...reasing disequilibrium between the burden of main-
...mpire or hegemonic position and the resources avail-
...dominant power to carry out this task, leads to the
... new international system. The distribution of terri-
...ttern of economic relations, and the hierarchy of
...flect the new distribution of power in the system, as
...the previous system. The emergent dominant states
...n attempt to extend their dominion to the limits of
...nic, military, and other capabilities. In time, these
...ll also mature, and new challengers will arise on the
...f their power and influence. Then the process of
...equilibrium, and hegemonic struggle will resume once

...lusion of one hegemonic war is the beginning of
...le of growth, expansion, and eventual decline. The
...ven growth continues to redistribute power, thus un-
... the status quo established by the last hegemonic
...disequilibrium replaces equilibrium, and the world
...ard a new round of hegemonic conflict. It has always
... and always will be, until men either destroy them-
... learn to develop an effective mechanism of peaceful

# 6

# Change and continuity in world politics

The basic assumption of this study has been that the nature of international relations has not changed fundamentally over the millennia. Believing that the past is not merely prologue and that the present does not have a monopoly on the truth, we have drawn on historical experience and the insights of numerous earlier writers. Although the purpose of this study has been to understand international political change, it also has assumed that an underlying continuity characterizes world politics: The history of Thucydides provides insights today as it did when it was written in the fifth century B.C. One must suspect that if somehow Thucydides were placed in our midst, he would (following an appropriate short course in geography, economics, and modern technology) have little trouble in understanding the power struggle of our age.

This assumption of continuity in the affairs of states has been challenged by much recent scholarship in the field of international relations. Contemporary changes in technology, economics, and human consciousness are said to have transformed the very nature of international relations. International actors, foreign-policy goals, and the means to achieve goals are said to have experienced decisive and benign changes; it is said that the nation-state has receded in importance, that welfare goals have displaced security goals as the highest priority of societies, and that force has declined as an effective instrument of foreign policy. One witnesses, in fact, a curious tension between the prevail-

ing mood of public pessimism and current scholarship on international relations. The emphasis of much recent scholarship in the field of international relations has been on developments that are judged to have changed the anarchic competitive nature of international relations.

The distinguished sociologist Alex Inkeles best captured the spirit of much contemporary scholarship and its assertion that a discontinuity has appeared in international relations:

> In the second half of the twentieth century, laymen and professional intellectuals alike have frequently expressed the sense that the relationship of all of us, all humankind, to each other and to our world has been undergoing a series of profound changes. We seem to be living in one of those rare historical eras in which a progressive quantitative process becomes a qualitative transformation. Even when, in more sober moments, we recognize that we are yet far from being there, we have the unmistakable sense that we are definitely set off on some new trajectory, and that we are not merely launched but are already well along toward an only vaguely identified destination. The widespread diffusion of this sense of a new, emergent global interrelatedness is expressed in numerous ideas, slogans, and catchphrases which have wide currency, such as "world government," "the global village," "spaceship earth," "the biosphere," and the ubiquitous cartoon of a crowded globe with a lighted fuse protruding from one end, the whole labelled "the world population bomb." Although the pervasiveness of the response to this emergent situation certainly tells us that *something* is happening, its diversity highlights our confusion as to exactly *what* it is that is happening (Inkeles, 1975, p. 467).

If a qualitative transformation has taken place in world politics, then this historic discontinuity obviously will invalidate the conception of international political change set forth in this study, transcending our model of change and the propositions drawn from the model, as well as the historical evidence to support them. Feeble guide that this model is, it (and, of course, all other efforts to learn from the past) will have to be cast aside. If the world has changed as much as many contemporary scholars suggest, then historical experience has little to say regarding the meaning of contemporary events. We will be intellectually cast adrift. For this reason, the purpose of this chapter is to evaluate



the argument that contemporary developments have qualitatively transformed the nature of international relations.

To many contemporary scholars of international relations, three profound developments suggest a fundamental transformation in the nature of international relations. The first is the technological revolution in warfare due to the advent of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The second is the high level of economic interdependence among national economies. The third is the advent of global society, accompanied by a change in human consciousness and a set of planetary problems. These developments have suggested to scholarly observers major shifts in the costs of war, the benefits of peace, and the necessity of international cooperation. Taken together, these three developments are believed to have transformed international relations and to have made peaceful change the new reality.

Although this vision that technological, economic, and other developments have transformed the nature of international relations is appealing, it is not convincing. The world has indeed changed, and profoundly so, because of these factors. Both the risks of conflict and the benefits of cooperation have increased. However, although modern science, technology, and economics have changed the world, there is little evidence to suggest that the human race has solved the problems associated with international political change, especially the problem of war.

## THE NUCLEAR REVOLUTION IN CONTEMPORARY WARFARE

The belief that military power is no longer a rational instrument of statecraft and a mechanism for international political change has been set forth by numerous scholars of international relations. Ironically, no one has made the argument more forcefully than Hans Morgenthau, the leading modern spokesman for political realism: "I think a revolution has occurred, perhaps the first true revolution in foreign policy since the beginning of history, through the introduction of nuclear weapons into the arsenal of warfare. [In the past] . . . there existed a rational relationship between violence as a means of foreign policy, and the ends of foreign policy. That is to say, a statesman could ask himself–

and always did ask himself—whether he could achieve what he sought for his nation by peaceful diplomatic means or whether he had to resort to war. . . . The statesman in the pre-nuclear age was very much in the position of a gambler—a reasonable gambler, that is—who is willing to risk a certain fraction of his material and human resources. If he wins, his risk is justified by victory; if he loses, he has not lost everything. His losses, in other words, are bearable. *This rational relationship between violence as a means of foreign policy and the ends of foreign policy has been destroyed by the possibility of all-out nuclear war*" (Morgenthau et al., 1961, p. 280; italics added).

Although nuclear weapons have indeed made total war (what we have called hegemonic war) extremely costly, they have by no means eliminated the problems of war. The categories of war expanded during the decades following World War II: proxy wars involving the nuclear powers; conventional limited wars; guerrilla wars; civil wars; terrorism; etc.[1] Such wars can and do function to force political change, despite the dangers of escalation. These so-called limited wars have taken their toll in tens of thousands of lives (indirectly, hundreds of thousands of lives) since the end of World War II. It is very difficult to reconcile this carnage with the thesis that modern weapons have transformed the nature of international relations.

