Security: Domestic and International

'The condition of man . . . is a condition of war against everyone.'

THOMAS HOBBS, *Leviathan* (1651)

PREVIEW Security is the deepest and most abiding issue in politics. At its heart is the question: How can people live a decent and worthwhile existence, free from threats, intimidation and violence?' The search for security is therefore linked to the pursuit of order; and for the establishment of relative peace and stability amongst individuals and groups with different needs and interests. These concerns are commonly thought to resolved in the domestic realm by the existence of a sovereign state, a body capable of imposing its will on all the groups and institutions within its borders. Nevertheless, domestic security raises important issues, particularly about the roles of the institutions of the 'coercive state'; the police and the military. However, the issue of security is often considered to be especially pressing in international politics because the international realm, unlike the domestic realm, is anarchical, and therefore threatening and unstable by its nature. There has been fierce theoretical debate about whether this implies that international conflict and war are inevitable features of world affairs, and about the extent to which states are able to keep war at bay through cooperation. These debates have become increasingly pressing due to the advent of new challenges to international security, such as the rise of transnational terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Finally, growing interest in the concept of 'human security' has shifted attention from the security of the state to the security of the individual, and, in the process, widened the notion of security to include, for instance, economic security, food security and personal security.

KEY ISSUES
- In what ways does civil policing differ from political policing?
- What mechanisms are used to make police forces publicly accountable?
- When, and in what ways, does the military intervene in domestic politics?
- What are the key theories of international security?
- How has the international security agenda changed in recent years?
- What are the implications of the notion of human security?

SECURITY BEYOND BOUNDARIES?

Although **security**, as the absence of danger, fear or anxiety, has a common character, a distinction is conventionally drawn between the maintenance of security in the domestic sphere and the maintenance of security in the international sphere. This implies that the domestic/international, or 'inside/outside', divide (discussed in Chapter 1) is of particular importance when it comes to security matters. From the 'inside' of politics, security refers to the state's capacity to maintain order within its own borders, using the instruments of the coercive state, the police and, at times, the military. Security, in this sense, deals with the relationship between the state and non-state actors of various kinds, ranging from criminal gangs to dissident groups and protest movements. In this respect, the state enjoys the great advantage that, in most cases, its sovereign power allows it to stand above all other associations and groups in society, ultimately by virtue of possessing a monopoly of the means of what Max Weber (see p. 82) called 'legitimate violence'.

From the 'outside' of politics, security refers to the capacity of the state to provide protection against threats from beyond its own borders, especially the ability of its armed forces to fight wars (see p. 415) and resist military attack. Security, in this sense, has traditionally dealt with the state's relationships with other states, reflecting the conventional assumption that only states possess the material and military resources to engage in warfare and, thereby, exert significant coercive influence on the international stage. However, whereas state sovereignty (see p. 58) supports the maintenance of security 'inside', it makes the maintenance of security 'outside' deeply problematic. As sovereignty means that there is no authority higher than the state, international politics is conducted in an environment that is anarchical, in the sense that it lacks enforceable rules or a pre-eminent power. It is commonly argued that this creates a bias in international affairs in favour of insecurity, rather than security.

Nevertheless, the 'inside/outside' divide in security matters has become increasingly difficult to sustain. This has been a result of recent trends and developments, not least those associated with globalization (see p. 142), which have seen a substantial growth in cross-border, or transnational, movements of people, goods, money, information and ideas. State borders may not have become irrelevant, but, in a technological age, they have certainly become more fragile or 'porous'. This was dramatically demonstrated by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, commonly dubbed 9/11. If the world's greatest power could be dealt such a devastating blow to its largest city and its national capital, what chance did other states have? Furthermore, the 'external' threat in this case came not from another state but from a non-state actor, a terrorist organization that operated more as a global network than as a nationally-based organization. For some, September 11 marked the point at which security ceased to be either a domestic issue or an international issue, but became instead a global issue.

Moreover, the blurring of the domestic/international divide has widened the opportunities available to governments to frame security issues in ways that are politically or ideologically advantageous. Within days of the 9/11, for instance, President George W. Bush portrayed the attacks as part of the 'war on terror' (see p. 401), a term that dominated subsequent discourse about both the nature of

● **Security**: the condition of being safe from harm or threats, usually understood as 'freedom from fear', implying physical harm.

Focus on . . .
The 'war on terror'

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

the attacks themselves and how the USA and others should respond to them. By presenting 9/11 as an act of 'war', as opposed to a 'crime', it was lifted out of a domestic security frame and presented within an international frame. This, perhaps, served to prepare US public opinion, as well as the wider international community, for a response that had a clear international dimension, namely military intervention in Afghanistan and, for that matter, against any other country claimed to be implicated with 'terror'. To have portrayed 9/11 as a criminal act would have been to suggest a more modest and focused response: namely, a police action against accused international murders.

DOMESTIC SECURITY

The police and politics

The police force lies at the heart of the coercive state. The central purpose of a police force is to maintain domestic order. Police forces came into existence in the nineteenth century, largely as a result of the higher levels of social unrest and political discontent that industrialization unleashed. For instance, in the UK, a paid, uniformed, full-time and specially trained police force was established by Robert Peel in London in 1829 following the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 in Manchester, when cavalry had been used to break up a large but peaceful working-class demonstration. This type of police system was introduced throughout the UK in 1856 and was later adopted by many other countries. Although police forces and militaries are similar, in that they are both disciplined, uniformed, and (if to different degrees) armed bodies, important differences can be identified.

In the first place, whereas the military's essentially external orientation means that it is called into action only rarely (for example, in times of war, national

emergency, and national disaster), the police force's concern with domestic order means that it has a routine and everyday involvement in public life. The police force is also more closely integrated into society than is the military: its members and their families usually live in the communities in which they work, although, as discussed below, a distinctive police culture often develops. Furthermore, the police typically use non-military tactics: because of their reliance on at least a measure of consent and legitimacy, they are either usually unarmed (as in the UK), or their arms are primarily a form of self-defence. To some extent, however, modern developments have tended to blur the distinction between the police and the military. Not only have armed forces been called in to deal with domestic disorder, as during the Los Angeles riots of 1992, but police forces have also tended to develop an increasingly paramilitary character. This is reflected in their access to progressively more sophisticated weaponry and, in many states, in their adoption of a quasi-military mode of operation.

There are three contrasting approaches to the nature of policing and the role that it plays in society:

- The *liberal* perspective regards the police as an essentially neutral body, the purpose of which is to maintain domestic order through the protection of individual rights and liberties. In this view, police forces operate within a broad consensus and enjoy a high measure of legitimacy, based on the perception that policing promotes social stability and personal security. The police are principally concerned with protecting citizens from each other. As policing is strictly concerned with upholding the rule of law (see p. 344), it has no broader political function.
- The *conservative* perspective stresses the police's role in preserving the authority of the state and ensuring that its jurisdiction extends throughout the community. This view, which is rooted in a more pessimistic view of human nature, emphasizes the importance of the police as an enforcement agency capable of controlling social unrest and civil disorder. In this light, police forces are inevitably seen as mechanisms of political control.
- The *radical* perspective advances a much more critical view of police power. This portrays police forces as tools of oppression that act in the interests of the state, rather than of the people, and serve elites, rather than the masses. In the Marxist version of this theory, the police are seen specifically as defenders of property and upholders of capitalist class interests.

The role of the police force is also shaped by the nature of the political system in which it operates and the ways in which the government uses the police. Civil policing tends to be distinguished from political policing, and divisions are usually identified between liberal states and so-called 'police states'.

Role of the police

Civil policing is the aspect of police work with which the general public is usually most familiar and which dominates the public image of the police force: the police force exists to 'fight crime'. This process increasingly has an international character, brought about by the advent of major transnational criminal organizations associated, in particular, with drug-trafficking and people-trafficking. However,

the routine process of maintaining civil order is very different when undertaken in, say, rural India than in modern cities such as New York, Paris and St Petersburg. It is widely accepted that, while small and relatively homogeneous communities are characterized by a significant level of self-policing, this changes as societies become more fragmented (socially and culturally), and as large-scale organization depersonalizes relationships and interaction. The spread of industrialization in the twentieth century therefore brought about a measure of convergence in police organization and tactics in different parts of the world. Police forces everywhere tend to confront similar problems in the form of, for example, traffic infringements, car theft, burglary, street crime and organized crime.

However, contrasting styles of civil policing have been adopted. On the one hand, there is the idea of **community policing**. This system has traditionally operated in Japan. Japanese police officers are expected to know and visit the various families and workplaces that fall within their area of jurisdiction, operating either from police boxes (*koban*) or from residential police stations (*chuza-isho*). The success of this method, however, depends on the police being regarded as respected members of the local community and on citizens accepting that their lives will be closely monitored. Pressure for efficiency and cost cutting led to the phasing out of community policing in the UK and elsewhere in the 1960s and 1970s, with a shift towards what is called 'fire brigade' policing. This emphasizes the capacity of the police to react to breaches of law when they occur, in the hope that crime will be prevented by the effectiveness of the police response. Fire-brigade policing, or reactive policing, requires the adoption of harder, even paramilitary, tactics, and a greater emphasis on technology and arms. Pioneered in the early 1990s in New York, 'zero tolerance' policing, or positive policing, has been widely adopted, formally or informally, in many parts of the world. Based on the so-called '**broken windows theory**', this relies on a strategy of strict enforcement in relation to minor offences (hence 'zero tolerance') in order to reduce levels of serious crime. It works on the basis that unrestrained petty crime creates the impression that 'no one is in control'.

Policing can, nevertheless, be 'political' in two senses. First, policing may be carried out in accordance with political biases or social prejudices that favour certain groups or interests over others. Second, policing may extend beyond civil matters and impact on specifically political disputes. The first concern has traditionally been raised by radicals and socialists, who dismiss the idea that police forces (or any other state body) act in a neutral and impartial fashion. From this perspective, the training and discipline of the police force and the nature of police work itself tend to breed a culture that is socially authoritarian and politically conservative. The working classes, strikers, protesters, women and racial minorities are therefore likely to be amongst the groups treated less sympathetically by the police.

Despite mechanisms of public accountability and protestations of impartiality, there is undoubtedly evidence to support these allegations, at least in particular circumstances. For instance, the US National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, set up by Lyndon Johnson to investigate the urban unrest that broke out in the USA during the 'long hot summer' of 1967, found that many of the disturbances were linked to the grievances of black ghetto dwellers about abusive or discriminatory police actions. The attack on Rodney King by four white Los Angeles police officers, whose acquittal in 1992 sparked two days of rioting, kept

● **Community policing**: A style of policing in which a constant police presence in the community seeks to build trust and cooperation with the public.

● **Broken windows theory**: The theory that minor offences (broken windows) that are not speedily dealt with advertise that an area is not cared for and so lead to more, and more serious, offenses.

• **Institutional racism**: A form of racism that operates through the culture or procedural rules of an organization, as distinct from personal prejudice.

• **Police state**: A state that relies on a system of arbitrary and indiscriminate policing in which civil liberties are routinely abused.

this image alive. Similarly, in the UK, the Macpherson Report (1999) into the murder of Stephen Lawrence concluded that the Metropolitan Police were guilty of **institutional racism**.

The level of political policing, meaning the use of the police as a political, rather than civil, instrument, has increased as societies have become more complex and fragmented. Some observers challenge the very distinction between civil and political areas of police work, arguing that all crime is 'political', in the sense that it springs from, and seeks to uphold, the established distribution of wealth, power and other resources in society. The neutrality of the police force in the eyes of the public is particularly compromised when it is used to control strikes, demonstrations and civil unrest that stem from deep divisions in society. The threat of terrorism (see p. 416), especially since the events of 11 September 2001, has drawn policing into some particularly difficult areas. Not only have many states strengthened national security legislation, and in the process extended the powers of the police but, in the USA, the UK and elsewhere, policing strategies have been adapted so as to take better account of particular threats posed by terrorism. Both of these developments have led to allegations that civil liberties have been compromised through the emergence of a national security state.

