instruments being inappropriate to the issues at hand, we are in unmapped territory: statesmen and publics will require new perspectives if not new concepts; scholars will have to develop new variables and new theories. Although Karl Deutsch and his colleagues explored some of the paths that could lead to the formation of what they called a pluralistic security community—a group of states among whom war was unthinkable<sup>38</sup>—there are few systematic treatments of how countries in such a configuration might conduct themselves.<sup>39</sup>

#### EASTERN EUROPE

In other areas of the world, however, we are likely to see time's cycle. The resurgent ethnic disputes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union appear much as they were when they were suppressed by Soviet power 45 and 70 years ago. It is almost as though we had simply turned back the clock or, to

---

38. Karl Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).

39. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, developed a model of complex interdependence that applies when force is not central, but much of the subsequent debate concerned whether the conditions for it were met, rather than elaborating and testing theories of how relations within a pluralistic security community would be conducted. Furthermore, the previous behavior was strongly influenced by the Cold War setting and so may be different, although still peaceful, in the future.

change the analogy, as though they were the patients described by Oliver Sacks who came back to life after medication had released them from the strange disease that had frozen them.<sup>40</sup> The prospects for international politics in this region are worrisome at best.

Most of the arguments made in the preceding section about the prospects for peace in Western Europe do not apply to the Eastern part of the continent. The latter is not filled with stable, democratic governments that have learned to cooperate and have developed a stake in each other's well-being. Nationalism and militarism are dangerous and grievances abound, especially those rooted in ethnic and border disputes. Even if Stephen Van Evera is correct to argue that the decrease in social stratification will remove one of the causes of hyper-nationalism,<sup>41</sup> the traditional sources of international strife are sufficient to lead the relations among these states to be permeated by the fear of war.

War is not inevitable, however. Statesmen realize that the costs of fighting are likely to be high, even if the likelihood of Soviet intervention has diminished. Also powerful will be the new factor of the East Europeans' knowledge that economic prosperity depends on access to the markets of the European Community and that such access is not likely to be granted to unstable, authoritarian, or aggressive regimes. Thus the very existence of the EC should encourage peace and stability in the East.<sup>42</sup> The West can also support democracy and moderation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union by seeking to build appropriate institutions, habits, and processes, although the extent of this influence is difficult to determine.<sup>43</sup>

Much is likely to depend on internal developments within each East European country (and the way one country develops may influence what

---

40. Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings* (New York: Dutton, 1983). The analogy should not be carried too far, however. The history of the intervening years has left strong, damaging marks: see George Kennan, "Communism in Russian History," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 5 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 168–186. Alexander Motyl argues that *perestroika* has not merely permitted the rise of ethnic nationalism in the USSR, but has made it a necessity for economic survival: Motyl, "Empire or Stability? The Case for Soviet Dissolution," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 499–524.

41. Van Evera, "Primed for Peace," pp. 9–10, 43–44.

42. The incentives of ties to the rest of Europe, in conjunction with the active assistance of European politicians, facilitated Spain's transition to democracy: see Edward Malefakis, "Spain and Its Francoist Heritage," in John Herz, ed., *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1982), pp. 217–219; and Mary Barker, "International Influences in the Transition to Democracy in Spain" (unpublished ms., Columbia University, Spring 1988).

43. Jack Snyder, "Avoiding Anarchy in the New Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), pp. 5–41.

happens in others as well). If the forces of nationalism and militarism are kept under control, the chances for peace will be increased.<sup>44</sup> This, in turn, depends in part on the success of the countries' economic programs. But whether the results are peaceful or violent, the general determinants of international politics in this region are likely to be fairly traditional ones, such as the presence or absence of aggressive regimes, the offense/defense balance in military strategy and technology, and the level of political and diplomatic skill of the national leaders. Our inability to predict the results stems from the fact that we cannot be certain about the values of a number of the key variables. But, with the exception of the pacifying influence of the hope for acceptance by West Europe, the variables at work and the ways they relate to each other should be quite familiar.

Because Eastern Europe is not alone on its continent, the optimism I stated earlier about the developed countries needs to be qualified. Probably the greatest danger—but still slight—to the peace and stability of Western Europe, and by extension to the United States, is large-scale violence—either international or civil—in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The power, location, and history of Germany mean that the most disturbing scenarios involve that country, which could easily be drawn into the East by strife, generating fears that the result if not the intention would be German dominance of the continent.