A major and disturbing consequence of the advent of weapons of mass destruction is that they have enhanced the threat of war as an instrument of policy. In part, this threat does serve to deter war between the superpowers and their allies. On the other hand, however, there is the ever-present danger that statesmen, in utilizing and/or responding to nuclear blackmail, will permit events to get out of control and escalate into a nuclear war sought by no one.

The exercise of power is still the central feature of international relations. The fact that it has been ineptly used by one or both of the two superpowers does not make it less relevant. However, it would be foolish to argue that the advent of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have not altered

[1] One of the best discussions of this subject was provided by Osgood and Tucker (1967).



the role and the use of force in the contemporary world. Indeed, these weapons have had a profound effect on the conduct of statecraft. Although their ultimate consequences have yet to be determined, weapons of mass destruction appear to have had three general effects on international relations (Smart, 1975, pp. 544–53).

First, the primary purpose of military power (at least for the moment) has become the deterrence of another great war. Mutual deterrence among antagonistic nuclear states places a limitation on violence and in turn protects international society as a whole from total war. The achievement of successful deterrence has resulted from the use of power to balance power, not from any obsolescence of power itself. As Kenneth Waltz pointed out, the nuclear revolution has had the effect that "force is more useful than ever for upholding the status quo, though not for changing it, and maintaining the status quo is the minimum goal of any great power" (1979, p. 191). If this system of mutual deterrence were to break down, modern instruments of national power would undoubtedly be unleashed in their full ferocity.

Second, nuclear weapons provide the nuclear state "with an infrangible guarantee of its independence and physical integrity" (Smart, 1975, p. 548). Although nuclear weapons have proved thus far to have little "compellance" capability (i.e., to compel one state to do the will of another state), they do constitute an insurance policy against ultimate disaster. Like the six-shooter of the American frontier, to some extent they make everyone equal. The most powerful state will think twice before attacking the smallest state armed with nuclear weapons. As a consequence, the spread of nuclear weapons, some believe, could create a system of universal deterrence and ultimate peace. Although there is some merit in this idea, gradations of power and capabilities obviously do continue in a nuclear-armed world.

Third, and more troubling, is the fact that the possession of nuclear weapons largely determines a nation's rank in the hierarchy of international prestige. Because even a relatively backward society may be economically capable of acquiring nuclear weapons, the modern identification of industrial capability with military power and prestige has been weakened. Nuclear weap-

ons in themselves confer an enhanced status and have become status symbols coveted by more and more states. Thus the acquisition of nuclear weapons has become an important objective for increasing numbers of contemporary states. The implications of this situation for the proliferation of nuclear arsenals and international stability are, to say the least, not conducive to a sanguine view of the future (see Waltz for a contrasting view).

The threat of war and the use of force and war have historically been governed by a fundamental relationship between the destructiveness and probability of war: The more potentially destructive a war seemed to be, the less the probability of its occurring, and vice versa.[2] The pacifist Leo Tolstoy appreciated this relationship and prayed that wars would become sufficiently destructive that men would refuse to fight them. The Hobson's choice of modern man is that insofar as he makes the world safe from total nuclear war through arms control and an effective system of deterrence, he also makes the world that much safer for limited wars and the calculated exploitation of nuclear threats.

Under conditions of mutual deterrence and a stable system of arms control, a series of limited wars could serve to change the international system (Kissinger, 1961, p. 90). If a threat to resort to nuclear war should lack credibility, then local superiority would prevail, and a rising state could use limited force to change the territorial status quo. The subsequent loss of access to critical resources or strategic territory could, in turn, reduce the dominant power to an inferior position and transform the governance of the international system. In the past, nations have precipitated total war to protect vital interests threatened by such a piecemeal strategy (known colloquially as bologna tactics). It is possible, despite much current speculation to the contrary, that mutual deterrence may serve ultimately to inhibit the dominant power from defending the status quo rather than preventing the rising power from seeking to change it.[3]

As Ronald L. Tammen stated the basic issue, "the great unre-

[2] I am indebted to Hedley Bull for this observation. See Bull (1963).

[3] The dominant state obviously could follow the same strategy and thereby reinforce its control over the system.



solved dilemma of nuclear weapons is how to use them aside from deterring an all-out war" (quoted by Smart, 1975, p. 551). The history of war and weaponry indicates that the great changes in international systems have been due not to weapons innovations by themselves but to the use of these weapons by political and military geniuses who have learned how to apply new weapons to gain advantages over other states. Thus the Romans were able to capture an empire because of their organizational, tactical, and strategic innovations, not because of the novelty of their weapons.[4] We are but a few decades into the nuclear age, and it is far too early to conclude that there will not be a Gaius Marius, Alexander,[5] or Napoleon who will develop tactics and strategy to make nuclear weapons and the nuclear threat effective instruments of national policy. Although such an effort to translate nuclear weapons into political gains might very well turn out to be irrational, can one with assurance deny that a future statesman might be daring enough or desperate enough to exploit mankind's fear of nuclear war in order to advance his political goals, especially if success promises mastery of the planet itself? Unfortunately, the history of international politics provides no reassurance that nuclear weapons will forever serve only a deterrent function.

Finally, the advent of nuclear weapons may make the task of diplomacy and the goal of instituting a mechanism of peaceful change more difficult rather than less difficult. In the prenuclear age, as Kissinger observed, diplomats were able to resolve interstate disputes and to find acceptable compromises because of the high probability that deadlock at the negotiating table would lead to decision on the battlefield (Kissinger, 1961, p. 170). Today, the destructiveness of war has decreased the probability that war will result from diplomatic impasse, and as a conse-

[4] A more recent example was the German innovation of blitzkreig warfare, which accounted for their rapid successes in the early days of World War II. Although the technologies involved in this novel form of warfare (the tank and the airplane) had been introduced during World War I, only later did the Germans develop the tactics, doctrine, and organization required to integrate them into powerful instruments of aggression.

[5] Actually, the military techniques used by Alexander the Great were developed by his father, Philip II of Macedon.

quence statesmen feel less pressured to make or accept the compromises required for peaceful resolution of disputes. Thus, the hope of many current writers that the nuclear revolution in warfare will lead to an issue-by-issue resolution of disputes through bargaining and mutual concession may be a vain hope.