Police states

However, the widening of police powers has been taken further in so-called '**police states**'. In a police state, the police force operates outside a legal framework and is accountable to neither the courts nor the general public. Police states have totalitarian (see p. 269) features, in that the excessive and unregulated power that is vested in the police is designed to create a climate of fear and intimidation in which all aspects of social existence are brought under political control. However, a police state is not run by the police force in the same way as a military regime is controlled by the armed forces. Rather, the police force acts as a private army that is controlled by, and acts in the interests of, a ruling elite.

This was clearly the case in Nazi Germany, which spawned a vast apparatus of political intimidation and secret policing. The SA (*Sturm Abteilung*), or 'Brownshirts', operated as political bullies and street fighters; the Gestapo was a secret police force; the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*) carried out intelligence and security operations; and the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) developed, under Himmler, into a state within a state. Russia also relied heavily on the activities of the secret police. Lenin formed the *Cheka* in 1917 to undermine his political opponents, and this mutated into the OGPU, then the NKVD (Stalin's personal instrument of terror), in 1953 the KGB and, since 1991, the Federal Security Service (FSB).

At the same time, some states usually classified as 'liberal' have also found a role for the secret police. The CIA in the USA has certainly engaged in a range of covert external operations, including the 1973 Pinochet *coup* in Chile, several attempted assassinations of the Cuban leader Fidel Castro, and the supply of arms to Contra rebels who are fighting against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in the 1980s. It has also been subject to allegations of interference in domestic affairs, not least in the form of the still unsubstantiated claim that it played a role in the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Terroristic policing was used in

Northern Ireland in the late 1960s in the form of the B-Specials. This was an auxiliary unit of the Royal Ulster Constabulary formed to control civilian demonstrations and fight the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The B-Specials engaged in partisan and routine intimidation of the Catholic community and were disbanded in 1969, but only as the British army took on a more prominent role in policing 'the troubles'.

The military and domestic politics

The development of modern armed forces can be traced back to the period following the Middle Ages when European powers started to develop a standardized form of military organization, usually based on a standing army. During the nineteenth century, the military became a specialized institution with a professional leadership separate from the rest of society. European colonialism, in turn, ensured that this military model was adopted all over the world, turning the military into a near-universal component of state organization. Costa Rica is sometimes identified as the classic exception to this rule, but its lack of armed forces is possible only because of the security provided by the US military.

The military is a political institution of a very particular kind. Four factors distinguish the military from other institutions and give it a distinct, and at times overwhelming, advantage over civilian organizations. First, as an instrument of war, the military enjoys a virtual monopoly of weaponry and substantial coercive power. As the military has the capacity to prop up or topple a regime, its loyalty is essential to state survival. Second, armed forces are tightly organized and highly-disciplined bodies, characterized by a hierarchy of ranks and a culture of strict obedience. They are, thus, an extreme example of bureaucracy (see p. 361) in the Weberian sense. Third, the military is invariably characterized by a distinctive culture and set of values, and an *esprit de corps* that prepare its personnel to fight, kill and possibly die. Sometimes portrayed as implicitly right-wing and deeply authoritarian (by virtue of its traditional emphasis on leadership, duty and honour), military culture can also be grounded in creeds such as revolutionary socialism (as in China), or Islamic fundamentalism (as in Iran). Fourth, the armed forces are often seen, and generally regard themselves, as being 'above' politics, in the sense that, because they guarantee the security and integrity of the state, they are the repository of the national interest.

The character of particular armed forces is nevertheless shaped by internal and external factors. These include the history and traditions of the military and specific regiments or units, and the nature of the broader political system, the political culture and the values of the regime itself. For example, the political orientation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in China is deeply influenced by the decisive role it played in establishing the communist regime in 1949 and by strict party control at every level of the Chinese military. In Israel, the military enjoys an unusual position of trust and respect, based on its role in absorbing and socializing immigrants, and on its record of safeguarding the security of the Israeli state. Finally, although all militaries serve as instruments of war (examined later in the chapter), some militaries also play a major role in domestic politics.

Guarantee of domestic order

Although military force is usually directed against other political societies, it may also be a decisive factor in domestic politics. However, the circumstances in which militaries are deployed, and the uses to which they are put, vary from system to system and from state to state. One of the least controversial non-military tasks that armed forces may be called on to undertake is to act as an emergency service in the event of natural and other disasters. This type of involvement in domestic affairs is exceptional and is usually devoid of political significance. However, the same cannot be said of circumstances in which the armed forces are used to police domestic civil disturbances or disputes.

US troops, for instance, were deployed to implement federal racial desegregation orders during the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, the army was brought in during industrial disputes to provide emergency fire and ambulance services. Such actions provoke criticism, not only because the military is used in ways that encroach on responsibilities that usually belong to the police, but also because they compromise the traditional neutrality of the armed forces. This highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between the domestic use of the military as a 'public' instrument serving the national interest and its use as a 'political' weapon furthering the partisan goals of the government of the day. This distinction becomes still more blurred when the military is used to quell civil unrest or counter popular insurrection.

Certain states confront levels of political tension and unrest that are quite beyond the capacity of the civilian police to contain. This occurs particularly in the case of serious religious, ethnic or national conflict. In such circumstances, the military can become the only guarantee of the integrity of the state, and may even be drawn into what may amount to a civil war to achieve this end. In 1969, UK troops were dispatched to Northern Ireland, initially to defend the beleaguered minority Catholic community, but increasingly to contain a campaign of sectarian terror waged by the IRA and opposing 'loyalist' groups such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Defence Force (UDF). The Indian army has been used on a number of occasions to counter civil unrest and restore political order. These have included the eviction of Sikh separatists from the Golden Temple at Amritsar in 1984 at the cost of 1,000 lives, and the seizure of Ayodhya from Hindu fundamentalists in 1992 following the destruction of the ancient Babri mosque. Russian troops were dispatched to the republic of Chechnya in 1994 to thwart its bid for independence in an operation that turned into a full-scale war, later developing into an ongoing guerrilla struggle.

In cases in which political legitimacy has collapsed altogether, the military may become the only prop of the regime, safeguarding it from popular **rebellion** or revolution. When this occurs, however, all semblance of constitutionalism (see p. 337) and consent is abandoned, as the government becomes an outright dictatorship. Thus, in May 1989, the survival of the Chinese communist regime was maintained only by the military assault on Tiananmen Square, which effectively neutralized the growing democracy movement. Such circumstances place a heavy strain on the loyalty of officers and the obedience of troops required to inflict violence on civilian demonstrators. Trouble was taken to deploy in Beijing only PLA divisions brought in from the countryside whose political loyalty could be counted on. During the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the unwillingness of the

● **Rebellion**: A popular uprising against the established order, usually (unlike a revolution) aimed at replacing rulers, rather than the political system itself.

military to take action against rioters in Cairo and elsewhere eventually forced President Mubarak to step down and turn power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which prepared for the calling of elections.

Alternative to civilian rule

The military's capacity to intervene directly in domestic politics can lead, in extreme cases, to the establishment of military rule (as discussed in Chapter 12). Just as the military can prop up an unpopular government or regime, it can also remove and replace the governing elite, or topple the regime itself. The defining feature of military rule is that members of the armed forces displace civilian politicians, meaning that the leading posts in government are filled on the basis of the person's position within the military chain of command. One version of military rule is the military junta. Most commonly found in Latin America, the military junta is a form of collective military government centred on a command council of officers whose members usually represent the three services (the army, navy and air force). In its classic form, for example in Argentina in 1978–83, civilians are excluded from the governing elite, and trade union and broader political activity is banned. However, rivalry between the services and between leading figures usually ensures that formal positions of power change hands relatively frequently. In other cases, a form of military dictatorship emerges as a single individual gains pre-eminence within the junta, as with Colonel Papadopoulos in Greece in 1967–74, General Pinochet in Chile after the 1973 *coup*, and General Abacha in Nigeria, 1993–98.

It is difficult, however, for military rule to exist in a stable and enduring political form. While military leaders may highlight the chronic weakness, intractable divisions and endemic corruption (see p. 365) of civilian government, it is unlikely that military rule will provide a solution to these problems, or that it will be perceived as legitimate, except during temporary periods of national crisis or political emergency. This is why military regimes are typically characterized by the suspension of civil liberties and the suppression of all potential sources of popular involvement in politics. Protest and demonstrations are curtailed, opposition political parties and trade unions are banned, and the media are subjected to strict censorship. As a result, the military often prefers to rule behind the scenes and exercise power covertly through a civilianized leadership. This occurred in Zaire under Mobutu, who came to power in a military *coup* in 1965, but later allowed the army to withdraw progressively from active politics by ruling through the Popular Movement of the Revolution, founded in 1967. In the 1960s and 1970s, Egypt's transition from military government to authoritarian civilian rule was achieved under Gamal Nasser and Anwar Sadat, both military figures. The appointment of civilian cabinets and the emergence of parties and interest group politics not only strengthened the regime's legitimacy, but also gave Nasser and Sadat a greater measure of freedom from their own militaries.

● **International security**: Conditions in which the mutual survival and safety of states is secured through measures taken to prevent or punish aggression, usually within a rule-governed international order.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

International security occupies a central position in the broader academic discipline of international relations (IR). Indeed, a recurrent theme in IR has

● **Power politics**: An approach to politics based on the assumption that the pursuit of power is the principal human goal; the term is sometimes used descriptively.

● **Egoism**: Greater concern with one's own interests or well-being, or selfishness; the belief that one's own interests are morally superior to those of others.

● **National interest**: Foreign policy goals, objectives or policy preferences that supposedly benefit a society as a whole (the foreign policy equivalent of the 'public interest').

been the search for ways of countering the risk, uncertainty and deep insecurity that are sometimes believed to be rooted in the international system itself. As pointed out above, such thinking is based on the principle of state sovereignty, which, in the domestic realm, implies order and stability (as no group or body can challenge the supreme authority of the state), but in the international realm implies disorder and possibly chaos (as no body stands above the state and can impose order upon it). However, the issue of security in the international realm has been the subject of considerable theoretical debate, with quite different approaches to the prospects for international security being advanced by realist, liberal and critical theorists. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War a series of new security challenges have emerged that are particularly problematic, because, in various ways, they exploit the greater interconnectedness of the modern world. These include the shift from traditional, inter-state war to so-called 'new' wars, the rise of transnational terrorism and an increase in nuclear proliferation. A further, and linked, development has been the tendency to rethink the concept of security at a still deeper level, usually through a concern with what has been called 'human security' (see p. 418), in contrast to 'national' or 'state' security.

Approaches to international politics

Realist approach

Realism (sometimes called 'political realism') has been the dominant perspective on international politics since World War II. It claims to offer an account of international politics that is 'realistic', in the sense that it is hard-headed and, as realists see it, devoid of wishful thinking and deluded moralizing. For realists, international politics is, first and last, about power and self-interest. This is why it is often portrayed as a '**power politics**' model of world affairs. As Hans Morgenthau (1948) put it, 'Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action'.

The theory of power politics is based on two core assumptions. The first is that people are essentially selfish and competitive, meaning that **egoism** is the defining characteristic of human nature. This is an idea that provides the foundation for the political theories of Niccolò Machiavelli (see p. 5) and Thomas Hobbes (see p. 61). However, whereas Machiavelli and Hobbes were primarily concerned to explain the conduct of individuals or social groups, realist international theorists have been concerned, above all, with the behaviour of states, seen as the most important actors on the world stage. The fact that states are composed of, and led by, people who are inherently selfish, greedy and power-seeking means that state behaviour must exhibit the same characteristics, human egoism implying state egoism. State egoism leads to international conflict, and possibly war, because each state pursues its own **national interest**, and these are, by their nature, incompatible.

From the 1970s onwards, new thinking within the realist tradition started to emerge which was critical of 'early' or 'classical' realism. Under the influence of Kenneth Waltz (see p. 409), 'neorealists' or 'structural' realists started to explain the behaviour of states on the basis of assumptions about the structure of the

Kenneth Waltz (born 1924)

US international relations theorist. Waltz's initial contribution to international relations, outlined in *Man, the State, and War* (1959), adopted a conventional realist approach and remains the basic starting point for the study of war. His *Theory of International Politics* (1979) was the most influential book of international relations theory of its generation. Ignoring human nature and the ethics of statecraft, Waltz used system theory to explain how international anarchy effectively determines the actions of states, with change in the international system occurring through changes in the distribution of capabilities between and amongst states. Waltz's analysis was closely associated with the Cold War, and the belief that bipolarity provides a better guarantee of peace and security than does multipolarity.

international system and, in particular, the fact that, in the absence of world government, the international system is characterized by anarchy. Being, in effect, an international 'state of nature', the system tends towards tension, conflict and the unavoidable possibility of war because states are forced to ensure survival and security by relying on their own capacities and resources, rather than any form of external support. This leads to the creation of a 'self-help' system in which states inevitably prioritize the build-up of military power as the only strategy that promises to ensure survival.