This chain of events seems unlikely, however. Offensive motivations are not strong: neither the West in general nor Germany in particular is likely to see a great deal to be gained by using force in the East. More troublesome would be the threat that unrest in the East could pose to established Western interests. This problem would be greater if and when the West has extensive economic ties to the East, but even under these conditions the costs of using force probably would outweigh the expected benefits. Security could be a more potent motivator in the face of extensive violence. But quarantine probably would be a more effective response than intervention. Violence in the East could also set in motion large flows of refugees that would create an economic and political menace,<sup>45</sup> but here too military force would not be

---

44. This is central to Snyder's policy prescriptions in "Avoiding Anarchy." Mearsheimer also sees hyper-nationalism as "the most important domestic cause of war," but exaggerates the extent to which "its causes lie . . . in the international system"; Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," p. 21.

45. For an excellent discussion of the links between migration and security, see Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," MIT Center for International Studies Occasional Paper, December 1990.

the most appropriate remedy. Ideology might pull the West in: the urge to protect a newly-democratic regime could be a strong one. But while active diplomacy would certainly be expected in this situation, force would only be a last resort. In all of these possible cases what would be crucial for the West would be the extent of its solidarity. The danger would be least if any intervention were joint, greater if any one country—especially Germany—proceeded on its own, and greatest if different Western states were linked to opposing factions or countries in the East. To a large extent, then, the West can contain the consequences of violence in Eastern Europe even if it fails to prevent it. Indeed, maintaining Western unity is perhaps the most important function of NATO, and 1991 discussions of a joint NATO force for potential use in Eastern Europe seem to have been motivated largely by the shared desire to avoid unilateral interventions.

#### THE THIRD WORLD

To include all of Africa, Asia, and Latin America under one rubric is to wield an even broader brush than I have employed so far. The crudeness of this residual category is indicated by the name "Third World," which is surely a confession of intellectual failure. That being neither economically developed nor communist gives countries much in common is to be doubted; the patterns of politics are likely to be different in different regions.<sup>46</sup> Also, perhaps, for better and for worse, international politics in Central and South America will continue to be strongly influenced by the United States. International politics among the states of sub-Saharan Africa are likely to continue to show at least some restraint because the lack of legitimacy of borders makes them all vulnerable and thus gives them powerful incentives to avoid fighting each other.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, most African countries have quite weak states, a characteristic that will continue to influence both their domestic and foreign policies by limiting both the resources that leaders can extract and the extent to which national as opposed to personal and societal interests can be expected to prevail.<sup>48</sup>

---

46. For general overviews of Third World security, see Yezid Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, Adelphi Paper No. 251 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, Summer 1990); and Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (January 1991), pp. 257–283.

47. See, for example, Jeffrey Herbst, "The Creation and Maintenance of National Boundaries in Africa," *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Fall 1989), pp. 673–692.

48. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (October 1982), pp. 1–24; Jeffrey Herbst,

The question I want to ask here may not require much detail: is the end of the Cold War likely to increase or decrease international conflict in the Third World? To put this another way, did the Cold War dampen or exacerbate conflict? It probably did both: dampened it in some respects, exacerbated it in others; dampened it in some areas of the globe, exacerbated it in others; dampened it under some circumstances, exacerbated it under others. In the net, however, it generally dampened conflict and we can therefore expect more rather than less conflict in the future.<sup>49</sup>

Many analysts argued that superpower competition spread conflict to the Third World. On some occasions, strife might not have developed at all had not a superpower sought out or been receptive to the pleas of a local actor to undermine or at least to preoccupy the other superpower's client. In other cases, conflict would have been less bloody and prolonged had the states or factions not expected that they could compensate for local weakness by garnering increased aid from abroad. Furthermore, the aid itself, especially financial and military, made these conflicts more intense and destructive. The civil war in Angola epitomizes these processes, although traces can be found in many other countries as well.

This is only the most visible part of the story, however. The extent to which superpower involvement dampened Third World conflicts is more difficult to discern because it resulted in non-events. But it is at least as important. Each superpower had an interest in seeing that the other did not make significant gains in the Third World, and also realized that the other had a parallel interest. Each knew that under most circumstances to succeed too well, or to permit its clients to do so, would invite a forceful response. Of course the Soviet Union in its desire to change the status quo welcomed and assisted disruptive movements and sought clients who, in part because of the nature of their domestic regimes, challenged their neighbors. But often it was indigenous forces that created violence and were restrained from abroad. The civil strife in Sri Lanka and the Punjab shows that even without

---

"War and the State in Africa," *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Spring 1990), pp. 117-139. As these articles note, more wars might lead to stronger states. See also Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

49. It should be noted, however, that the conclusion about the future follows from the judgment of the past only if all other things remain equal. This ignores the possibility that the end of the Cold War will trigger processes that could compensate for the removal of the superpower restraint or, on the other hand, that would alter politics in the Third World in ways that are difficult to foresee. For reasoning of this type, see Jervis, "Systems Effects."