The thesis that nuclear weapons have made hegemonic war or a system-changing series of limited wars an impossibility must remain inconclusive. That the superpowers have avoided war and exercised restraint over several decades of conflict is cause for optimism. However, one must recognize that the thesis has yet to be seriously tested. In their many confrontations, the vital interests of the two states have not been directly at issue. Whereas the existence of nuclear weapons must be credited for this restraint, the real test will come if a vital interest of one or the other superpowers becomes involved and events threaten to get out of control. The avoidance of such a situation must be a major responsibility of contemporary statesmanship. A further argument is that under contemporary conditions economic power has displaced military power. The use of economic power by OPEC to transform the world economy is certainly unprecedented. It was due, however, to a peculiar set of circumstances, and there is little reason to believe this type of action could be repeated in other areas. More generally, economic power defined as "the power to interrupt commercial or financial relations" for political purposes is nothing new in international relations [Hirschman, 1969, p. 16]. Thucydides tells us that an act of economic warfare, the Megara Decree, was a precipitator of the Peloponnesian War.[6] In the modern world, the great expansion of world market relations has obviously enhanced the role of economic power as an instrument of statecraft. However, as the recent American experience with economic sanctions against Iran and the Soviet Union indicates, the use of economic power (like military power for that matter) remains highly limited.[7] Whether economic power or some other form of power will be

[6] The decree sought to bring economic ruin to the Megarans by barring the ports of the Athenian empire.

[7] A thorough evaluation of economic power is provided by Knorr, 1975, especially Chapter 6.



cost effective to achieve an objective in a particular situation is an empirical question today as it was in the past.

## THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF NATIONAL ECONOMIES

At the same time that war is said to have declined as a rational means of securing the objectives of states, the objectives themselves are said to have been transformed. In the modern world, economic welfare (as well as development, in the case of developing economies), rather than narrow national security, is said to have become the principal objective of all societies. This objective can best be achieved, it is argued, through economic growth, international cooperation, and rational use of the world's scarce resources, rather than through war and competitive struggle. The inherent logic of these welfare and development objectives leads to an increasingly interdependent world economy and to a global society in which economic cooperation displaces the traditional conflict over territory, relative gain, and the international balance of power.

The argument that the current level of economic interdependence has transformed world politics must also be viewed with skepticism. In evaluating this idea, one should note that the modern era of international relations has been characterized by a paradox. Since the advent and spread of industrialism (today so closely associated with the concept of modernization), groups and states have been able to maximize their mutual gains through international cooperation and the establishment of an efficient economic organization both domestically and internationally. The gradual creation of the world market economy over the past century and a half has reflected this global commitment to efficiency and growth. In fact, this changed economic reality has been the hallmark of modern world politics.

Since the very beginnings of the industrial era, successive generations of thinkers have speculated (and hoped) that the benefits of economic growth and cooperation would tame the power struggle among groups and states (Hirschman, 1977).[8] As this

[8] Marxists and political realists, of course, have a less benign view of the impact of industrialism on international relations.

study has suggested, the advent of sustained economic growth and a world market economy has moderated international relations. In the modern era, nations have most frequently had more to gain through economic efficiency, cooperation, and an international division of labor than through war, imperialism, and exclusive economic spheres. Yet economic interdependence and the promise of mutual gain have not eliminated the efforts of nations to advance their own interests at the expense of others and at the expense of the overall economic efficiency of the global economy. The historical struggle among groups and states for individual advantage and domination has continued, although not always in the same form as in the premodern era. The major change has been the displacement of the cycle of empires and imperial-command economics by the cycle of hegemony and a world market economy.

Unfortunately, the growth of economic interdependence and the prospect of mutual gain have not eliminated competition and mutual distrust among nations. Trade has not always proved to be a force for peace. On the contrary, with increasing interdependence, nations have become more apprehensive over the loss of autonomy and such matters as access to foreign markets, security for sources of raw materials, and the associated costs of interdependence. Economic nationalism has never been far below the surface, and in this century the breakdown of the international economy in response to nationalism has been a contributing factor to conflict (Gilpin, 1977).

The growth of economic interdependence, it must be readily conceded, is one of the remarkable achievements of the modern world. It has made possible unprecedented affluence for a sizable fraction of the human race. Economic interdependence today, however, is less extensive geographically than such interdependence in the late nineteenth century. In reality, it encompasses only the industrial democracies and part of the so-called Third World. The Soviet Union and its satellites have withdrawn, and they regard this economic interdependence as hostile economic encirclement.

Of equal importance, the affluence of some nations and the poverty of the majority of the human race have produced a vast



fissure in the world. The universal awareness of the gap between rich and poor and the intense desire of poor peoples everywhere to catch up has become a novel and divisive force in the world. Few peoples today complacently accept their abject poverty as the will of God; they see it as the result of human decision: The rich are rich and they are poor, most peoples believe, because they are powerless and in consequence have been exploited. The desire to overturn this seemingly unjust state of human affairs is one of the most powerful political forces of our age, and it is not one that is apt to make the conduct of states more benign today than in the past (Sprout and Sprout, 1971, pp. 364–5).

One may hope that the intermeshing of national economies and the mutual absolute gains derived from interdependence, along with a global division of labor, may moderate still further the struggle over relative power and gain among competitive nation-states. But as societies have become more interdependent and have become more concerned with economic welfare, citizens have also become increasingly aware of the costs to their individual welfare and group welfare of the policies of other societies. As Henri Hauser (1937) observed decades ago, this spreading consciousness of mutual interdependence has become an increasingly disruptive factor in international relations since its beginnings in the latter part of the nineteenth century. What will be the political consequences of a rapidly urbanizing and economically conscious world with great and increasing inequalities between rich and poor within and between nations? And what will be the effects on political stability and cooperation of the seemingly intractable problems of reduced economic growth, high levels of unemployment, and global inflation? Such novel economic factors in contemporary society may have a powerful and malevolent impact on international relations.