The realist approach to international politics has important implications for security. Indeed, Waltz (1979) presented security as the 'highest end' of international politics. From the realist perspective, states have primary responsibility for maintaining security, as reflected in the notion of '**national security**'. The major threats to security therefore come from other states. In this way, the threat of violence and other forms of physical coercion are intrinsically linked to the prospects of inter-state war. National security is, thus, closely linked to the prevention of such wars, usually through the build-up of military capacity to deter potential aggressors. However, the fact that states are inclined to treat other states as enemies does not inevitably lead to bloodshed and open violence. Rather, realists believe that conflict can be contained by the **balance of power**. Classical realists have thus advocated that the balance of power be embraced as a policy which uses diplomacy, or possibly war, to prevent any state from achieving a predominant position in the international system. Neorealists, for their part, view the balance of power as a system, rather than as a policy; that is, as a condition in which no one state predominates over others, tending to create general equilibrium and discourage any state from pursuing hegemonic ambitions.

Liberal approach

The key ideas and themes of liberal ideology are examined in Chapter 2. However, liberalism has also had a major impact on the discipline of international relations. This draws on a much older tradition of so-called 'idealist' theo-

● **National security**: Conditions in which the survival and safety of a particular nation or state is secured, usually through the build up of military capacity to deter aggression.

● **Balance of power**: A condition in which no one state predominates over others, tending to create general equilibrium and curb the hegemonic ambitions of states.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

German philosopher. Kant spent his entire life in Königsberg (which was then in East Prussia), becoming professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg in 1770. His 'critical' philosophy holds that knowledge is not merely an aggregate of sense impressions; it depends on the conceptual apparatus of human understanding. Kant's political thought was shaped by the central importance of morality. He believed that the law of reason dictated categorical imperatives, the most important of which was the obligation to treat others as 'ends', and never only as 'means'. Kant's most important works include *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

rizing which dates back, via Kant's belief in the possibility of 'universal and perpetual peace', to the Middle Ages and the ideas of early '**just war**' thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). Liberalism offers an optimistic vision of international politics, based, ultimately, on a belief in human rationality and moral goodness (although liberals also believe that humans are naturally self-interested creatures). This inclines them to believe that the principle of balance or harmony operates in all forms of social interaction. Individuals, groups and, for that matter, states may pursue self-interest, but a natural equilibrium will tend to assert itself. Just as, from a liberal perspective, natural or unregulated equilibrium emerges in economic life (Adam Smith's (see p. 130) 'invisible hand' of capitalism), a balance of interests develops amongst the states of the world. This inclines liberals to believe in internationalism (see p. 117) and to hold that realists substantially underestimate the scope for cooperation and trust to develop within the international system (see p. 412).

Nevertheless, liberals do not believe that peace and international order simply arise entirely on their own. Instead, mechanisms are needed to constrain the ambitions of sovereign states, and these take the form of **international 'regimes'** or international organizations. This reflects the ideas of what is called 'liberal institutionalism'. The basis for such a view lies in the 'domestic analogy', the idea that insight into international politics can be gained by reflecting on the structures of democratic politics. Taking particular account of social contract theory, as developed by thinkers such as Hobbes and John Locke (see p. 31), this highlights the fact that only the construction of a sovereign power can safeguard citizens from the chaos and barbarity of the 'state of nature'. If order can only be imposed 'from above' in domestic politics, the same must be true of international politics. This provided the basis for the establishment of an international rule of law, which, as US President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) put it, would turn the 'jungle' of international politics into a 'zoo'. Liberals have therefore generally viewed the trend towards global governance (see p. 432) in positive terms (as discussed in Chapter 19). Against realist support for national security, they have also supported the idea of 'collective security' (see p. 411), the notion that underpinned the construction of the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations.

● **Just war**: A war that in its purpose and content meets certain ethical standards, and so is (allegedly) morally justified.

● **International regime**: Sets of norms or rules that govern the interactions of states and non-state actors in particular issue areas.

● **Security paradox**: The paradox that a build up of military capacity designed to strengthen national security may be counter-productive, in that it encourages other states to adopt more threatening and hostile postures.

Critical approaches

Since the late 1980s, the range of critical approaches to international politics has expanded considerably. Until that point, Marxism had constituted the principal alternative to mainstream realist and liberal theories. What made the Marxist approach distinctive was that it placed its emphasis not on patterns of conflict and cooperation between states, but on structures of economic power and the role played in world affairs by international capital. It thus brought international political economy, sometimes seen as a sub-field within IR, into focus. However, hastened by the end of the Cold War, a wide range of 'new voices' started to influence the study of world politics, notable examples include constructivism (see p. 16), critical theory, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism and green politics. In view of their diverse philosophical underpinnings and contrasting political viewpoints, it is tempting to argue that the only thing that unites these 'new voices' is a shared antipathy towards mainstream thinking. However, two broad similarities can be identified. The first is that, albeit in different ways and to different degrees, they have tried to go beyond the positivism of mainstream theory, emphasizing instead the role of consciousness in shaping social conduct and therefore world affairs. Second, critical theories are 'critical' in that, in their different ways, they oppose the dominant forces and interests in modern world affairs and so contest the international status quo, usually by aligning themselves with marginal or oppressed groups. Each of them, thus, seeks to uncover inequalities and asymmetries that mainstream theories tend to ignore.

The critical theories that have most clearly addressed the issue of security are constructivism and feminism. Constructivism has been the most influential post-positivist approach to international theory, and has gained significantly greater attention since the end of the Cold War. Constructivists who follow in the tradition of Alexander Wendt (1999), argue that interactions between states are mediated by beliefs, values and assumptions that structure both how states see themselves and how they understand, and respond to, the structures within which they operate. This implies, for instance, that state behaviour is not determined, as neorealists assert, by the structural dynamics of international anarchy, but by how they *view* that anarchy. As Wendt (1992) put it, 'anarchy is what states make of it'. While some states view anarchy as dangerous and threatening, others may see it as the basis for freedom and opportunity. An 'anarchy of friends' is thus very different from an 'anarchy of enemies'. Constructivists argue that this leaves open the possibility that states may transcend a narrow conception of self-interest and embrace the cause of global justice, even cosmopolitanism (see pp. 51–2). Feminists, on the other hand, have criticized the realist view of security on two other grounds. In the first place, it is premised on masculinist assumptions about rivalry, competition and inevitable conflict, arising from a tendency to see the world in terms of interactions amongst a series of power-seeking, autonomous actors. Second, feminists have argued that the conventional idea of national security tends to be self-defeating as a result of the **security paradox**. This creates what has been called the 'insecurity of security'. For many feminists, the gendered nature of security is also reflected in the gendered nature of war and armed conflict, as highlighted by, amongst others, Jean Bethke Elshtain (see p. 413).

Debating . . .
Is peace and cooperation amongst states destined to remain elusive?

International relations is centrally concerned with the balance between cooperation and conflict in world affairs, tradition-ally linked to the issues of war and peace. While realists argued that the tendency towards international conflict and, prob-ably, war are ultimately irresistible, liberals and others highlight the possibility of trust and cooperation amongst states. Why are state relations so often characterized by fear and hostility, and can this fear and hostility ever be overcome?

YES

Absence of world government. The tragedy of interna-tional politics is that the only way of ensuring enduring peace and order – the establishment of world govern-ment – is either starkly unrealistic (states will never sacri-fice their sovereignty to a higher body), or profoundly undesirable (it will lead to global despotism). As neoreal-ists point out, international anarchy tends towards conflict because states are forced to survive through mili-tary self-help, and this is only contained by a fortuitous, but always temporary, balance of power. For 'offensive' realists (who believe that states seek to maximize power and not merely security), when the balance of power breaks down, war is the likely outcome (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The security dilemma. Conflict and, even, war are inevitable because relations between states are always characterized by uncertainty and suspicion. This is best explained through the security dilemma. This is the dilemma that arises from the fact that a build-up of mili-tary capacity for defensive reasons by one state is always liable to be interpreted as aggressive by other states. The irresolvable uncertainty about these matters leads to arms races and a ratcheting-up of tension between states, especially because states are likely to assume that the actions of other states are aggressive because mispercep-tion in this respect risks national disaster.

Relative gains. International conflict is encouraged by the fact that the primary concern of states is to maintain or improve their position relative to other states; that is, to make 'relative' gains. Apart from anything else, this discourages cooperation and reduces the effectiveness of international organizations because, although all states may benefit from a particular action or policy, each state is actually more worried about whether other states benefit more than it does. In this view, international poli-tics is a zero-sum game: states can only improve their position within the power hierarchy at the expense of other states.

NO

An interdependent world. Realism's narrow preoccupa-tion with the military and diplomatic dimensions of international politics, the so-called 'high politics' of secu-rity and survival, is misplaced. Instead, the international agenda is becoming broader with greater attention being given to the 'low politics' of welfare, environmental protection and political justice. Of particular importance is the growing tendency for states to prioritize trade over war, recognizing both that this opens up a non-military route to state progress and, by deepening economic inter-dependence, makes war perhaps impossible. States are concerned with making 'absolute' gains, engaging in cooperation in order to be better off in real terms, rather than a self-defeating struggle for 'relative' gains.

International society. The realist emphasis on power politics has been modified by the recognition that inter-acting states constitute a 'society' and not merely a 'system'. To a growing degree, international society is rule-governed and biased in favour of order and predictability, rather than risk and uncertainty. This occurs because, as states interact with one another, they develop norms and rules enabling trust and cooperation to emerge, a tendency supported by international law, diplomacy and the activities of international organiza-tions.

Democratic peace thesis. Liberals have long argued that state relations are structured as much by the internal, constitutional structure of the state as they are by exter-nal factors such as the structural dynamics of the inter-national system. In particular, strong empirical evidence that democratic states do not go to war against one another suggests a link between peace and democracy. 'Democratic peace' is upheld by the fact that public opinion normally favours the avoidance of war; that democracies are inclined to use non-violent forms of conflict resolution in all of their affairs; and that cultural ties develop amongst democracies, encouraging them to view each other as friends not enemies.

Jean Bethke Elshtain (born 1941)

US political philosopher. Elshtain's *Public Man, Private Woman* (1981) made a major contribution to feminist scholarship in examining the role of gender in fashioning the division between public and private spheres in political theory. In *Women and War* (1987), she discussed the perceptual lenses that determine the roles of men and women in war, interweaving personal narrative and historical analysis to highlight the myths that men are 'just warriors' and women are 'beautiful souls' to be saved. In *Just War Against Terror* (2003), Elshtain argued that the 'war on terror' was just, in that it was fought against the genocidal threat of 'apocalyptic' terrorism, a form of warfare that made no distinction between combatants and non-combatants.

New security challenges

From traditional wars to 'new' wars

International security has usually implied a search for the conditions in which traditional, inter-state wars can be ended or prevented. Since the birth of the modern international system through the Peace of Westphalia (1648), war has been seen as an instrument of state policy, a means through which states gained ascendancy over one another, or sought to resist other states' bid for ascendancy. As the Prussian general and military theorist Karl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) put it, 'War is merely a continuation of politics (or policy) by other means'. However, war and warfare have changed. Since World War II, the number of inter-state wars with 20 or more deaths per year rose to 9 in 1987, then dropped to 1 in 2002, 2 in 2003 and zero in 2004. Starting with the tactics employed in the 1950s and 1960s by national liberation movements in places such as Algeria, Vietnam and Palestine, and then extending to conflicts in countries such as Somalia, Liberia, Sudan and the Congo, a new style of warfare has developed, possibly even redefining war itself. Following the break-up of the USSR and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, such 'new' wars occurred in Bosnia and in the Caucasus, particularly Chechnya, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, often seen as part of the larger 'war on terror'.