superpower involvement, internal conflict can be prolonged and bloody. Furthermore, it is no accident that the only protracted armed conflicts in the Middle East were those that did not engage the Soviet-American rivalry (the Iran-Iraq War and Egypt's intervention in Yemen). The Arab-Israeli wars were short because they were dangerous not only to the local actors, but also to the superpowers who therefore had an interest in seeing that they did not get out of hand. In some cases, such as Angola and Afghanistan, extensive superpower involvement was compatible with a lengthy conflict, and indeed may have prolonged it. But when the superpower stakes were great, the area volatile, and the Third World actors not completely under control, the superpowers could not be content to fuel the conflict by indiscriminate assistance but also had to see that it did not lead them to a dangerous confrontation.

The 1991 Gulf War, the first case of major post-Cold War violence, might not have taken place in the earlier era. The United States could not have afforded to act as it did had the Soviet Union been Iraq's ally and a threat in Europe. The latter factor would have made the United States unable to deploy such a large military force; the former would have made it fear that a military response could call in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, aggression by a client of the Soviet Union would have been more of a threat than was Iraq's action in the actual event. So the United States would have been more strongly motivated to respond. Indeed, the Soviet Union would have realized this and might have restrained its client. Iraq's behavior also would have been different. With Soviet assistance, its need for Kuwait's wealth would have been slightly diminished. Furthermore, to the extent that it acted out of fear of isolation or the hope that the new international constellation provided it with a "window of opportunity," a continuation of the Cold War would have made the aggression less likely.<sup>50</sup>

The superpowers offered security to their Third World clients as well as restraining them. Unless other forces and mechanisms that would serve these functions develop, aggression will be less difficult and, partly for this reason, status quo states in the Third World will worry more about self-protection. Even absent aggressive motives, conflict will often result through the security dilemma: states' efforts to make themselves more secure will threaten others. These traditional sources of international conflict will work themselves out

---

50. See Milton Viorst, "Report from Baghdad," *New Yorker*, June 24, 1991, pp. 67-68; Saddam Hussein's speech to the Arab Summit Meeting on February 24, 1990, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service: Near East and South Asia*, February 27, 1990, pp. 1-5.

in a context that for at least several years will be changing rapidly as the states seek to adjust to the decreased superpower presence. Indeed, in some cases weak clients will collapse or be overthrown (e.g., Ethiopia), heightening the possibilities for regional disturbances.

The Third World may not necessarily recapitulate the international history of developed states. What Alexander Gerschenkron showed about domestic politics is true for international relations as well—the countries that go first change the environment so that the paths of late-comers are different.<sup>51</sup> Even without their Cold War hyper-involvement, the superpowers and European states will continue to exert some influence. Third World leaders may also seek to emulate the First, in part in the hope of thereby earning greater aid, investment, and access to markets. Nevertheless, as in Eastern Europe, a decrease in superpower influence will permit more of the display of aggression and mutual insecurity that constitute the standard patterns of international conflict. Nationalism, ethnic disputes, and regional rivalries are likely to be prominent. Undoubtedly there will be surprises in the details, and specific predictions are beyond reach, but there is no reason to think that the basic contours of international politics will be unfamiliar.

### *The Increased Range of Choice for the United States*

Whether or not the new era turns out to be more violent than the Cold War, it will present the United States with a wider range of choices. While the Soviet-American rivalry did not entirely dictate American policy—witness the past 45 years of vigorous political and academic debates—Americans agreed on crucial questions most of the time: American security needs were the core of its national interest; the Soviet Union was the greatest threat; the United States had no choice but to be actively engaged in the world to protect itself. Even when the answers differed sharply, for example over whether the Third World mattered to the United States, almost everyone agreed that the question was what policy would bolster American national security.<sup>52</sup>

---

51. Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1962). Also see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (London: Blackwell, 1990), chapter 7.

52. See, for example, the articles by Stephen Walt, "The Case for Finite Containment: Analyzing U.S. Grand Strategy," Steven David, "Why the Third World Matters," Michael Desch, "The Keys that Lock Up the World: Identifying American Interests in the Periphery," and Robert Johnson, "The Persian Gulf in U.S. Strategy: A Skeptical View," in *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Summer 1989), pp. 5–160; and Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn't." It can also be argued that America had fewer valid security concerns during

This is no longer the case: the realm of compulsion has contracted and that of freedom of choice has expanded. The reason is not only the collapse of the Soviet Union but also the changes in world politics among the developed countries discussed earlier. If the standard rules of international relations were still to apply, the Soviet Union would be replaced as an American adversary by one of the other most powerful states in the system. But I do not believe this will occur.