The vision that the goal of efficiency might displace that of redistribution and that the process of international political change might become benign was set forth early in this century by a realist writer, Halford Mackinder. Writing in 1904 at the conclusion of the last and greatest phase of European expansion, Mackinder observed that the "Columbian epoch" had ended. For four hundred years, he noted, the European peoples had

grown in wealth, population, and power; they had expanded their dominion over the entire globe and had fought numerous wars of territorial division and redivision. Explorers had completed the outline of the map of the world, and the European peoples had politically appropriated all but the most remote territories: the empires of China and Japan. Most significant of all, it had been a conquest against negligible resistance and involving relatively little cost to the Europeans. But now, he argued, it was finished and a new epoch was beginning. This new age would be different in that there was no longer the great "empty" space to absorb the energies and surplus populations of the European peoples. The world was now a closed system, and the explosion of social forces accompanying growth could no longer be dissipated outward against weak and pliable peoples. Instead, national ambitions and expansion would rebound back on the European nations themselves and throughout the globe. In the post-Columbian age, he predicted, the cost of territorial expansion and conflict would far outweigh any conceivable benefit. "Probably," Mackinder wrote, "some half-consciousness of this fact is at last diverting much of the attention of statesmen in all parts of the world from territorial expansion to the struggle for relative efficiency" (Mackinder, 1962, p. 242).

Since 1904, when Mackinder wrote these lines, the world has experienced two costly and devastating world wars of territorial conquest. Although this fact is cause for caution, Mackinder's prophecy that the struggle for economic efficiency rather than territorial aggrandizement would become the central feature of international relations continues to be an appealing one. The advent of nuclear weapons and the technological revolution in warfare may yet prove to have decreased the utility of the military instrument at the same time that present-day economic concerns and world economic interdependence have enhanced the importance of economic relations among nation-states; then the dream of substituting a mechanism of peaceful change for the traditional reliance on war may become a reality. Making this dream a reality should be a major objective of contemporary statecraft.

Groups and states attempt to change the international system



for one of two sets of fundamental reasons: (1) to increase economic efficiency and maximize mutual gain; (2) to redistribute wealth and power in their own favor at the expense of efficiency and overall gains. Modern history has witnessed the displacement of the second motive by the first, at least to an impressive degree. But there is no guarantee that this will continue, and the eventual effects of contemporary political, economic, and technological developments are uncertain. It is as yet unclear whether cooperation to achieve efficiency or conflict over redistribution will be the predominant motivating force behind international political change in the last decades of this century.

## THE ADVENT OF GLOBAL SOCIETY

Finally, contemporary developments have suggested to many observers the transcendence of the traditional mentality and character of international statecraft: Advances in communications and transportation have unified the planet physically. New types of transnational and international actors more responsive to modern science, technology, and economics have broken the monopoly of the state in the management and governance of the international system. Global ecological problems, as well as resource constraints and limits to growth, have placed on the world's agenda a set of pressing issues whose solutions are beyond the means of self-serving nation-states. Modern science, advances in knowledge, and social technologies permit a more rational approach to the solution of international problems than do strife and conflict. The universal commitment to modernization and a better life for all gives diverse peoples a common set of concerns and aspirations. In short, those values and interests that unite the human race are said to be displacing those factors that historically have divided it and have been the underlying causes of wars and violent change. Or, as Inkeles (1975, p. 495) put it, "the emergence of a uniform world culture" is a reality, and a transformation in human consciousness is occurring that will provide escape from the irrational struggle for national advantage.

This thesis that a transformation in human consciousness has taken place in concert with the advent of a global society must

also be highly qualified. This position is founded on the belief that modern science and its offspring, technology, are making the world one, both mentally and physically. Advances in scientific knowledge are believed to be leading toward a more rational approach to the solution of human problems at the same time that modern technological advances have given all mankind a common destiny and the tools necessary to solve the fundamental problems of the planet. It is argued that science and technology imply a morality of international cooperation and make possible a world order that is more nearly just. Through the use of reason and the exploitation of technology, the human race can transcend the irrational struggle over relative gains in order to pursue gains for all mankind and especially to solve the global problems of ecological degradation and resource depletion.

Unfortunately, past expressions of neo-Malthusian ideas similar to the current limits-to-growth thesis have not led to the transcendence of narrow circumscribed loyalties; on the contrary, national fears concerning overpopulation and insufficiency of raw materials have led to the most destructive and irrational of human impulses. Eras of arrested growth, diminishing returns, and market constriction have historically been associated with conflict and war. Social Darwinism, imperialism, and the struggle for *Lebensraum* were the intellectual progeny of neo-Malthusian fears in the late nineteenth century and in the 1930s, and there is little evidence to suggest that mankind has advanced much beyond this level of jungle morality. The horrendous political implications of drastically reduced economic growth and scarcities of energy (particularly oil) for developed societies accustomed to ever-increasing levels of consumption and for the greater part of mankind in underdeveloped countries condemned to ever-worsening poverty become increasingly obvious to all. To the extent that the limits-to-growth thesis is correct, its influence on the behavior of nation-states may not be as benign and conducive to cooperation as many of its proponents would like to believe. Instead, intense competition may easily develop among economies for the world's dwindling supplies of petroleum, the markets required to finance energy imports, and the carving up of the last great commons (the oceans) for the resources they contain.



Even if modern science and technology have given mankind a new consciousness of shared values and common problems, this situation is no guarantee of common interest or of a willingness to subordinate selfish concerns to the larger good. On the contrary, modern science and technology may intensify the conflict over the globe's scarce resources. But it is more important to inquire whether or not a unified humanity really exists. Unfortunately, it does not. The modern "unified world" has been a creation of the West, which has sought to impose its values and way of life on a recalcitrant set of diverse cultures. This unity was shattered economically and ideologically by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and by the triumph there (and, after World War II, elsewhere) of a radically different mode of political and economic organization. The modern revival of Islam and the revolt of other non-Western cultures against Western values may point to an even greater schism ahead. Emergent power centers with cultural and diplomatic traditions vastly different from those of the once-dominant West may presage a return to the civilizational conflicts reminiscent of the premodern era. In short, one should not confuse the physical unity of the globe with moral unity; the human species remains deeply divided by race, religion, and wealth.

In actuality, the political fragmentation of the world has increased in recent decades. The world now encompasses approximately one hundred and fifty separate sovereignties; nationalism, with its roots in seventeenth-century Europe, has become the predominant religion of modern man. As has been the case in Europe, the continuing formation of nation-states and the spread of nationalism have unleashed powerful and dangerous forces of destruction. The present era is witnessing the proliferation of the nation-state, not its transcendence. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the new nationalisms were pitted against one another in six wars, several of which were devastating.[9] If the history of European state formation and nationalism is any guide, a true global society and a new consciousness may be far in the future.

[9] These wars among Third-World states and Marxist (except the Islamic republic of Iran) states include the following: Vietnam–Cambodia; Ethiopia–Somalia; Tanzania–Uganda; China–Vietnam; Iraq–Iran.