'New' wars tend to be **civil wars**, rather than inter-state wars. About 95 per cent of armed conflicts since the mid-1990s have occurred within states, not between states. Civil wars have become common in the postcolonial world, where colonialism (see p. 122) has often left a heritage of ethnic or regional rivalry, economic underdevelopment and weakened state power; hence the emergence of 'quasi-states' or 'failed states' (see p. 76). These states are weak, in that they fail the most basic test of state power: they are unable to maintain domestic order and personal security, meaning that civil strife, and even civil war, become routine. This is the point, however, where domestic security becomes entangled with international security, as the only effective protection for the domestic population may come from external sources in the form of humanitarian intervention (see p. 424). The complex and problematic nature of such interventions can be examined through the example of intervention in Libya in 2011 (see p. 414).

● **Civil war**: An armed conflict between politically organized groups within a state, usually fought to gain (or retain) control over the state, or to establish a new state.

Intervention in Libya: a responsibility to protect?

Events: In February 2011, a popular uprising erupted against President Gaddafi, as part of the Arab Spring (see p. 88). However, unlike earlier events in Tunisia and Egypt, the Gaddafi regime launched a brutal crackdown and pro-Gaddafi forces started to push eastward, threatening the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. Fearing a bloodbath, the international community responded swiftly. By the end of February, the UN Security Council had placed sanctions, an arms embargo and an asset freeze on Libya, and referred Gaddafi's crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. On 17 March, the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, which mandated that 'all necessary measures' be taken to protect civilians'. Two days later, a US-led coalition launched air and missile strikes against Libyan forces, responsibility for what was dubbed Operation Unified Protector quickly being transferred to NATO. In policing the arms embargo and patrolling the no-fly zone over Libya through aerial attacks on pro-Gaddafi forces and military equipment, NATO's intervention helped to tip the balance in the conflict in favour of the Libyan opposition. By early October, the Libyan National Transitional Council had secured control over the entire country and rebels had captured and killed Gaddafi. 'Operation Unified Protector' ended on 31 October, 222 days after it had begun (Daalder and Stavridis, 2012).

Significance: The fact that major humanitarian interventions had not occurred since Kosovo and East Timor in 1999, and Sierra Leone in 2000 had encouraged some to believe that the era of humanitarian intervention was over, a reflection of the unusual set of circumstances that prevailed during the early post-Cold War period. The USA's involvement in prolonged counter-insurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also served to highlight the danger of states getting bogged down in military interventions, especially as, sooner or later, the so-called 'body bag effect' tends to weaken domestic support. The 2011 Libyan intervention, nevertheless, went ahead for two main reasons. First, the political leaderships in the USA, France and the UK, the key supporters of intervention, feared the political cost of being seen to stand passively by while widespread slaughter took place in Libya, particularly as they had given such clear support to earlier Arab Spring uprisings. Second, and crucially, the intervention was deemed to be militarily feasible, both because of the relative weakness of the pro-Gaddafi forces once they were deprived of their aerial capacity, and in view of the calculation that intervention could be accomplished with minimal NATO losses, as a land invasion ('boots on the ground') could be avoided.

The key moral justification for the Libyan intervention arose from the principle of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), even though the notion was not specifically cited in Resolution 1973. The core theme of R2P is that the international community is bound by a humanitarian imperative to intervene to protect civilians in the event of either an actual or apprehended large-scale loss of life, or large-scale ethnic cleansing, if the resources exist to do so and the cost is not disproportionate. As moral responsibilities extend, potentially, to the whole of humanity, we have an obligation to 'save strangers'. In the case of Libya, this moral justification was bolstered by the legitimacy the intervention derived from its authorization by the Security Council and the support of key regional bodies such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Critics of the intervention have nevertheless portrayed Libya as an example of neocolonialism, on the grounds that it was significantly motivated by the desire to gain control of oil and other resources, and also reflected a continuing attempt by western powers to control the destiny of developing states. In this light, R2P merely provides a moral cloak for self-seeking behaviour, and it is invoked only when it suits the purposes of western powers. In cases such as Syria during 2011–12 it is conveniently ignored. Others have portrayed the Libyan intervention as a violation of international law, in that it violated the principle of state sovereignty.

However, 'new' wars often pose a wider and more profound threat to civilian populations than did the inter-state wars of old. The civilian/military divide – which had been symbolized by the fact that traditional wars were fought by uniformed, organized bodies of men (national armies, navies and air forces) – has been blurred in a variety of ways. The wide use of **guerrilla** tactics and the emphasis on popular resistance, or **insurgency**, has given modern warfare a diffuse character. As it tends to involve a succession of small-scale engagements, rather than set-piece, major battles, the conventional idea of a battlefield has become almost redundant. War has developed into 'war amongst the people' (Smith, 2006), a tendency that has been deepened by the 'collateral damage' that has sometimes been caused by counter-insurgency operations. The blurring has also occurred because civilian populations have increasingly been the target of military action (through the use of landmines, suicide bombs, vehicle bombs and terrorism generally), its objective being to create economic and social dislocation, and to destroy the enemy's resolve and appetite for war. Modern warfare is therefore often accompanied by a refugee crisis in which thousands, and sometimes millions, of displaced people seek shelter and security, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

The civilian/military divide has been further blurred by the changing nature of armies and security forces. Guerrilla armies, for instance, consist of irregular soldiers or armed bands of volunteers, and insurgency often comes close to assuming the character of a popular uprising. Finally, 'new' wars have often been more barbaric and horrific than old ones, as the rules that have constrained conventional inter-state warfare have commonly been set aside. Practices such as kidnapping, torture, systematic rape and indiscriminate killings that result from landmines, car bombs and suicide attacks have become routine features of modern warfare. This is sometimes explained in terms of the implications of militant identity politics, through which the enemy is defined in terms of their membership of a particular group, rather than in terms of their role or actions. An entire people, race or culture may therefore be defined as 'the enemy', meaning that they are seen as worthless or fundamentally evil, and that military and civilian targets are equally legitimate.

Transnational terrorism

During much of the post-1945 period, terrorism generally had a nationalist orientation. In the 1940s and 1950s, it was associated with Third World anti-colonial struggles in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, later being taken up by national liberation movements such the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and groups such as Black September. Terrorism was also used by disaffected national or ethnic minorities in developed western societies, notably by the IRA in Northern Ireland and on the UK mainland, by ETA (*Euzkadi ta Askatsuna*) in the Basque region of Spain and by the FLQ (*Front de libération du Québec*) in Quebec. Nevertheless, the September 11 terrorist attacks convinced many people that terrorism had been reborn in a new and more dangerous form, leading some to conclude that it had become the principal threat to international peace and security.

The most obvious way in which terrorism has become more significant is that has acquired a transnational, even global, dimension. Although the interna-

● **Guerrilla war**: (Spanish) Literally, 'little war'; an insurgency or 'people's' war, fought by irregular troops using tactics that are suited to the terrain and emphasize mobility and surprise, rather than superior fire power.

● **Insurgency**: An armed uprising, involving irregular soldiers, which aims to overthrow the established regime.

Terrorism

Terrorism, in its broadest sense, is a form of political violence that aims to achieve its objectives by creating a climate of fear, apprehension and uncertainty. The most common forms of terrorist action include assassinations, bombings, hostage seizures and plane hijacks, although 9/11 and the advent of terrorism with a global reach has threatened to redefine the phenomenon. The term is highly pejorative and tends to be used selectively (one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter). Often portrayed as a specficially anti-government activity, some portray the use by governments of terror against their own or other populations as 'state terrorism'.

● **Weapons of mass destruction**: A category of weapons that covers nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, which have a massive and indiscriminate destructive capacity.

tional character of terrorism can be traced back to the advent of airplane hijackings in the late 1960s, carried out by groups such as the PLO, 9/11 and other al-Qaeda, or al-Qaeda-linked, attacks in Madrid, London and elsewhere have taken this process to a new level. Transnational terrorism is generally associated with the advance of globalization, in that it takes advantage of increased cross-border flows of people, goods, money, technology and ideas, and thereby creates the impression that terrorists can strike anywhere, at any time. Such terrorism has also been dubbed 'catastrophic' terrorism or 'hyper-terrorism', highlighting its radical and devastating impact, as well as the greater difficulties experienced in counteracting it.

This applies for at least three reasons. First, an increased emphasis has been placed on terrorist tactics that are particularly difficult to defend against, notably, suicide terrorism. How can protection be provided against attackers who are willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to kill others? This contributes to the idea that, although it may be possible to reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks, the threat can never be eradicated. Second, the potential scope and scale of terrorism has greatly increased as a result of modern technology, and particularly the prospect of **weapons of mass destruction** (WMD) falling into the hands of terrorists. Since 9/11, governments have been trying to plan for the possibility of terrorist attacks using chemical or biological weapons, with the prospect of nuclear terrorism no longer being dismissed as a fanciful idea. Third, it is sometimes argued that modern terrorists not only have easier access to WMD, but also have a greater willingness to use them. This, allegedly is because they may be less constrained by moral and humanitarian principles than previous generations of terrorists. In the case of Islamist terrorism, this is supposedly explained by the radical politico-religious ideology which inspires it, in which western society and its associated values are viewed as evil and intrinsically corrupt, an implacable enemy of Islam.

Upholding international security in an age of transnational terrorism has been a particularly difficult task. Three main counter-terrorism strategies have been employed in the modern period. The first strategy involves the revision and strengthening of arrangements for state security, usually by extending the legal powers of government. States, for example, have asserted control over global financial flows; immigration arrangements have been made more rigorous, especially during high-alert periods; the surveillance and control of domestic populations, but particularly members of 'extremist' groups or terrorist sympathizers, has been significantly tightened; and, in many cases, the power to detain terrorist suspects has been strengthened. However, state security measures have often had an extra-legal or, at best, quasi-legal character. In the early post-9/11 period, the Bush administration in the USA took this approach furthest, notably by establishing the Guantánamo Bay detention centre in Cuba, and by practices such as 'extraordinary rendition'.

The second strategy is the use of force-based or repressive counter-terrorism, which, in recent years, has been associated with the 'war on terror'. Military responses to terrorism have been designed to deny terrorists the support or 'sponsorship' of regimes that had formerly given them succour (such as Sudan and Afghanistan), or to launch direct attacks on terrorist training camps and terrorist leaders. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the US-led 'war on terror', military repression may sometimes be counter-productive, especially when military action

against terrorism is seen to be insensitive to human rights and the interests of civilian populations. The third strategy is the use of political deals to encourage terrorists to abandon violence by drawing them into a process of negotiation and diplomacy. Although this is sometimes seen as an example of appeasement, a moral retreat in the face of intimidation and violence, the fact is that most terrorist campaigns have political endings. In part, this is because leading figures in terrorist movements tend to gravitate towards respectability and constitutional politics once they recognize that terrorist tactics are generally ineffective.

Nuclear proliferation

The 'nuclear age' was born on 6 August 1945, when the USA dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A second bomb was dropped three days later on Nagasaki. The unprecedented destructive potential of **nuclear weapons** explains why the issue of nuclear proliferation has been at the forefront of the international security agenda since World War II. During the Cold War period, sometimes dubbed the 'first nuclear age', nuclear proliferation was primarily 'vertical' (the accumulation of nuclear weapons by established nuclear states) rather than 'horizontal' (the acquisition of nuclear weapons by more states or other actors). The 'nuclear club' contained only the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the USA, the USSR, China, France and the UK), but, during this period, the USA and the USSR built up the capacity to destroy the world many times over. By 2002, the joint US and Russian nuclear capacity amounted to 98 per cent of all nuclear warheads that had been built. This nuclear arms race was fuelled, in particular, by the profound **deterrence** value of nuclear weapons. In view of the devastating potential of nuclear weapons, an attack on a nuclear power is almost unthinkable. A nuclear balance of power therefore developed in which both the USA and the USSR acquired so-called 'second-strike' nuclear capabilities that would enable them to withstand an enemy's attack and still destroy major strategic targets and population centres. By the early 1960s, both superpowers had an invulnerable second-strike capability which ensured that nuclear war would result in **Mutually Assured Destruction** (MAD), sometimes seen as a 'balance of terror'.