#### REMAINING THREATS TO AMERICAN SECURITY

Some threats to American security remain: nuclear weapons in the hands of the Soviet Union and other states, scarcity of economic resources, and non-traditional menaces such as migration and pollution. While they call for serious attention, however, they are not likely to narrow the range of American choice nearly as severely as the Cold War did.

Even if the Soviet Union or the successor republics are benign, it or they will still have a nuclear stockpile that could destroy the United States. Nevertheless, the threat is much reduced even if one concentrates on capabilities and puts aside the enormous change in intentions (which, some argue, can easily revert to hostility, especially as Soviet or Russian domestic politics changes).<sup>53</sup> With the Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe, not only is there little threat to Western Europe, but it is difficult to see how a Soviet-American nuclear confrontation could develop. During the Cold War most analysts did not doubt the American ability to deter a direct attack; they feared a nuclear war resulting from NATO's inability to stop an invasion of Western Europe.

A second threat is the spread of nuclear weapons. Americans used to take comfort in the fact that most potential proliferators were enemies of the Soviet Union—e.g., Taiwan, Pakistan. But with the diminution of the Soviet threat and the increasing awareness that countries like Iraq and North Korea

---

the Cold War than was generally believed: see, for example, Robert Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Spring 1991), pp. 18–22; Eric Nordlinger "Prospects and Policies for Soviet-American Reconciliation," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Summer 1988), pp. 197–222; Nordlinger, "America's Strategic Immunity," in Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer, eds., *Soviet-American Relations After the Cold War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 239–261; Jervis, *Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, chapter 1; Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 244–250.

53. See, for example, Colin Gray, "Do the Changes Within the Soviet Union Provide a Basis for Eased Soviet-American Relations? A Skeptical View," in Jervis and Bialer, eds., *Soviet-American Relations*, pp. 61–75.



could acquire nuclear weapons, the menace to the United States has increased, at least relative to other threats. Former Soviet clients may at once be more desperate (lacking a powerful superpower patron) and more autonomous (lacking a superpower to restrain them). Even though they are many years away from being able to threaten the United States directly, the day is much nearer when they could menace American allies or present a potent deterrent to American intervention in their region.<sup>54</sup> If Iraq had possessed nuclear weapons, for example, U.S. policy in the 1991 Persian Gulf crisis and War would have been more complicated, to say the least.

The heightened danger of proliferation still provides a great deal of room for freedom of choice, however. The United States can seek to minimize the risk of having to fight a regional nuclear power by minimizing its involvement with that country and its neighbors. Alternatively, it can pursue an active foreign policy aimed at discouraging proliferation and deterring the outbreak of dangerous regional conflicts. During the Cold War, the first option was seen as unacceptable because it would permit unhindered (at least by the United States) Soviet access to the region, a concern that is no longer relevant. The Cold War also inhibited a vigorous non-proliferation policy because the United States felt it could not afford to alienate its regional allies, a consideration that is also now less constraining.

Is access to raw materials a central security concern? With the possible exception of oil, it is hard to see how a hostile power could deny any raw materials to the United States. Even oil is dispersed throughout many areas of the world and the ability of a cartel to drive the price up—let alone withhold sales to the West—is limited by the potential availability of alternative energy sources. Thus, even if Saddam Hussein had retained control of Kuwait and gained great influence over Saudi Arabia, the United States would not have been at his mercy. To the extent that dependence on Middle Eastern oil is worrisome, conservation and the development of alternative energy sources would probably be cheaper than maintaining and using military force. During the Cold War one could reply that America's strong position was simply irrelevant because Europe and Japan were very vulnerable. Now, even if this is true, there are no immediate security reasons for

---

54. See Stephen Peter Rosen, "Regional Nuclear War: Problems for Theory and Practice," unpublished paper. For a general discussion of the danger of proliferation and possible American responses in the post-Cold War world, see Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 24–30; and Eric Arnett, "Choosing Nuclear Arsenals," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 166–171.

oil to be an American concern, although a major price increase would still be economically disruptive. Furthermore, Western oil exploitation techniques applied to the Soviet Union should greatly increase the global supply, barring a prolonged civil war in that country or among the successor republics.

New threats to American security may emerge. A revolution or widespread civil unrest in Mexico could send large numbers of refugees across the border. Although this event represents the highest combination of likelihood and danger if it did occur, it is doubtful whether traditional security policies can have much influence on whether this will occur or how the United States could cope with it. Thus this menace cannot be the premise for many of the guidelines for general foreign policy.

Non-traditional security threats such as global warming, ozone depletion, and other forms of environmental degradation are also of concern. But the dangers are too far off, the scientific evidence is too ambiguous, the domestic interests involved are too conflicting, and the alternative approaches are too many for these issues to dominate American foreign policy and provide an agreed-upon basis for action as containment did previously.