Embedded in most social sciences and in the study of international relations is the belief that through science and reason the human race can gain control over its destiny. Through the advancement of knowledge, humanity can learn to master the blind forces of change and to construct a science of peace. Through an understanding of the sources of our actions and the consequences of our acts, human rationality should be able to guide statesmen through the crisis of a decaying world order to a renovated and stable world order. The fundamental problem faced, this argument continues, is not uncontrollable passions but ignorance.

Political realism is, of course, the very embodiment of this faith in reason and science. An offspring of modern science and the Enlightenment, realism holds that through calculations of power and national interest statesmen can create order out of anarchy and thereby moderate the inevitable conflicts of autonomous, self-centered, and competitive states. If states would pursue only their own security interests (forsaking religious goals and ideology) and respect equally the vital interests of other states, a basis of compromise and orderly change would be possible (Morgenthau, 1973, pp. 540–4). Although the content of international-relations theory has changed dramatically over the centuries, this faith that a "science of international relations" will ultimately save mankind still lies at the heart of its studies.

The major difference between political realism and much contemporary theorizing about international relations is that realism assumes the continuity of statecraft. Realism is based on practices of states, and it seeks to understand how states have always behaved and presumably will always behave. It does not believe that the condition of anarchy can be transcended except through a universal imperium, and thus it contrasts with a powerful strain in contemporary thinking. The advance of technology may open up opportunities for mutual benefit, but it also increases the power available for political struggle. The advance of human reason and understanding will not end this power struggle, but it does make possible a more enlightened understanding and pursuit of national self-interest.

A scholar of international relations has a responsibility to be true to this faith that the advance of knowledge will enable us to



create a more just and more peaceful world. But, in honesty, one must inquire whether or not twentieth-century students of international relations know anything that Thucydides and his fifth-century compatriots did not know about the behavior of states. What advice could today's students give that would have enabled the Greeks to have prevented the great war that destroyed their civilization? Until scholars possess a better understanding of international political change, these questions cannot be answered, nor can the consequences of the actions of men be controlled. Yet it would be irresponsible for scholars to abandon their efforts to further their limited understanding of international relations.

This emphasis on the continuity of statecraft is open to the criticism that it must assume that societies do not learn and are not able to modify behavior that leads to wars they do not seek. If by "learning" one means a transcendence of the nature of the state as self-regarding and of the international system as competitive, the criticism is apt. This study does assume that the acquisition of knowledge will not make states less selfish or the system noncompetitive. But it would be incorrect to suggest that this study assumes that political leaders do not learn from historical experience or, the scholar hopes, from the outpourings of his craft. States can learn to be more enlightened in their definitions of their interests and can learn to be more cooperative in their behavior. Also, it appears that in all eras there have been "mature states" that have been chastened by the costs of conquest or have been moved by considerations of justice toward other societies (Wight, 1979, p. 155). Sweden today would be an example. Perhaps contemporary Japan and West Germany are as well.

Although states (or rather the individuals who compose them and lead them) do learn lessons from their experiences, they do not always learn the same lessons, or what some might regard as the correct lessons. History can teach the risk of misplaced trust, as in the case of Neville Chamberlain at Munich, as well as the benefits of cooperation, as in the case of West Germany and the European community today. A given experience can also teach different lessons to different people. For some, America's defeat in Vietnam taught that military intervention in the internal af-

fairs of other states is immoral and too costly; for others, failure was the product of halfhearted measures and timid leadership. And even though some states occasionally come to appreciate the mutual benefits of international cooperation, unfortunately all states have yet to learn the lesson simultaneously.

Ultimately, international politics still can be characterized as it was by Thucydides: the interplay of impersonal forces and great leaders. Technological, economic, and demographic factors push states toward both war and peaceful cooperation. The prudent and enlightened leader can guide the ship of state in one direction or the other. Though always constrained, choices always exist. Historical experience helps teach us what these choices are and what their probable consequences are. In this sense, one can say that learning can take place and can influence the course of international relations.

## CONCLUSION

In the final decades of the twentieth century, technological, economic, and other developments have suggested to many individuals that the nation-state has finally ceased to be the most efficient unit of economic and political organization. It is argued that a larger regional or even global organization of economic and political affairs is necessary, that new types of economic and political entities would be more efficient than the nation-state. In the interest of world peace and global welfare, some have proposed that more modern forms of international and transnational organization should supplant the increasingly anachronistic nation-state.

It may very well be correct that a systems change is called for in the contemporary world. Certainly the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction necessitate a more stable and more peaceful system or world order; also, the forces that threaten global economic welfare cannot easily be contained by highly competitive and nationalistic nation-states. Yet, even though such a change in economic and political arrangements might be highly desirable, it would undoubtedly be a very costly matter, as was the prior shift from feudalism to the nation-state.



Unfortunately (or, perhaps, fortunately), no contemporary political entrepreneur appears to regard forcing the transition from the nation-state to some other basis of world economic and political order as a profitable proposition.

Some writers would argue that a systems change has already taken place and that the traditional nation-state has been supplanted by states of continental dimensions resulting from the increased scale of economic and military power (McNeill, 1954, pp. 72–3). The American–Soviet bipolar system is viewed as the first stage of a global system dominated by superpowers of continent scale. This theory considers that World Wars I and II were responsible for this systems change. Observers see other superpowers emerging that may eventually take their places beside the United States and the Soviet Union, such as China, Brazil, India, and a united western Europe.

It is not clear, however, what the ultimate effect of contemporary military and economic developments will be on the scale of political organization. The scope of nuclear warfare and the immense cost of a retaliatory force would appear to favor an enlargement of political entities. At the same time, however, an attempt to conquer a small state possessing even a very modest nuclear capability may be prohibitively expensive. Increasing economic interdependence certainly has decreased national economic autonomy. However, it has also meant that states can have access to large markets without the necessity of integrating politically and that states have increased their intervention in the economy in order to protect national values against potentially harmful external economic forces. Although the emergence of global ecological and related problems necessitates a comparable organization of human affairs, the hold of the nation-state concept on the minds of men grows ever more tenacious. The ambiguous effects of these contemporary developments may be noted in three seemingly contradictory aspects of present-day international politics: (1) the emergence of the superpower; (2) the movement toward regional integration; (3) the proliferation of new nation-states and secession movements in older nation-states. These contradictory developments suggest that the sizes and distributions of political entities in our era have yet to be determined.