However, although the end of the Cold War and the cessation of East–West rivalry produced early, optimistic expectations or declining concerns about nuclear proliferation, the 'second nuclear age', has proved, in certain respects, to be more troubling than the first. For one thing, established nuclear powers continue to use nuclear strategies. Thus, even though the new START Treaty, signed in 2010 by the USA and Russia, agreed to reduce the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers by half, both countries would still possess 1,550 nuclear warheads. The greatest concern has, nevertheless, arisen over further horizontal nuclear proliferation, fuelled by regional rivalries and the fact that, particularly since the break-up of the USSR, nuclear weapons and nuclear technology have become more readily available. India and Pakistan joined the 'nuclear club' in 1998, as did North Korea in 2006. Israel has been an undeclared nuclear power, possibly since 1979, and it is widely believed that Iran is in the process of developing an independent nuclear capacity.

Anxieties over proliferation have intensified because of the nature of the states and other actors that may acquire nuclear capabilities. This particularly

● **Nuclear weapons**: Weapons that use nuclear fission (atomic bombs) or nuclear fusion (hydrogen bombs) to destroy their targets, through the effect of blast, heat and radiation.

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

● **Mutually Assured Destruction**: A condition in which a nuclear attack by either state would only ensure its own destruction, as both possess an invulnerable second-strike capacity.

● **Rogue state**: A state whose foreign policy poses a threat to neighbouring or other states, through its aggressive intent, build-up of weapons, or association with terrorism.

● **Human development**: A standard of human well-being that takes account of people's ability to develop their full potential, and lead fulfilled and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.

applies in the case of so-called '**rogue states**', in which military-based dictatorial government combines with factors such as ethnic and social conflict, and economic underdevelopment, to dictate an aggressive foreign policy, particularly in the context of regional instability. North Korea is widely portrayed as a potential rogue nuclear state, which poses a threat not only to South Korea, but also to Japan and even the USA. The acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran has been seen as a profound threat to international security for a number of reasons. These include the possibility that Israel may launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack against Iran before it acquires nuclear capability; that Iran itself may launch an unprovoked nuclear attack on Israel; and that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons may spark a destabilizing nuclear arms race across the entire Middle East, with increased pressure on states such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey to acquire nuclear weapons. However, others have argued that such concerns are alarmist and that the acquisition of nuclear weapons tends to foster caution, even statesmanship, based on the sense of security and national prestige that they bring, rather than nuclear adventurism. According to Waltz (2012) a nuclear Iran would bring stability to the Middle East, as Israel and Iran would then deter each other, without giving other countries in the region a greater incentive to acquire their own nuclear capability.

Human security

The post-Cold War period has not only seen the emergence of new threats to international and global security, but it has also witnessed the emergence of new thinking about the nature of security, as such. The key shift has been from viewing security as essentially an attribute of a state (as in 'state security' or 'national security') to viewing it as a matter for the individual, as implied by the idea of 'human security'. Human security has recast the concept of security by taking on board the idea of **human development**, which has been used in the UN's Human Development Reports since 1994. This switched attention from economic-based conceptions of poverty (for example, using an income of 'a dollar a day' as a standard of poverty) to conceptions built around human capabilities, such as the ability to acquire knowledge, access resources, achieve gender equality and so forth. Human security thus takes account not only of the extent to which threats posed by armed conflict have changed and, in some senses, intensified (as discussed earlier, in relation to 'new' wars), but also the degree to which modern armed conflict is entangled with issues of poverty and underdevelopment. Economic disruption and widening inequality, which stem, amongst other things, from disparities in the global trading system, are seen to heighten the vulnerability of states to civil war, terrorism and warlord conflict, while, at the same time, armed conflict disrupts economies and trade and leads to other forms of human misery. In addition, human security takes account of non-military sources of insecurity, bringing issues such as the lack of an assured basic income, inadequate access to basic food and environmental degradation within the international security agenda.

A growing concern about human security has also, at times, encouraged the international community to assume a more interventionist stance. This can be seen in a greater willingness to undertake humanitarian interventions since the early 1990s, and in support for the establishment of international tribunals and,

since 2002, the International Criminal Court (ICC). The conviction of Charles Taylor – the former president of Liberia, who was found guilty in 2012 of aiding and abetting murder, rape, enslavement and the use of child soldiers by the Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone – was thus meant to ensure that other heads of government or state would be less likely to act in such ways in the future. The Landmines Treaty (1997) was, similarly, designed to deter the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

However, the concept of human security has also been criticized. Some have argued, for instance, that human security has deepened and widened the concept of security to such an extent that it has become virtually meaningless. This particularly applies as it extends security beyond the conventional idea of 'freedom from fear' to include the much broader notion of 'freedom from want'. Furthermore, the notion may create false expectations about the international community's capacity to banish violence and insecurity. In other cases, however, intervention by the international community intended to promote human security has proved to be highly controversial, not uncommonly provoking charges of 'neocolonialism'. As of 2012, for example, the ICC had arrested only Africans.

SUMMARY

- The central role of the police is to enforce criminal law and maintain civil order. The police force may nevertheless have a political character if social or other biases operate within it, if it is deployed in the event of civil unrest or political disputes, and if there is a police state in which the police force is turned into a private army that serves only the interests of the ruling elite.

- The key purpose of the military is to be an instrument of war that can be directed against other political societies. However, the military may also help to maintain domestic order and stability when civilian mechanisms are unable or unwilling to act, and it may, in particular circumstances, displace civilian government with a form of military rule. Military regimes, nevertheless, tend to be short-lived because they rely on coercive power in the absence of legitimacy.

- Realists advance a power politics model of world affairs in which security is primarily understood in terms of 'national security' and war is kept in check by the balance of power. The liberal belief in interdependence and balance in world affairs inclines them to place their faith in 'collective security', while critical theorists have either emphasized the extent to which state interactions are mediated by beliefs, values and assumptions, or exposed masculinist biases in the conventional realist paradigm.

- A variety of new security challenges have arisen in the post-Cold War era. These include: the shift from traditional, inter-state war to 'new' wars, in which the civilian/military divide is typically blurred; the advent of transnational terrorism which threatens to strike anywhere, at any time, and possibly with devastating effect; and increased horizontal nuclear proliferation, especially linked to fears about nuclear weapons getting into the 'wrong' hands.

- The concept of 'human security' has shifted thinking about security away from the state and towards the individual. By extending the notion of security beyond 'freedom from fear' to include 'freedom from want', it has deepened and widened the notion of security, and thereby, potentially, extended the responsibilities of the international community. Critics, however, argue that this risks making the concept of security virtually meaningless, and creates false expectations about the international community's capacity to banish violence and insecurity.

Questions for discussion

- Why did the USA respond to 9/11 with a 'war on terror' rather than a police action against international murderers?
- Is all policing political?
- If all states rest on coercive power, why do armed forces so rarely intervene directly in politics?
- When, if ever, is it justifiable to use the military as an instrument of domestic policy?
- Which approach to international politics provides the soundest basis for understanding the prospects for international security?
- Are 'new' wars really more barbaric and horrific than traditional wars?
- Is transnational terrorism a greater threat to international security than nuclear proliferation?
- What have been the implications of thinking about security in 'human' terms?

Further reading

Brewer, J., A. Guelke, I. Hume, E. Moxon-Browne and R. Wilford, *The Police, Public Order and the State* (1996). A good comparative introduction to the role of the police in eight states.

Kaldor, M., *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (2007). A wide-ranging and stimulating discussion of human security in the context of the changing nature of economic relations and armed conflict.

Silva, P. (ed.) *The Soldier and the State in South America: Essays in Civil–Military Relations* (2001). A collection of essays that examine the political impact of the military in South America in the past and the present.

Smith, M. E., *International Security: Politics, Policy, Prospects* (2010). A clear and comprehensive account of modern threats to international security and how such threats are managed.

World Order and Global Governance

'We shall have world government whether or not you like it, by conquest or consent.'

Statement by the US Council on Foreign Relations, February 1950

PREVIEW   The issue of world order is central to an understanding of international politics. The shape of world order affects both the level of stability within the global system and the balance within it between conflict and cooperation. However, since the end of the Cold War, the nature of world order has been the subject of significant debate and disagreement. Early proclamations of the establishment of a 'new world order', characterized by peace and international cooperation, were soon replaced by talk of a unipolar world order, with the USA taking centre stage as the world's sole super-power. This 'unipolar moment' may nevertheless have been brief. Not only did the USA's involvement in difficult and protracted counter-insurgency wars following September 11 strengthen the impression of US decline, but emerging powers, notably China, started to exert greater influence on the world stage. The notion that unipolarity is giving way to multipolarity has, moreover, been supported by evidence of the increasing importance of international organizations, a trend that is sometimes interpreted as emerging 'global governance'. Of particular importance in this respect have been the major institutions of global economic governance – the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization – and the centrepiece of the global governance system, the United Nations. Although some argue that the trend in favour of global governance reflects the fact that, in an interdependent world, states must act together to address the challenges that confront them, others dismiss global governance as a myth and raise serious questions about the effectiveness of international organizations.

KEY ISSUES

- What were the implications for world order of the end of the Cold War?
- Is the USA a hegemonic power, or a power in decline?
- How is rising multipolarity likely to affect world politics?
- Is global governance a myth or a reality?
- How effective is the system of global economic governance?
- Is the UN an indispensable component of the modern international system?

TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY WORLD ORDER

The 'new world order' and its fate

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

● **Bipolarity**: The tendency of the international system to revolve around two poles (major power blocs).

Although there is considerable debate about the nature of twenty-first-century **world order**, there is considerable agreement about the shape of world order during the Cold War period. Its most prominent feature was that two major power blocs confronted one another, a US-dominated West and a Soviet-dominated East. In the aftermath of the defeat of Germany, Japan and Italy in World War II, and with the UK weakened by war and suffering from long-term relative economic decline, the USA and the USSR emerged as 'superpowers'. Cold War **bipolarity** was consolidated by the formation of rival military alliances – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 and the Warsaw Pact in 1955, and was reflected in the division of Europe – symbolized by the Berlin Wall, erected in 1961. Although the Cold War remained 'cold', in the sense that the adversaries avoided direct confrontation, the period was characterized by a by protracted – and, at times, extreme – tension, reflected both in covert operations and proxy warfare and, most dramatically, in the build up by both parties of massive armouries of nuclear weapons, creating a 'balance of terror'.

However, when the Cold War came to an end, the end was dramatic, swift and quite unexpected. Over seventy years of communism collapsed in just two years, 1989–91, and where communist regimes survived, as in China, a process of radical change took place. During the momentous year of 1989, communist rule in Eastern Europe was rolled back to the borders of the USSR by a series of popular revolutions; in 1990, representatives of NATO and the Warsaw Pact met in Paris formally to end the Cold War; and, in 1991, the USSR itself collapsed. While most explained these developments in terms of the structural weaknesses of Soviet-style communism, emphasis has also been placed on the disruption caused in the USSR by the accelerating programme of economic and political reform, initiated by President Gorbachev from 1985 onwards, and on President Reagan's so-called 'second Cold War' in the 1980s, when increased military spending put massive pressure on the fragile and inefficient Soviet economy.

The end of the Cold War produced a burst of enthusiasm for the ideas of liberal internationalism (see p. 117). The idea that the post-Cold War era would be characterized by a 'new world order' had first been mooted by Gorbachev in a speech to the UN General Assembly in 1988. In addition to proposing a strengthening of the United Nations and a reinvigoration of its peacekeeping role, Gorbachev called for the 'de-ideologization' of relations amongst states to achieve greater cooperation and reduce the use of force in international affairs. In his 'Towards a New World Order' speech to Congress in September 1990, President Bush Sr outlined his version for the post-Cold War world – its features included US leadership to ensure the international rule of law, a partnership between the USA and the USSR including the integration of the latter into the world economic bodies, and a check on the use of force by the promotion of collective security. This post-Cold War world order appeared to pass its first series of major tests with ease. Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in August 1990 led to the construction of a broad western and Islamic alliance that, through the Gulf

Focus on . . .
Humanitarian intervention

Humanitarian intervention is military intervention that is carried out in pursuit of humanitarian rather than strategic objectives. The growth in humanitarian intervention reflects the wider acceptance of universalist doctrines such as human rights (see p. 342) and the fact that democratic support for warfare can increasingly be mobilized only on the basis of a moral cause. Supporters of humanitarian intervention see it as evidence of the inability of states in a global age to restrict their moral responsibilities to their own people.