THE RANGE OF CHOICE. Even with the new dangers, the United States is now free—and indeed is required—to think much more seriously about how to define its interests. Old questions of both ends and means which the Cold War answered or put in abeyance have returned. What does the United States want? What does it value, what does it seek, what costs is it willing to pay, and what methods are likely to be efficacious? If possible, Americans would like to see the world resemble them—or, to put it slightly differently, embody their values. Thus the United States seeks a world composed of states that are liberal, democratic, prosperous, and peaceful both internally and in their foreign policies. In such a world the United States would probably prosper as well and would have little cause for concern if others grew even richer, since this would threaten neither its security nor its self-image. Indeed, Americans desire such a world less for the direct benefits it would bring to the United States than because they believe that it would serve the best interests of all people.<sup>55</sup>

---

55. Whether this is the case is an interesting question that can be dealt with only briefly here. America's vision of the good society is not universally shared either domestically or internationally. Some people, especially those who see political and social development as unidirectional, may believe that with sufficient education and exposure to the Western world all people will want to be like Americans. Perhaps this will be true in the long run, but it appears that for the foreseeable future many in the Third World will find western liberal individualism repellant.

But these generalities do not tell us how active a foreign policy the United States should adopt. Should the United States attempt to influence others by intervention (not limiting this to the military sense) or by example? The latter tradition, overwhelmed and abandoned by the exigencies of the Cold War, has deep roots in American institutions, values, and politics. The desire to be "like a city upon the Hill" is a strong one, having been embraced by liberals and conservatives in different periods of our history. That complete isolation is impossible does not rule out a significant retraction of American involvement abroad.<sup>56</sup>

With security concerns no longer pressing, other values must determine how deeply and in what ways the United States should pursue an activist foreign policy. Human rights is a prime example. When the House of Representatives voted to renew China's most-favored-nation status for tariffs in the fall of 1990, it not only said that this concession would not be granted unless China eliminated major human rights violations within six months, but also permitted the president to waive this requirement if doing so would further encourage China to improve human rights.<sup>57</sup> Compare the Cold War, when it was routine for Congress to attach various conditions to foreign aid bills with the proviso that they could be waived if doing so was in the American national *security* interest. At least some Americans would like to elevate human rights to this privileged status. Although enhancing its status is not presently national policy, during the Cold War would the American ambassador to Kenya have so publicly criticized that government for its

---

This presents the United States with an intellectual—and emotional—conundrum as well as a policy dilemma. Americans want to see their values realized throughout the world, and one of these values is self-determination in the broadest sense of the term. But should Americans rejoice or despair if others then define themselves in ways that are antithetical to Americans' values and hostile to their interests? For an argument that if America is to have a benign effect on the world and realize its deepest values, it must "recast . . . its self-conception, its place in the West, and its relation to the former Leninist and 'third' worlds," see Kenneth Jowitt, "The Leninist Extinction," in Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), p. 94. Also see Louis Hartz's seminal *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955), chapter 11.

56. Public opinion polls on the attitudes of the American people toward isolationism yield sharply conflicting results. According to one, 74 percent of the people want to reduce involvement abroad in order to concentrate on problems at home; *Time*, October 7, 1991, p. 15. According to another, 63 percent believe that the United States should assert itself in international politics as much as or more than it does now; R.W. Apple, Jr., "Majority in Poll Fault Focus by Bush on Global Policy But Back New Order," *New York Times*, October 11, 1991, p. 8.

57. Clifford Krauss, "Democratic Leaders Divided on China Trade," *New York Times*, October 9, 1990, p. 5.

human rights abuses?<sup>58</sup> Even more strikingly, the United States temporarily halted aid to Yugoslavia in May 1991 because of the “pattern of systematic gross violations of human rights” in that country, which in the past had a privileged position as a crucial bulwark against Soviet expansionism.<sup>59</sup>

The United States could also use its new flexibility to promote democracy abroad. To some extent it did this during the Cold War; the “Reagan Doctrine” included support for guerrillas in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. But for Reagan the promotion of democracy meant supporting any non-communist forces. More often, seeking democracy was seen as too dangerous: the fear of communism meant that the United States supported right-wing dictatorships out of the fear that if they were undermined, the victors would be not democratic reformers but the hard-core left wing.<sup>60</sup> As President Kennedy said after the assassination of the Dominican Republic’s dictator, Rafael Trujillo: “There are three possibilities in descending order of preference; a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first, but we really can’t renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third.”<sup>61</sup> Although the third possibility is still disturbing because it would oppress the people in the country involved, the demise of the Cold War has sapped much of the force of the dilemma Kennedy articulated and allows American presidents to support democratic movements if they so choose.<sup>62</sup>