Although there are important elements of truth in all the theses discussed in this chapter, none of them leads to the conclusion that mankind has transcended the fundamental nature of international relations. World politics is still characterized by the struggle of political entities for power, prestige, and wealth in a condition of global anarchy. Nuclear weapons have not made the resort to force irrelevant; economic interdependence does not guarantee that cooperation will triumph over conflict; a global community of common values and outlook has yet to displace international anarchy. The fundamental problem of international relations in the contemporary world is the problem of peaceful adjustment to the consequences of the uneven growth of power among states, just as it was in the past. International society cannot and does not stand still. War and violence remain serious possibilities as the world moves from the decay of one international system toward the creation of another.

# Epilogue: Change and war in the contemporary world

At the end of the last hegemonic struggle in 1945, the United States stood at the apex of the international hierarchy of power and prestige. American economic and military power was supreme, and it provided the basis for an American-centered world economic and political order. By the 1980s this Pax Americana was in a state of disarray because of the differential growth of power among states over the previous few decades. The proliferation of nuclear weapons, the rise or reemergence of other centers of economic power, and especially the massive growth in Soviet military strength had weakened the political foundations of the international system established at the end of World War II. Events in Iran, Afghanistan, and elsewhere signaled that world politics were entering on a new and uncertain phase.

Sensing the ominous portents of this changed situation, numerous commentators and statesmen have reflected and written on its meaning. Parallels have been drawn between our own age and the periods preceding other great wars, particularly World War I. Contrasting unhappily with the seemingly halcyon days of the early 1960s, an uneasiness has settled over world affairs. The Middle East in 1980 has been compared to the pre-1914 Balkans, and a former secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, spoke of a period of maximum danger ahead when Soviet military power reaches its zenith. A book entitled *The Third World War—August 1985* (Hackett et al., 1978) became a best seller,

generate additional resources to maintain its global hegemony, and if, through some combination of both responses, it can restore a favorable equilibrium between its power and commitments. This will depend not only on specific policy initiatives of the United States but also on those of other governments in the years ahead. The thrust of political, economic, and technological forces creates challenges and opportunities; domestic politics and political leadership create the responses of states to these challenges and opportunities. The course of history is indeterminant; only in retrospect does it appear otherwise.

In the meantime, the contemporary era has been aptly described as one of "eroding hegemony" (Keohane and Nye, 1977, pp. 42–6). Such a condition in world politics has, of course, existed in the past. The interregnum between British dominance and American dominance of international economics and politics, what E. H. Carr called the "twenty years' crisis" (1919–39), was such a period; the former hegemonic power could no longer set the rules, and the rising hegemonic power had neither the will nor the power to assume this responsibility (Carr, 1951). In the absence of rejuvenation by the old hegemony or the triumph of its successor or the establishment of some other basis of governance, the pressing issues of world order (rules governing trade, the future of the international monetary system, a new regime for the oceans, etc.) remain unresolved. Progress toward the formulation of new rules and regimes for an international system to follow the Pax Americana has been slow or nonexistent.

Yet, on the basis of the analysis of political change advanced in this study, there are reasons for believing that the present disequilibrium in the international system can be resolved without resort to hegemonic war. Although the danger of hegemonic war is very real, what is known about such wars provides grounds for guarded optimism. Whereas the contemporary world displays some of the preconditions for hegemonic conflict, other preconditions appear to be totally or partially lacking. An evaluation of the current international situation reinforces the hope that a gradual process of peaceful change, rather than war, may characterize the present era of world politics.



An extremely important reason for guarded optimism is the relative stability of the existing bipolar structure. As Waltz (1979) argued, the present bipolar system appears to be relatively stable. Historically, however, as this study has shown, five types of developments tend to destabilize bipolar systems and trigger hegemonic conflict. Fortunately, none of these destabilizing developments appears imminent in the contemporary world (1980), at least for the immediate future.

The first potentially destabilizing factor is the danger that one of the pair (like Sparta prior to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War) will fail to play its balancing role. Through neglect, it permits a dangerous shift in the balance of power to take place. As long as the United States and the Soviet Union maintain a system of mutual nuclear deterence, this is unlikely to happen. Although many Americans and others fear that the United States has permitted a dangerous shift in the military balance to take place in favor of the Soviet Union, the strategic nuclear relationship continues to be one based firmly on the presumption of "mutually assured destruction" in the event of hegemonic war; each superpower has the capability to devastate the other. Yet, it must be added that a continuing deterioration in the American military position could remove this constraint on the system of mutual deterrence; at the least it could encourage Soviet leadership to exploit politically the belief that the Soviet Union has become the reigning hegemon.

The second potentially destabilizing factor is the danger of the rise of a third party to upset the bipolar balance. Although students of international relations disagree on the relative stability of bipolar systems versus multipolar systems, almost all agree that a tripolar system is the most unstable configuration. As long as western Europe lacks political unity, Japan remains weak militarily, and China continues in a backward state, this danger is minimized, though by no means eliminated. Certainly the Soviet Union has a genuine fear of an encircling alliance composed of these neighboring powers and the United States. The United States, for its part, would regard the loss of one of these powers or the loss of the oil fields of the Middle East as a major

setback. Thus, although the contemporary bipolar distribution of power is basically stable, it does contain the potential for dangerous tripolar structures of power.

The third potentially destabilizing factor is the danger of polarization of the international system as a whole into two hostile camps. In such a situation, international relations become a zero-sum game in which a gain to one camp or bloc is a loss to the other. This was the case prior to the outbreak of World War I, when minor tensions in the Balkans flared up into a major conflagration. Such a polarization has not yet developed (1980). To repeat an earlier metaphor, political space is not closing in. On the contrary, the world is becoming more pluralistic, with the emergence of a number of regional actors and issues. The outcomes of political conflicts in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere do not necessarily advantage one or another of the two superpowers so as to force the other to take decisive counteraction. Yet the emergence of frequently unstable new powers in the so-called Third World, the proliferation of nuclear weapons to these states, and the conflicts among them could involve the superpowers in highly volatile situations.