Humanitarian intervention has been seen as justified in the following circumstances:

- In the case of gross abuses of human rights (such as the expulsion or extermination of large numbers of defenceless people).
- When such abuses threaten the security of neighbouring states.

- When the absence of democracy weakens the principle of national self-determination.
- When diplomatic means have been exhausted and the human cost of intervention is less than that of non-intervention.

Critics of humanitarian intervention, however, make the following points:

- Any violation of state sovereignty weakens the established rules of world order.
- Aggression has almost always been legitimized by humanitarian justification (examples include Mussolini and Hitler).
- Military intervention invariably leaves matters worse, not better, or draws intervening powers into long-term involvement.

War of 1991, brought about the expulsion of Iraqi forces. The advent of a new moral consciousness in foreign affairs was also evident in the wider use of 'humanitarian intervention', notably in NATO's campaign of aerial bombing that removed Serb forces from Kosovo in 1999.

However, the wave of optimism and idealism that greeted the post-Cold War world did not last long. Many were quick to dismiss the 'new world order' as little more than a convenient catchphrase, and one that was certainly not grounded in a developed strategic vision. Much of how this 'new world' would work remained vague. Moreover, alternative interpretations of the post-Cold War world order were not slow in emerging. Some heralded the rise not of a new world order but, rather, a new world *dis*order. The reason for this was the release of stresses and tensions that the Cold War had helped to keep under control. By maintaining the image of an external threat (be it international communism or capitalist encirclement), the Cold War had served to promote internal cohesion and given societies a sense of purpose and identity. However, the collapse of the external threat helped to unleash centrifugal pressures, which usually took the form of ethnic, racial and regional conflict. This occurred in many parts of the world, but was particularly evident in Eastern Europe, as demonstrated in the prolonged bloodshed in the 1990s amongst Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. Far from establishing a world order based on respect for justice and human rights, (see p. 342), the international community stood by in former Yugoslavia and, until the Kosovo crisis, allowed Serbia to wage a war of expansion and perpetrate **genocidal** policies reminiscent of those used in World War II.

● **Genocide**: An attempt to eradicate a people – identified by their nationality, race, ethnicity or religion – through acts including mass murder, forced resettlement, and forced sterilization.

Nevertheless, the greatest weakness of the idea of an emerging liberal world order was a failure to take account of the shifting role and status of the USA. The main significance of the end of the Cold War was the collapse of the USSR as a meaningful challenger to the USA, leaving the USA as the world's sole super-power, a **hyperpower** or 'global hegemon'. Indeed, talk of a 'new world order' may have been nothing more than an ideological tool to legitimize the global exercise of power by the USA. In other words, the 'liberal moment' in world affairs turned out to be the '**unipolar** moment'. However, the implications of a unipolar world order only emerged over a period of time.

The 'war on terror' and beyond

September 11, 2001 is often seen as a defining moment in world history, the point at which the true nature of the post-Cold War era was revealed and the beginning of the period of unprecedented global strife and instability. In that sense, the advent of the 'war on terror' (see p. 401), rather than the collapse of communism, marked the birth of the 'real' twenty-first century. On the other hand, it is possible to exaggerate the impact of 9/11. As Robert Kagan (2004) put it, 'America did not change on September 11. It only became more itself'.

A variety of theories have been advanced to explain the advent of global, or transnational, terrorism (see p. 416) and the nature of the 'war on terror'. The most influential and widely discussed of these is Samuel Huntington's (see p. 425) theory of a **clash of civilizations**. Huntington argued that the major civilizations (western, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, Latin American and Orthodox Christian) would become, in the absence of the East–West ideological conflict and in reaction to globalization (see p. 142), the principal actors in world affairs. Such an analysis contrasted sharply with the expectation of 'end of history' theorists such as Francis Fukuyama (see p. 271) that politico-cultural divisions would narrow and ultimately evaporate as all parts of the world converged around support for liberal-democratic values and systems. Huntington particularly warned about the likelihood of conflict between China (wedded to distinctive Sinic cultural values, despite rapid economic growth) and the West, and between the West and Islam.

Huntington's thesis has nevertheless been widely criticized. The most common criticism is that it fails to recognize the extent to which globalization and other forces have already blurred cultural differences in many parts of the world. For instance, the notion of an 'Islamic civilization' or a 'western civilization' fails to take account of either the extent of political, cultural and social division within each 'civilization', or the extent to which Islam and the West have influenced one another, and continue to do so. Moreover, the link between cultural difference and political antagonism is, at best, questionable, as most wars take place between states from the same, rather than different, civilizations. Finally, conflict between civilizations may be more an expression of perceived economic and political injustice than of cultural rivalry. The rise of political Islam, for instance, may be better explained by tensions and crises (in the Middle East in general and the Arab world in particular) linked to the inheritance of colonialism, the unresolved Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the survival of unpopular but often oil-rich autocratic regimes, and urban poverty and unemployment, than by cultural incompatibility between western and Islamic value systems.

● **Hyperpower**: A power that commands much greater power than any of its potential rivals, and so dominates world politics.

● **Unipolarity:** An international system in which there is one pre-eminent state; the existence of a single great power.

● **Clash of civilizations thesis**: The theory that twenty-first century conflict would not primarily be ideological or economic, but rather cultural: it would be conflict between nations from 'different civilizations'.

Samuel P. Huntington (1927–2008)

US academic and political commentator. Huntington made influential contributions in three fields: military politics, strategy and civil–military relations; US and comparative politics; and political development and the politics of less-developed societies. In *The Third Wave* (1991) he coined the notion of 'waves of democratization' and linked the process of democratization after 1975 to two earlier waves, in 1828–1926 and 1943–62. His most widely discussed work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of World Order* (1996), advanced the controversial thesis that, in the twenty-first century, conflict between the world's major civilizations would lead to warfare and international disorder.

Alternative explanations highlight the significance of changes in world order. According to Robert Cooper (2004), the East–West confrontation of the old world order has given way to a world divided into three parts:

- In the 'premodern' world, by which Cooper meant those post-colonial states that have benefited neither from political stability nor from economic development, chaos reigns. Examples of such states include Somalia, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sometimes seen as 'weak states', 'failed states' (see p. 76) or rogue states.
- In the 'modern' world, states continue to be effective and are fiercely protective of their own sovereignty (see p. 58). Such a world operates on the basis of a balance of power, as the interests and ambitions of one state are only constrained by the capabilities of other states.
- In the 'postmodern' world, which Cooper associated primarily with Europe and the European Union (EU), states have evolved 'beyond' power politics, and have abandoned war as a means of maintaining security in favour of multilateral agreements, international law and global governance (see p. 432).

This view of the emerging world order, however, highlights a range of challenges and new security threats. Not the least of these arises from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which, in the premodern world, can easily get into the hands of 'rogue' states or non-state actors (such as terrorist organizations). Particular concern has been expressed about nuclear proliferation, the membership of the so-called 'nuclear club' having expanded from five (the USA, Russia, China, France and the UK) to nine, with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea, and with other countries, such as Iran, thought to be close to developing them (as discussed in Chapter 18). Although Europe may be a 'zone of safety', outside Europe there is a 'zone of danger and chaos' in which the instabilities of the premodern world threaten to spill over into the modern – and even the postmodern – worlds. Cooper (2004) acknowledged that a kind of 'new' imperialism (see p. 427) may be the only way of bringing order to chaos. Such an analysis overlaps at significant points with the neoconservative (or 'neo-con') ideas that had a particular

● **Bush doctrine**: The doctrine, outlined by President George W. Bush in 2002, that the USA had a right to treat states that harbour, or give aid to, terrorists as terrorists themselves.

impact on the Bush administration in the USA in the years following 9/11, and which were reflected in what came to be known as the **Bush doctrine**. Neoconservatives thus sought to preserve and reinforce what was seen as the USA's 'benevolent global hegemony' (Kristol and Kagan, 2004). Its key features included a build-up of the USA's military strength to achieve a position of 'strength beyond challenge' and an assertive, interventionist foreign policy that set out to promote liberal-democratic governance through a process of 'regime change', achieved by military means if necessary.

After 9/11, the USA's approach to the 'war on terror' quickly started to take shape. Its opening act was the US-led military assault on Afghanistan that toppled the Taliban regime within a matter of weeks. The 'war on terror', however, moved in a more radical and controversial direction as it became clear that 'regime change' in Saddam Hussein's Iraq was the Bush administration's next objective. This led to the 2003 Iraq War, fought by the USA and a 'coalition of the willing'. What made the Iraq War controversial was that, whereas the attack on Afghanistan had been widely seen as a form of self-defence (Afghanistan had provided al-Qaeda with the closest thing to a home base), the war against Iraq was justified using the doctrine of pre-emptive attack. Although the Bush administration alleged (with little substantiation) that there were links between the Saddam regime and al-Qaeda, and asserted (contrary to subsequent evidence) that Iraq was in possession of WMD, the central justification was that a 'rogue' regime such as Saddam's that actively sought, and may have acquired, WMD could not be tolerated in the twenty-first century.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, despite early dramatic successes (the overthrow of the Taliban and Saddam regimes), the USA and its allies found themselves fighting wars that proved to be more problematic and protracted than anticipated. Both developed into complex counter-insurgency wars against enemies whose use of the tactics of guerrilla warfare, terrorism and suicide bombings highlighted the limitations of preponderant US military power. As in the Vietnam War (1959–76), guerrilla warfare tactics proved to be highly effective against a much more powerful and better resourced enemy, but the use of military means had also weakened the USA's 'soft' power (see p. 428) and damaged its reputation across the Middle East. In that sense, the USA was in danger of creating the very 'arc of extremism' that it had set out to destroy. In addition, the strategy of imposing 'democracy from above' had proved to be naïve at best – failing, in particular, to recognize the difficulties involved in the process of 'state-building' (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Significant shifts occurred in the 'war on terror' once President Obama was inaugurated in January 2009, building on a drift towards multilateralism (see p. 435) during Bush's second term in office, 2005–09. In line with the advice of soft-power theorists for the USA to 'learn to cooperate, and to listen' (Nye, 2004), Obama altered the tone of the USA's engagement with world affairs generally, and with the Muslim world in particular. In a keynote speech in Cairo in June 2009, he called for a 'new beginning' between the USA and Muslims around the world, acknowledging that 'no system of government can and should be imposed upon one nation by another'. However, even though the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' was quickly toned down and soon abandoned, and the strategic approach to it was revised, military engagement continued to play an important role under Obama. This was reflected in a significant shift of

emphasis from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the form of what became known as the 'Af-Pak' policy. Thanks to the success of the 'surge' in US troops, which started in 2007, in reducing levels of civil strife and civilian deaths in Iraq, responsibility for maintaining security in Iraqi towns and cities was passed from US and allied troops to Iraqi forces in 2009, and the USA's combat mission in Iraq ended in August 2010. Under Obama's redrawn battle strategy for Afghanistan, a similar 'surge' was initiated in early 2010, in an attempt to refocus and re-energize NATO's deeply problematic mission there. At the same time, July 2011 was set as the date that US forces in Afghanistan would start to withdraw, with a commitment that by the end of 2014 the USA's 'combat' mission will have ceased.

From unipolarity to multipolarity?

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq raised major questions about the nature and extent of the USA's global leadership. In sharp contrast to the image of the USA as the 'indispensable nation', a benevolent **hegemon** whose widening influence brought peace and prosperity, radical theorists such as Noam Chomsky (see p. 181) portrayed the USA as a 'rogue superpower', the principal source of terrorism and violence across the globe. Whether its hegemony (see p. 174) was benevolent or malign, the difficulty the USA experienced in achieving its military and political goals through the 'war on terror' convinced many that its global leadership was faltering, a conclusion supported by the 2007–09 global financial crisis (as discussed in Chapter 6). These developments, indeed, have been seen as part of a wider process; namely, a significant redistribution of global power, with unipolarity giving way to **multipolarity**. Rising multipolarity has been associated with three main trends:

- the decline of the USA
- the rise of China and other 'emerging powers'
- the changing nature of power and power relations.