The United States could also seek to protect—or more accurately, minimize the damage to—the environment. This would have high economic costs, at least as measured by the standard—and perhaps misleading—indicators of well-being. Most obviously, curbing the emission of greenhouse gases would slow economic growth. The effort would have to be an international one,

---

58. Raymond Bonner, “A Reporter at Large: African Democracy,” *New Yorker*, September 3, 1990, pp. 93–105. Also see Jane Perez, “Kenyan Magazine Editor Held After Articles on Opposition Party,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1991. For reports of an American attack on human and political rights violations in Pakistan, see J. Michael Luhan, “Bhutto and Her Party Languish After Defeat,” *New York Times*, May 6, 1991, p. 5.

59. David Binder, “U.S., Citing Human Rights, Halts Aid to Yugoslavia,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1991, p. 10. Also see the stories in the *Times* over the succeeding week.

60. The best discussion is Douglas Macdonald, *Adventures in Chaos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

61. Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 769.

62. For the case for making the spread of democracy the pivot of American foreign policy, see Gregory Fossedal, *The Democratic Imperative: Exporting the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). For balanced discussions, see Snyder, “Averting Anarchy”; Art, “Defensible Defense,” pp. 42–43; Van Evera, “Why Europe Matters,” pp. 25–30.

and American leadership could strain relations with other developed states and require economic concessions to developing ones. But the end of the Cold War makes it possible to give more consideration to such policies. Not only have some resources been liberated by the decline in military spending that the end of the Soviet threat permits, but part of the previous necessity for high economic growth was security in the form of staying ahead of the Soviet Union. Diplomatic capital that was previously required for anti-Soviet policies could also now be employed for environmental issues.

Encouraging domestic economic growth remains an important goal. Foreign policy may need to play an even larger role here than in the past as the pressures on the open international economic system increase due to the diminution of the shared Western interest in maintaining common strength against the Soviet Union. There is now a greater danger of the world breaking into trading blocs, damaging the American economy and increasing political frictions.<sup>63</sup> To prevent this, foreign political involvement and even security guarantees may be called for, as Robert Art and Stephen Van Evera argue.<sup>64</sup> But these measures may be neither necessary nor sufficient for the objective. Protectionist impulses have proved weaker than many analysts expected and may not be able to dominate even though proponents of free trade now lack the Cold War rationale. An activist foreign policy in the form of support for and close ties to trading partners would not reduce domestic pressures for protection unless it produced significant concessions from them, a bargain these countries might reject. Furthermore, concessions to the United States granted in return for security support might contradict the non-discriminatory principles of an open system. Thus while supporting the American (and the world) economy will continue to be an important objective, it is not likely to provide agreed-upon guidelines for U.S. foreign policy or to readily gain pride of place over other values.

An additional continuing American goal could be the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, less for narrow concerns about U.S. security than for the desire to spare other countries the horrors of nuclear war. If the former were all that were at stake, the United States could react to Pakistan's nuclear program by disengaging from the subcontinent. A nuclear war between India and Pakistan would not menace America. Indeed, if it turned

---

63. Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 397–401.

64. Art, "Defensible Defense," pp. 30–41; and Van Evera, "Why Europe Matters," pp. 10–11.

out badly for both countries—which probably would be the case—it might discourage proliferation in areas of more direct concern to the United States. But security is not the only value at stake; nuclear war is an evil that is worth a significant price to suppress.

Perhaps the most ambitious goal the United States could seek is curbing if not eliminating war. However much this might have accorded with America's deepest hopes, it was out of the question during the Cold War: the intrinsic evil of war had to yield to a consideration of how the American stance toward a particular conflict would affect the world-wide rivalry with the Soviet Union.<sup>65</sup> As the conflict in the Gulf reminds us, the decline in Soviet power means that the United States need not fear that military interventions could trigger undesired Soviet responses, and it vastly increases the possibilities for collective security. Even before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, President Bush called for the United States to build such a system: "As the world's most powerful democracy, we are inescapably the leader, the connecting link in a global alliance of democracies. The pivotal responsibility for ensuring the stability of the international balance remains ours."<sup>66</sup>

If collective security is desirable and even feasible, how much should the United States contribute to it? To the extent that the United States takes the lead, it is likely to demand primacy in setting the policy, as it did in the Persian Gulf. But it is far from clear whether other states would tolerate having as little influence as they did in that case. The alternative is a smaller American contribution and truly multilateral decision-making. But how often has the United States been willing to take a very active part in an international venture without playing the leading role? Little of the talk of a new world order asks the United States to bend its conception of the common good to that of other members of the international community. Furthermore, the collective goods problem would be harder to surmount if the American

---

65. As Arnold Wolfers put it, collective defense had primacy over collective security; Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), chapter 12.

66. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, p. 7. This is part of Bush's "new world order." For a good exposition of this slippery concept, see Stanley Sloan, "The U.S. role in a New World Order: Prospects for George Bush's Global Vision," Congressional Research Service Report, March 28, 1991. Slightly less ambitiously, the United States might seek a concert system. This would require extensive cooperation among the great powers but would not try to prevent all aggression. For the concert as a model for the future, see Charles Kupchan and Clifford Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 114–161; and Gregory Gause, "Postwar Gulf Security: Hegemony, Balance, or Concert?" unpublished paper.

contribution was less than dominant. If a sizeable number of states are asked to take relatively equal shares in the venture, each will feel that it can shirk and pass more of the burden to its partners, thereby increasing both frictions and the chance that the enterprise will collapse.

### *The Necessity for Choice*

The Cold War has freed America from the overriding concern with security and has presented the United States with a wide range of possibilities. This poses a “necessity for choice”—to borrow the title of a book written in an era when there was actually little room for choice<sup>67</sup>—because the goals and values discussed in the previous section are not entirely consistent with each other. Some can be pursued only by slighting others: when foreign regimes engage in many practices of which the United States disapproves, it will have to choose which of them to most vigorously oppose. For example, if a country seeks nuclear weapons, violates civil rights, and tolerates aggression, the United States—and others—will have to order its priorities and decide which is the greatest evil. Perhaps in some cases the United States can help a new regime come to power that will cease all these practices. But this is not to be counted on. Indeed, free elections can produce a regime that follows unfriendly foreign policy and distasteful domestic practices.<sup>68</sup> The problem is illustrated by President Bush’s recent proposal on foreign aid which sets forth “five objectives: promoting democratic values, strengthening United States competitiveness, promoting peace, protecting against transnational threats, and meeting humanitarian needs.”<sup>69</sup> But the proposed legislation does not weight these objectives or explain how to make trade-offs among them.

Many specific conflicts between American goals are possible. The United States may have to choose between protecting some parts of the environment and maintaining good relations with Japan. Continuing frictions over fishing, whaling, and the importation of ivory may be followed by the need for the United States to decide whether to spend its political capital opposing the extensive Japanese logging of the rain forests of Southeast Asia. In the

---

67. Henry Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

68. This would probably be true in Algeria. See Youssef Ibrahim, “Algeria Imposes a Curfew and Promises to Use Force,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1991, p. 6.

69. Janet Battaile, “Bush Seeks Expanded Powers on Foreign Aid,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1991, p. 7.

security area, encouraging European unity probably would further the chances of peace as well as more deeply embed Germany in a supra-national structure. But a united Europe would be a more effective competitor for global influence and economic advantage. The goal of non-proliferation could be furthered at the cost of offering political support to authoritarian and oppressive regimes.<sup>70</sup> Security guarantees could be a potent tool against proliferation, but they would also bolster undesirable regimes and unjust borders as well as increasing the danger that America would be drawn into any war that did break out. In other cases, such as North Korea, the United States might emulate Israel and destroy the nuclear facilities of a would-be proliferator. But acting in this way could undermine a collective security system by convincing others that their participation was not necessary, or that the United States was too reckless to provide acceptable leadership. A collective security system, in turn, would freeze the status quo and protect tyrants unless it were supplemented by a method for producing peaceful change and curbing outrageous internal practices.

Collective security was represented and perhaps furthered by the war against Iraq. Maintaining an inclusive coalition displayed great American skill; however, it also came at the price of other American values. Thus the United States had to alter its stance toward Iran and, even more, Syria, regimes that do not fully abide by the norms of proper international—let alone domestic—behavior. Furthermore, Syria took the opportunity to consolidate its control over Lebanon, an act of aggression that the United States could not in those circumstances oppose or even protest. Other states with less direct interests in opposing Iraq also may have required significant inducements. Thus, apparently to gain Chinese cooperation in the Security Council, the United States reduced its pressure on the human rights issue.

The Gulf War has also elevated overall expectations of what the United States can and should do. As Bush himself said: "Never before has the world looked more to the American example. What makes us American is our allegiance to an idea that all people everywhere must be free."<sup>71</sup> Such rhetoric may lay a trap for policy. Just as twenty years ago people asked, "if the United States can put a man on the moon, why can it not end poverty,

---

70. See Richard Betts, "Paranoids, Pygmies, Pariahs, and Nonproliferation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 26 (Spring 1977), pp. 167–168, 179–183.