The fourth potentially destabilizing factor is the danger of entanglement of the major powers in the ambitions and difficulties of minor allies. It was the ambitions of Sparta's ally, Corinth, and its provocations of Athens that precipitated the great war between the Peloponnesian and Delian leagues. The difficulties of Germany's ally, Austria, beset with a decaying multiethnic empire, escalated into World War I. In neither of these cases could the major power tolerate the defeat or disintegration of its minor ally. Fortunately, these dangers do not appear imminent today. Even though particular allies of both superpowers have unfulfilled ambitions and/or serious political problems of their own, it is unlikely that they could or would set in motion a series of untoward events that would precipitate conflict among the two superpowers; this is because these allies are insufficiently independent and the superpowers are sufficiently self-reliant (Waltz, 1979). Again, however, one must not too quickly dismiss this potential danger. A Sino–Soviet confrontation, workers' revolts in eastern Europe, or political instability among America's allies



in western Europe and the Middle East could pose dangers for the international system.

The fifth potentially destabilizing factor is the danger of loss of control over economic, political, and social developments. Eras of rapid and revolutionary change within and among nations create dangerous uncertainties and anxieties that lead political elites in great powers to miscalculate. Hegemonic wars signal not merely changes in political relations among states but frequently social and economic upheavals as well; World War I, as Halévy showed (1965, p. 212), represented a collapse of the decaying European social and economic order. The crisis of world capitalism in the 1980s (high rate of inflation, rising level of unemployment, and low rate of economic growth) and the equally severe crisis of world communism (as represented by the workers' revolt in Poland) signal major strains in both systems.

Although the decades following World War II frequently have been called an age of political turbulence, the international system in that period has actually been characterized by remarkable resilience. It has accommodated a number of major developments: an unprecedented process of decolonization, rapid technological changes, the emergence of new powers (India, Brazil, China), sociopolitical revolutions in developing countries, massive shocks to the world economy, and the resurgence of non-Western civilizations. Yet the basic framework of an international system composed of two central blocs and a large nonaligned periphery has remained essentially intact.

This relative stability of the system has been strengthened by the domestic stability of the two dominant powers themselves. In contrast to the situations prevailing before World Wars I and II, neither power has been torn by powerful class or national conflicts. Although racial strife in the United States and ethnic problems in Russia are causing tensions in both societies, these internal difficulties pale in comparison with the nationalistic struggles of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1914 and the intense class conflicts of the European powers in the 1930s. The basic domestic stability of the United States and the Soviet Union today helps to ensure that revolutionary upheavals in these societies will not disrupt the international system.

Yet it would be foolish to be complacent regarding the underlying social stability of the system. A prolonged period of restricted economic growth could erode the political stability of the United States and the Soviet Union. A more probable threat to world stability would be untoward developments in important peripheral areas, in particular eastern Europe and the Middle East. The dependence of Soviet security on the subservient eastern European bloc and the dependence of the West on Middle Eastern petroleum constitute worrisome factors in contemporary world politics. The maintenance of stable conditions in these areas over the long term is a formidable challenge. Another continuing danger is that one or both of the superpowers might engage in foreign adventures in order to dampen internal dissent and promote political unity.

Another reason for guarded optimism regarding the avoidance of hegemonic war is that in the closing decades of the twentieth century, economic, political, and ideological cleavages are not coalescing but instead are running counter to one another. In the past, a precondition for hegemonic war in many cases has been the coalescence of political, economic, and ideological issues. In periods prior to the outbreak of hegemonic war, conflict has intensified because the contending parties have been at odds with one another on all fronts and have had few interests in common to moderate the antagonism. In such situations, compromise in one issue area becomes increasingly difficult because of its linkage to other issue areas. As a consequence, disputes in one area easily spill over into other areas, and the joining of issues leads to escalation of the conflict. The great wars of world history have tended to be at once political, economic, and ideological struggles.

In the 1980s, however, although the United States and the Soviet Union find themselves in political and ideological conflict, they share a powerful interest in avoiding nuclear war and stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Moreover, they also share certain economic interests, and both countries have numerous economic conflicts with their political and economic allies. This intermingling of interests and conflicts is thus a source of stability. Ironically, a less autarkic Soviet Union challenging the United States in world markets and competing for scarce resources would be, and might very well become, a destabilizing factor. A decline in Soviet production of petroleum or Soviet entry into world markets may change this situation and increase the level of economic tensions.



The contemporary situation is somewhat anomalous in the multiple nature of the challenge to the dominant power in the system. On the one hand, the position of the United States is challenged economically by Japan, western Europe, and the members of OPEC. On the other hand, the military and political challenge comes principally from the Soviet Union.[1] Although there are those writers who believe that the economic confrontation between the United States and its allies is threatening to world peace,[2] the position of this book is that the worst danger to international stability is the Soviet–American confrontation. From this perspective, the primary consequence of the economic competition between the United States and its allies has been to undermine the capacity of the United States to meet the Soviet challenge; however, if Japan and West Germany were to convert their military potential into actual capability, then the balance of military and political power could be changed dramatically, probably with important unforeseen consequences. At best, therefore, one can say that the long-term significance of contemporary developments for the future of the system is ambiguous.

Finally, and most important of all, hegemonic wars are preceded by an important psychological change in the temporal outlook of peoples. The outbreaks of hegemonic struggles have most frequently been triggered by the fear of ultimate decline and the perceived erosion of power. The desire to preserve what one has while the advantage is still on one's side has caused insecure and declining powers to precipitate great wars. The purpose of such war frequently has been to minimize potential losses rather than to maximize any particular set of gains.

Here, perhaps, is the greatest cause for anxiety in the years

[1] Similar, but not identical, situations have occurred in the past. For example, Dutch preeminence in the seventeenth century was threatened militarily by the French and economically by the British.

[2] This is the thesis of Kaldor (1978).

immediately ahead. What would be the reaction of the United States if the balance of power is seen to be shifting irrevocably to the Soviet advantage? What would be the Soviet response to a perceived threat of encirclement by a resurgent United States, an industrialized China, a dynamic Japan, a hostile Islam, an unstable eastern Europe, and a modernized NATO? How might one or another of these powers (the United States today, Russia tomorrow) respond to the continuing redistribution of world power?

A generally unappreciated factor in the preservation of world peace over the past few decades has involved the ideological perspectives of the United States and the Soviet Union. Each rival power subscribes to an ideology that promises inevitable victory to its own system of values and assures it that history is on its side. For the United States, freedom, democracy, and national independence are the most powerful forces in the world; for the Soviet Union, communism is the "wave of the future." These rival belief systems have been sources of conflict but also of reassurance for both nations. Despite their clashes and struggles, neither side has experienced the panic that has preceded the great wars of history, a panic that arises from fear that time has begun to run against one. Neither nation has felt the need to risk everything in the present in order to prevent inevitable defeat in the future. Fortunately for world peace, both the United States and the Soviet Union have believed the logic of historical development to be working for them. Each power has believed the twentieth century to be its century. But the foundations of both of these faiths are experiencing strain.