Decline of the USA?

Debates about the decline of the USA's global hegemony are nothing new. They date back to the late 1950s and the launch by the USSR of the Sputnik satellite. During the 1970s and 1980s, it became fashionable to proclaim that the USA had been eclipsed by resurgent Japan and Germany, the USA succumbing to a tendency, common amongst earlier great powers, to **imperial over-reach** (Kennedy, 1989). However, the issue has resurfaced with renewed force in the early twenty-first century. Although judgements about a state's ranking within a hierarchy are bedevilled by the complex and multifaceted nature of global power (see p. 428), the idea of US decline has been linked to a number of developments. The USA's military dominance over the rest of the world is, undeniably, huge. By 2007, the USA accounted for 46 per cent of the world's military spending, and had a nine-fold lead over China, the second largest military spender. The USA has some 700 military bases in over 100 countries, as well as an unchallengeable lead in hi-tech weaponry and airpower. Yet, preponderant military power may no longer be a secure basis for hegemony. There is a huge gap between the

● **Hegemon**: A leading or paramount power.

● **Multipolarity**: An international system in which there are three or more power centres, creating a bias in favour of fluidity and, perhaps, instability.

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

Focus on . . .
Dimensions of global power

There is no agreement about the precise factors that allow states and other key actors to exert influence on the world stage. Nevertheless, global power can be seen to have a number of dimensions:

- **Military power**: For many commentators, power in international politics boils down to military capacity. Realist theorists, for example, have traditionally favoured a 'basic force' model of power, on the grounds that military capacity enables a country both to protect its territory and people from external aggression, and to pursue its interests abroad through conquest and expansion. Key factors are therefore the size of the armed forces; their effectiveness in terms of morale, training, discipline and leadership; and, crucially, their access to advanced weaponry and equipment. Nevertheless, military capabilities may not translate into genuine political efficacy, as the 'unusability' of nuclear weapons in most circumstances demonstrates.

- **Economic power**: The 'weight' of states in international affairs is closely linked to their wealth and economic resources. This applies, in part, because economic development underpins military capacity, as wealth enables states to develop large armies, acquire modern weapons, and wage costly or sustained wars. Modern technology and a vast industrial base also gives states political leverage in relation to trading partners, especially if their national currency is so strong and stable that it is used as a means of international exchange. Liberals tend to argue that, in an age of globalization, trade

had displaced war as the chief currency of international politics.

- **'Soft' power**: Thinking about global power has conventionally focused on 'hard' power – the ability to affect the behaviour of others through the use of inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks); in effect, a combination of economic and military power. 'Soft' power is 'co-optive power'; it rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others by attraction, rather than coercion (Nye, 2004). Whereas hard power draws on resources such as force, sanctions, payments and bribes, soft power operates largely through culture, political ideals and foreign policies (especially policies imbued with moral authority). However, soft power strategies are seldom effective on their own – hard and soft power typically reinforcing one another through what has been called 'smart power' (Nye, 2008).

- **Structural power**: Structural power is the power to decide 'how things are done', reflected in the ability to shape the frameworks within which states relate to one another, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises (Strange, 1996). Of particular significance, in this respect, is the influence states exert through their participation within regimes and international organizations, allowing them to have a wider, if less tangible, impact on matters ranging from finance and trade to security and development. Nevertheless, structural power usually operates alongside 'relational' power (the direct influence one actor has on another actor), providing alternative ways of explaining how outcomes in international politics are determined.

● **Asymmetrical war**: War fought between opponents with clearly unequal levels of military, economic and technological power, in which warfare strategies tend to be adapted to the needs of the weak.

destructive capacity of the US military machine and what it can achieve politically. The forced withdrawals of the USA from Lebanon in 1984 and Somalia in 1993, and the difficulty of winning **asymmetrical wars** in Iraq and Afghanistan, demonstrate how the use of terrorist, guerrilla and insurrectionary tactics can thwart even the most advanced power.

A major component of the debate about US power is the focus on its relative economic decline. Although the USA remains the world's largest economy, its

competitors, notably China and India, have been growing much more quickly in recent decades, with the Chinese economy being predicted to outstrip the US economy, perhaps by 2020. The 2007–09 global financial crisis may have further weakened the USA, exposing the flaws of the US economic model and bringing the dollar's position as the world's leading currency into question. On the other hand, the USA continues to account for about 40 per cent of world spending on research and development, giving it an almost unassailable technological lead over other countries and ensuring high productivity levels. China is generations away from rivalling the USA in the technologically advanced sectors of the economy. Moreover, just as the British Empire remained a global hegemon until the mid-twentieth century, despite being overtaken in economic terms by the USA and Germany in the late nineteenth century, the USA may continue to retain global leadership in a world in which it is no longer the economic number one.

US power, nevertheless, may have declined more in terms of 'soft' power than in terms of 'hard' power. This has happened in a number of ways. The USA's reputation has been damaged by its association with corporate power and by widening global inequality, with resentment developing against what has been seen as 'globalization-as-Americanization'. As discussed above, serious damage has also been done to the USA's moral authority by the 'war on terror' generally and the Iraq War in particular, made worse by the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and in the Guantánamo detention camp. Such developments are nevertheless counterbalanced by the USA's continued and unrivalled structural power. The USA exercises disproportional influence over the institutions of global economic governance (see p. 436) and over NATO. Despite the growing influence of the developing world and of emerging economies, no country is close to challenging the USA's influence over global economic decision-making. Indeed, although – as demonstrated by the 2011 intervention in Libya (see p. 414) – the USA's global leadership is no longer so consistent or forthright, US involvement in matters related to intervention and economic, military or political affairs remains indispensable. Without the USA, nothing happens.

Rise of China and 'the rest'

Of all the powers that may rival, or even eclipse, the USA, the most significant is undoubtedly China. Indeed, many predict that the twenty-first century will become the 'Chinese century', just as the twentieth century had been the 'American century'. The basis for China's great power status is its rapid economic progress since the introduction of market reforms in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping (1904–97), the most dramatic phase of which began only in the 1990s. Annual growth rates of between 8 and 10 per cent for almost thirty years (about twice the levels achieved by the USA and other western states) meant that China became the world's largest exporter in 2009, and, in 2010, it overtook Japan to become the world's second largest economy. With the world's largest population (1.3 billion in 2007), China has a seemingly inexhaustible supply of cheap labour, making it, increasingly, the manufacturing heart of the global economy. China's emerging global role is evident in the influence it now exerts within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G20 over issues such as **climate change** in its burgeoning resource links with Africa, Australia and parts of the Middle East and Latin America. An often neglected aspect of China's growing

● **Climate change**: A shift in long-term or prevalent weather conditions; the term is almost always used to refer to the phenomenon of 'global warming'.

influence is the extraordinary rise of its 'soft' power. This reflects both the significance of Confucianism (see p. 278) in providing a cultural basis for cooperation in Asia, and the attraction of its anti-imperialist heritage in Africa and across much of the global South.

Nevertheless, the rise of China is often seen as part of a larger shift in the balance of global power from West to East, and specifically to Asia, and maybe from the USA to the **BRICs countries**, sometimes dubbed 'the rest'. Initial predictions of the growing economic might of the BRICs countries suggested that they would exceed the combined strength of the industrialized G7 countries by the middle of the twenty-first century, although this has been repeatedly revised and could occur as early as 2021. An alternative scenario is that the twenty-first century will not so much be the 'Chinese century' as the 'Asian century', with India, Japan and South Korea also being key actors. The transformation of India into an emerging power has been based on economic growth rates only marginally less impressive than China's. It is estimated that, if recent trends persist, by 2020 China and India will jointly account for half of the world's GDP.

However, the continued forward march of a Chinese-led Asia, or the BRICs countries, cannot be taken for granted. In addition to showing signs of an economic slowdown in 2011 and 2012, the Chinese economy remains heavily dependent on supplies of cheap labour, and a transition to a more highly-technologized economy based on advanced skills and production techniques has yet to be achieved. The most serious challenge facing China, however, may be how it reconciles tensions between its political and economic structures. While the Chinese political system remains firmly Stalinist, based on single-party rule by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), its economic system is increasingly market-orientated and firmly embedded in the global capitalist system. Although authoritarianism (p. 277) may have advantages in terms of managing large-scale economic change and, for instance, pushing through audacious infrastructure programmes, it may be unable to cope with the pluralizing and liberalizing pressures generated by a market capitalist system.

Moreover, neither China nor any of the other BRICs countries shows a capacity for, or willingness to demonstrate, political or diplomatic leadership by openly challenging the USA. This is both because they recognize that US hegemony has a variety of advantages (not least that the USA contributes disproportionately to maintaining the international frameworks through which they increasingly exert influence) and because their desire for economic development takes precedence over geopolitical leadership. Finally, the capacity of the BRICS countries to act as a single entity is severely restricted by political, ideological and economic differences among its members. Indeed, the principal significance of the BRICS countries may be less that they reflect the common interests of 'the rest' and more that they represent a device through which China can bolster its position in relation to the USA, without risking a direct confrontation that may endanger its 'peaceful rise' (see p. 431).

● **The BRICs countries**: A collective term for the four large, fast-growing economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Changing nature of power and power relations

Multipolar trends are not evident only in the decline of old powers and the growth of new powers, but also in the wider diffusion of power beyond the control of any state. This has been evident in globalization's tendency to

Debating . . .
Will China's rise continue to be peaceful?

China's emergence is customarily referred to by Chinese authorities as a its 'peaceful rise'. This confounds the conventional expectation that emerging powers become great powers largely by building up military power and through the use of war. In this view, major shifts in world order are seldom accomplished peacefully, suggesting that war, in particular between 'rising' China and the 'declining' USA, is likely, if not inevitable. Is China a rising power of a different kind? Has military power become redundant in world affairs?

YES	NO

YES

Implications of interdependence. The key reason why China's rise has been, and will continue to be, peaceful is that it is taking place within an international system shaped by globalization. Globalization reduces the incidence of war in two main ways. First, rising states such as China no longer need to make economic gains by conquest because globalization offers a cheaper and easier route to national prosperity, in the form of trade. Second, by significantly increasing levels of economic interdependence, globalization makes a Chinese recourse to war almost unthinkable. This is because of the economic costs that war would involve – destroyed trade partnerships, lost external investment, and so on.

'Soft' balancing. Neorealist theorists argue that, confronted by a rising or major power, other states will tend to 'balance' (oppose or challenge that power for fear of leaving itself exposed), rather than 'bandwagon' (side with that power; that is, 'jump on the bandwagon'). However, China's inclination to 'balance' against the USA will be confined to the adoption of 'soft' (non-military) balancing strategies, because the latter's huge military dominance is unlikely to be abandoned in the near future. Similarly, the likelihood that the USA will adopt 'hard' (military) balancing strategies against China has greatly reduced due to the difficulties it experienced in waging the 'war on terror'.

Sino–US bipolar stability. As the twenty-first century progresses, world order may be reshaped on a bipolar, rather than multipolar, basis. The military, economic and structural strengths of the USA are not going to fade soon, and China, already an economic superpower, is clearly not merely one of 'the rest'. Sino–US relations may, as a result, come to replicate US–USSR relations during the 'long peace' of the Cold War period. In other words, bipolarity will, once again, prove to be the surest way of preventing rivalry and hostility spilling over into aggression, as it provides the most favourable conditions for a stable balance of power.