71. Quoted in Maureen Dowd, "Bush Stands Firm on Military Policy in Iraqi Civil War," *New York Times*, April 14, 1991, p. 1.



produce racial harmony, etc.," so now others—and American public opinion as well—expect the United States to protect the Kurds, democratize Kuwait, and perhaps bring peace and security to much of the globe. Dashing these expectations may create disappointment and bitterness that will be obstacles to a more modest policy; trying to live up to them would lead the United States to overreach itself.

The costs of leading this coalition will be particularly high if the war—and the way it was conducted—increases anti-Americanism in the Third World, especially in Muslim countries. Such a reaction would destabilize friendly regimes, set back moderate political movements, and decrease support for other American interventions in the Third World.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, if this proves to be the case, this exercise of collective security, far from deterring future aggressors and laying the foundations for a moderate world order, will have increased instability and violence.

During the Cold War, American security policy was marked by what was sometimes known as "the great trade-off": a deterrence policy that relied on the threat of all-out war increased the probability of peace, but at the price of risking total destruction if it failed. In the current era, the great trade-off is between America's security and non-security interests. The reduced urgency of the former allow greater attention to the latter. Moreover, while the pursuit of many values would require U.S. foreign policy to be as active as it was during the Cold War, American security could be well-served by minimizing military and even political involvement abroad. It is hard to see how the American homeland could be threatened except through commitments and entangling alliances. Furthering the other values discussed above requires promises, threats, and a variety of close political ties abroad, and these may come at some cost to American security.

More specifically, policies that seek to keep the peace in various areas of the world (especially Eastern Europe, but in the Third World as well) incur the cost of increasing the chance that the United States will be drawn into these conflicts if they occur. If the United States cared only about promoting democracy and peaceful intercourse in Eastern Europe, it would become deeply involved in that region, offering aid and investment, seeking to build liberal domestic and international institutions, and even offering security

---

72. For a related discussion, see Richard K. Herrmann, "The Middle East and the New World Order: Rethinking U.S. Political Strategy after the Gulf War," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 42–75.

guarantees. But if these policies were to fail and violence to break out in the region, there would be greater pressure on the United States to intervene, with force if necessary. This would be costly and dangerous. Indeed, the only plausible path to Soviet-American nuclear war is through the United States resisting the re-imposition of Soviet rule over Eastern Europe or break-away republics of the Soviet Union. Such Soviet actions can hardly be seen as threats to American security, however; this war would depend on a drastic extension of American interests.<sup>73</sup> In fact NATO recently declared that "coercion or intimidation" of states in Eastern and Central Europe would be a "direct and material concern" to the alliance, although officials also announced that this was not intended as a challenge to the Soviet Union.<sup>74</sup> Whether the United States and its European partners will make this a real commitment is not yet clear. Of course, the United States could get the worst of both possible worlds: it could fail to involve itself in efforts that might prevent strife and yet be unable to remain aloof when conflict broke out.<sup>75</sup> After all, President Bush announced that the United States would not intervene to protect the Kurds, but political (and perhaps personal) pressures overcame this stance of self-control.<sup>76</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The end of the Cold War bears witness both to time's cycle and to time's arrow. Politics among the developed countries will not return to what it was before 1939. The costs of war have drastically increased while the benefits, especially compared with those available from alternative means, have decreased. Part of the reason for the latter change, in turn, is that the values of states and the individuals that compose them have changed. Although such constant factors as rivalry, the security dilemma, and the desire for advantage over others will continue, they are not likely to produce violence. And without the recurring threat of war, the patterns of international politics in the developed world cannot be the same. This is not true elsewhere on

---

73. For the advocacy of this position, see Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interest," p. 13. Walter Slocombe, "The Continued Need for Extended Deterrence," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Autumn 1991), pp. 160-167.

74. Thomas Friedman, "NATO Tries to Ease Security Concerns in Eastern Europe," *New York Times*, June 7, 1991, p. 1.

75. I am indebted to Stephen Van Evera for discussion on this point.

76. Secretary of State Baker apparently came to support intervention only after he visited the Kurdish refugee camps.

the globe. While Eastern Europe and the Third World are not likely to simply recapitulate the West's history from which so many of our theories of international politics are derived, neither should we expect a basic change from the familiar ways in which nations relate to each other.

The combination of the end of traditional threats to American security and the continuation of violence in many parts of the world confronts the United States with a wide range of choice. Without the clear framework that constituted the Cold War, there will be conflicts between security interests and other interests. New possibilities arise but not all of them can be pursued simultaneously. While the new era will be a less constrained one for the developed states in general and the United States in particular, by the same token the intellectual and political tasks are considerably increased. How involved America should be in world politics and what values it should seek to foster—and at what cost and risk—are questions that remain open, unanswered, and largely unaddressed.