At the end of World War II, the United States held a position of unparalleled preeminence in the international system. During the first decades of the postwar period, its power and influence expanded until it was finally checked in the jungles of Southeast Asia and by more fundamental changes in the international distribution of economic and military power. The administration of Richard Nixon constituted a watershed in that it was the first to deal with the challenge posed by the increasing disequilibrium between America's international position and America's capacity to finance it. The United States has worked to meet this challenge through political retrenchment, efforts toward detente with the Soviet Union, rapprochement with China, and the generation



of additional resources through changes in its domestic and foreign economic policies.

The fundamental task of the United States in the realm of foreign affairs has become one of responding to its changed position in the world as new powers arise on the world scene. It must bring its power and commitments into balance, either through increasing the former or reducing the latter or by some combination of both strategies. Although this is a serious challenge, it need not be a source of alarm. Other great powers have succeeded in this task and have survived, maintaining their vital interests and values intact. There is danger, however, that the military challenge of the Soviet Union and the changing economic fortunes of the United States might generate severe anxiety in the American public. Although there is certainly cause for concern in these matters, exaggerated rhetoric over the relative decline of American power and wealth can itself give rise to panic and irrational actions.

Despite its relative decline, the American economy remains the most powerful in the world and dwarfs that of the Soviet Union. However, American society has placed on its economy consumption demands (both public and private) and protection demands beyond its capabilities at the same time that productive investment and economic productivity have slackened. Although the Reagan Administration can greatly increase defense expenditures to meet the Soviet challenge in an era of restricted economic growth, it could do so only at high cost to consumption or investment or both. The inherent danger in a massive expansion of defense expenditures is that it will be inflationary and will further undermine the productivity of the economy.[3] The long-term well-being and security of the United States necessitate judicious allocation of national resources among the areas of consumption, protection, and investment.

The Soviet Union is, of course, the rising challenger, and it appears to be the one power that in the years to come could supplant the American dominance over the inter-national system. Although the growth and expansion of Russian power have

[3] Proposals of the Administration to extend American commitments in the Middle East and elsewhere could have the same consequence.

deep historical roots, the acceleration in the development of Soviet industrial and military might in recent decades has been formidable. The Soviet Union has fashioned a powerful military machine from a state that was near defeat and collapse during World War II. Further, it occupies a central position on the Eurasian land mass and enjoys conventional military superiority over the United States in important areas. A major question for the future is whether or not the Soviets can translate and are willing to translate these expanding military capabilities into decisive political gains in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere in the world.

Meanwhile, the relative decline in American power and the continuing restraint on the use of military force has given rise to an era of uneasy coexistence between the superpowers. The erratic process of detente, if ultimately successful, may turn out to be an unprecedented example of peaceful change.[3] What it could well signify is a change from an America-centered global system to a more nearly equal bipolar system, and, perhaps eventually, a multipolar global system. The apparent settlement of the German and central European questions has stabilized, at least for the moment, the outstanding territorial issue dividing the two superpowers. The fundamental issue in the strategic-arms-limitation talks has been the stabilization of the nuclear arms race on the basis of strategic parity. Both powers favor steps to discourage further proliferation of nuclear weapons. There remain, however, many other issues about which the two superpowers continue to have antagonistic interests that could destabilize their relations. The Soviet aggression in Afghanistan is a case in point, and, of course, the rise of other powers could undermine this emergent bipolar structure over the longer term.

At the present juncture, it is the United States whose position is threatened by the rise of Soviet power. In the decades ahead, however, the Soviet Union also must adjust to the differential growth of power among states. For the Soviet Union, the burden

[3] It must be acknowledged that the Soviet Union and the United States have quite different conceptions of the meaning of detente. For the Soviets, detente does not mean an end to the class struggle or the historic movement toward the victory of communism. For the United States, detente is indivisible; the Soviet Union must not use detente to advance its political control over other nations.



of adjusting to the transformation of the international system from a bipolar system to a tripolar or even multipolar system could be even more severe than it would prove to be for the United States. In the wake of the collapse of Communist ideological unity and the rise of a rival ideological center in Peking, the Soviet Union finds itself surrounded by potentially threatening and growing centers of industrial power. Although it possesses unprecedented military strength, it could lose the reassurance of its ideology, and it is sluggish with respect to economic growth and technological development. If its neighboring powers (Japan, western Europe, and China) continue to grow in economic power and military potential, Russia's logistical advantage of occupying a central position on the Eurasian continent is also a political liability. On all sides, centrifugal forces could pull at this last of the great multiethnic empires as neighbors make demands for revision of the territorial status quo and as subordinate non-Russian peoples seek greater equality and autonomy. Such external and internal challenges could give rise to powerful defensive reactions on the part of the Soviet governing elite.

Several years ago, Ernest Mandel, a leading European Marxist, ascribed the changing fortunes of the Unites States to the law of uneven development: "After having benefited from the law of unequal development for a century, the United States is now becoming its victim" (1970, p. 7). Similarly, one may make the same observation regarding the future of the Soviet Union; this law plays no favorites between capitalists and communists. Observing the growing challenge of a unified and developing Communist China, an Indian political scientist writes that the uneven development of socialism is creating contradictions in the system today. Chatterjee, 1975, p. 8, put it best: "In the long run, the law of uneven socialist development may pose a greater threat to the Soviet Union than does the law of uneven capitalist development to the United States. In the years ahead, both nations may need to adjust to a world in which power is diffusing at an unprecedented rate to a plurality of powers.

We conclude this epilogue on a cautiously optimistic note. Although there are powerful forces that could lead to hegemonic war between the superpowers, the historic conditions for such a

war are only partially present. The redistribution of military power in favor of Russia as the rising state in the international system and the possibility of further redistributions of power to other states pose serious threats to the stability of the system; in response the superpowers might precipitate a course of events over which they could lose control. However, these potentially destabilizing developments are balanced by the restraint imposed by the existence of nuclear weapons, the plurality of the system, and the mutual benefits of economic cooperation. The supreme task for statesmen in the final decades of the twentieth century is to build on the positive forces of our age in the creation of a new and more stable international order.

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