NO

Multipolar instabilities. China's rise is part of a wider restructuring of world order, in which global power is being distributed more widely. Neorealists argue that such multipolarity creates conditions that are inherently prone to conflict and instability, making it increasingly unlikely that China will maintain its 'peaceful rise'. As multipolarity favours fluidity and uncertainty, shifting alliances and power imbalances, it creates opportunities (just as in the run-up to World War I and World War II) for ambitious states to make a bid for power through conquest and expansion. As states seek to maximize power, and not merely security, such circumstances make great powers prone to indiscipline and risk-taking (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Cultural and ideological rivalry. Sino–US bipolarity may pose a greater threat to global peace than did Cold War bipolarity. Whereas antagonism between the USA and the USSR was primarily ideological in character, in the case of 'liberal-democratic' USA and 'Confucian' China ideological differences are rooted in deeper cultural divisions. These may provide the basis for growing enmity and misunderstanding, in line with the 'clash of civilizations' thesis. The transfer of hegemony from the British Empire in the nineteenth century to the USA in the twentieth century may, thus, have remained peaceful only because of cultural similarities that allowed the UK to view the 'rising' USA as essentially unthreatening.

Flashpoints. There are various flashpoints that have the potential to turn tension and hostility into aggression. Chief amongst these is Taiwan, where US support for an independent and 'pro-western' Taiwan clashes with China's quest to incorporate Taiwan into 'greater China' (Carpenter, 2006). Other issues that may inflame Sino–US relations include Tibet, where Beijing's policy of aggressive 'Sinofication' conflicts with Washington's unofficial support for Tibetan independence; human rights generally, but especially China's treatment of 'pro-democracy' dissidents; and the future of disputed islands in the East and South China Seas.

strengthen the role of non-state actors. Transnational corporations (TNCs) (see p. 149), for example, increasingly dominate the global economy, accounting for about 50 per cent of world manufacturing production and over 70 per cent of world trade. Moreover, TNCs are able to elude political control because of the ease with which they can locate investment and production. Similarly, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (see p. 248) have proliferated since the 1980s, coming to exercise powerful influence within **international organizations** such as the European Union and the United Nations.

As well as power being reapportioned amongst the states of the world, and between states and non-state actors of various kinds, there are reasons for thinking that the nature of power is changing in ways that make its concentration in a small number of hands increasingly difficult to sustain. This has happened in two main ways. First, due to technology, and in a world of global communications, and rising literacy rates and educational standards, 'soft' power has become as important as 'hard' power in influencing political outcomes. Military power, the traditional currency of world politics, has certainly not become irrelevant, but its use is greatly undermined when it is not matched by 'hearts and minds' strategies. For instance, the use of 'shock and awe' tactics by the US military in Iraq, and other demonstrations of US coercive power, have proved to be counter-productive, in the sense that they damaged the USA's reputation and its moral authority, particularly across the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Second, new technology has, in a number of ways, altered power balances both within and between societies, often empowering the traditionally powerless. For instance, al-Qaeda influence on world politics after 9/11 was out of all proportion to its organizational and economic strength, because modern technology, in the form of bombs and airplanes, had given its terrorist activities a global reach. Advances in communication technology, particularly the use of mobile phones and the internet, have also improved the tactical effectiveness of loosely organized groups, ranging from terrorist bands to protest groups and social movements. Finally, public opinion around the world, and thus the behaviour of governments, is affected by the near-ubiquitous access to television and the wider use of satellite technology. This ensures, for example, that pictures of devastation and human suffering – whether caused by warfare, famine or natural disasters – are shared across the globe almost instantaneously. (The political influence of new forms of information and communication technology is examined in greater detail in Chapter 8.)

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Rise of global governance

The issue of world order tends to focus on an image of international politics in which states are assumed to be the primary actors, world affairs largely being determined by the (sometimes shifting) distribution of power amongst states. However, this only gives us partial insight into the workings of the modern international system. A further major component is the framework of global governance, which, to a greater or lesser extent, helps to shape interactions amongst states. But what is global governance? Why has it developed, and how significant

Interdependence

Interdependence' refers to a relationship between two parties in which each is affected by decisions that are taken by the other. Interdependence implies mutual influence, even a rough equality between the parties in question, usually arising from a sense of mutual vulnerability. Keohane and Nye (1977) advanced the idea of 'complex interdependence' as an alternative to the realist model of international politics. This highlights the extent to which (1) states have ceased to be autonomous international actors; (2) economic and other issues have become more prominent in world affairs; and (3) military force has become a less reliable and less important policy option.

● **Absolute gains**: Benefits that accrue to states from a policy or action regardless of their impact on other states.

● **Relative gains**: Benefits that improve a state's position relative to other states, promoting their position within a hierarchy.

is it? Global governance has been described as a 'collection of governance-related activities, rules and mechanisms, formal and informal, existing at a variety of levels in the world today' (Karns and Mingst, 2009). Global governance hovers somewhere between the traditional idea of international anarchy (in which states interact in the absence of a supranational authority) and the fanciful idea of world government (in which all of humankind is united under one common political authority). As such, global governance is a process of interactive decision-making that allows still-sovereign states to engage in sustained cooperation and, at times, undertake collective action. The growth in the number and importance of international organizations has certainly been a key factor in the emergence of a system of global governance, to such an extent that global governance is sometimes, in effect, used as a collective term describing the international organizations currently in existence. However, global governance and an international organization are not synonymous, as the former has mixed actor involvement, featuring (in addition to states and international organizations) NGOs, TNCs and other institutions of global civil society (see p. 106).

The rise of international organizations nevertheless provides an indication of the growing significance of global governance. The end of World War II marked the emergence of a global governance system with the creation of the United Nations and the institutions of the Bretton Woods system (examined in the next section). By 1949, the number of international organizations stood at 123, compared with 49 in 1914. By the mid-1980s, the total number of such bodies had reached 378, with the average membership per organization standing at over 40 (compared with 18.6 in 1945, and 22.7 in 1964). Although their number subsequently declined, largely due to the dissolution of the Soviet bloc organizations at the end of the Cold War, this masks a substantial growth in international agencies and other institutions, as the number of bodies spawned by international organizations themselves has continued to grow. Liberals such as Robert Keohane (see p. 434) tend to explain such developments in terms of growing interdependencies amongst states, associated with concerns about power politics, economic crises, human rights violations, development disparities and environmental degradation. International organizations are therefore a reflection of the extent of interdependence in the global system, an acknowledgement by states that, increasingly, they can achieve more by working together than by working separately. In this view, states will cooperate when each calculates that it will make '**absolute**' **gains** as a result.

Realists, in contrast, tend to explain the growth of global governance in terms of the emerging hegemonic role of the USA, which saw the pursuit of US national interests and the promotion of international cooperation as mutually sustaining goals. International organization is linked to hegemony because only a hegemonic state possesses the power to tolerate the '**relative**' **gains** that other states may make, so long as they make 'absolute' gains themselves. From this perspective, a hegemon needs not only to be able to enforce the 'rules of the game', but also to be committed to a system that brings benefit to the mass of states. Critical theorists, for their part, tend to view international organizations as devices constructed to serve the dominant interests of the global system – the hegemonic power; western industrialized states generally; TNCs and social, ethnic and gender elites across the global North. In this view, international organizations reflect and, to some degree, exist to consolidate global inequalities and asymmetries.

Robert Keohane (born 1941)

US international relations theorist. With his long-time collaborator, Joseph S. Nye, Keohane questioned some of the core assumptions of realist analysis in *Transnational Relations and Wold Politics* (1971), highlighting the increasing importance of non-state actors and of economic issues in world affairs. In *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (1977), Keohane and Nye set out the theory of 'complex interdependence' as an alternative to realism. Since the publication of *After Hegemony* (1984), however, Keohane has attempted to synthesize structural realism and complex interdependence, creating a hybrid dubbed either 'modified structural realism' or 'neoliberal institutionalism'.

The extent to which the modern world conforms to the features of a global governance system is nevertheless a source of debate. Liberal theorists, in particular, not only argue that global governance is a meaningful development, providing an alternative to the international anarchy of old, but also claim that the trend in its favour is unmistakable and, perhaps, irresistible. This is based on two factors. First, thanks to globalization and the development of a generally more interconnected world, states are increasingly confronted by challenges that are beyond their capacity to deal with when acting alone. In short, global problems require global solutions. Second, the growth of international organizations fosters further cooperation by strengthening trust (see p. 87) amongst states, accustoming them to rule-governed behaviour. This suggests that the trend in favour of global governance generates an internal momentum, making it difficult to reverse. However, the extent to which the world as a whole has become orderly and norm-governed should not be exaggerated. It is more accurate to refer to an *emerging* global governance process, rather than an *established* global governance system. Moreover, the norms and rules of global governance are better established in some parts of the world than in others. For instance, Europe has been portrayed as the heart of the so-called 'postmodern' world, by virtue of the EU's success in 'pooling' sovereignty and banishing balance-of-power politics (Cooper, 2004). Europe, nevertheless, is an exception and many parts of the world are still little-affected by international norms and rules, as demonstrated by the existence of 'rogue' states and **pariah states**.

Global economic governance

Evolution of the Bretton Woods system

The trend towards global governance has been particularly evident in the sphere of economic policy-making. This is because economics is the most obvious area of interdependence amongst states, and the area where the failure of international cooperation can cause the clearest damage. Since 1945, a system of global economic governance has emerged through a thickening web of multilateral agreements, formal institutions and informal networks, with the most important institutions being those established by the Bretton Woods agreement, negotiated

● **Pariah state**: A state whose behaviour places it outside the international community, leading to diplomatic isolation and widespread condemnation.

● **Exchange rate**: The price at which one currency is exchanged for another.

● **Washington consensus**: A policy package that sought to reduce intervention in the market through measures of deregulation, privatization and fiscal constraint.

● **Structural adjustment programmes**: Devices used to bring about market-orientated 'structural adjustment' of economies through 'conditionalities' attached to loans made by the IMF and the World Bank.

just before the end of World War II. Known, in due course, collectively, as the 'Bretton Woods system', these bodies were:

● The International Monetary Fund (IMF)
● The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), better known as the World Bank
● The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was replaced in 1995 by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The Bretton Woods agreement is a clear example of the multilateralism that was to become increasingly prominent in the post-1945 period. However, it would be a mistake to portray Bretton Woods simply in terms of multilateralism and the recognition of mutual interests. This would be to ignore the crucial role played by the USA, which emerged from World War II as the world's predominant military and economic power, and which linked its continuing prosperity to the establishment of an open and stable international economic system. At the centre of the Bretton Woods system was a new monetary order, overseen by the IMF, which sought to maintain stable **exchange rates**. This was achieved by fixing all currencies to the value of the US dollar, which acted as a 'currency anchor', with the US dollar being convertible to gold at a rate of $35 per ounce. For at least two decades, the Bretton Woods system appeared to be a remarkable success. Instead of the end of World War II, and the consequent drop in military expenditure, bringing back, as some had feared, the dark days of the Great Depression, it heralded the onset of the 'long boom' of the postwar period, the longest period of sustained economic growth the world economy had ever experienced.

However, the 'golden age' of the 1950s and 1960s was followed by the 'stagflation' of the 1970s, in which economic stagnation and rising unemployment was linked to high inflation. In this context, and with the US economy struggling to cope with spiralling spending of home and abroad, in 1971 the USA abandoned the system of fixed exchange rates – signalling, in effect, the end of the Bretton Woods system in its original form. The advent of 'floating' exchange rates initiated a major policy and ideological shift. In policy terms, it gave rise to the **Washington consensus**. In ideological terms, the IMF, GATT and the World Bank were converted during the 1970s and 1980s to the idea of an international economic order based on free-market and free-trade principles. The replacement of GATT by the World Trade Organization in 1995 strengthened the free trade agenda and helped to accelerate the advance of economic globalization.

Evaluating global economic governance

In its initial mission, as the guarantor of exchange rates stability, the IMF was highly successful for at least two decades. Nevertheless, the IMF became an increasingly controversial institution from the 1980s onwards. This was because it linked the provision of loans to developing and transition countries to conditions for '**structural adjustment**' that reflected an unqualified faith in free markets and free trade. Supporters of the IMF argue that, despite short-term instability and insecurities, an adjustment to an open and market-based

Focus on . . .
Global economic governance

- **The International Monetary Fund (IMF)**: The IMF was set up to oversee the global rules governing money in general and, in particular, to maintain currency stability through a system of fixed exchange rates. Since 1971, the IMF has embraced a neoliberal economic model, and requires countries to carry out stringent market-based reforms as a condition for receiving assistance. The IMF has grown from its original 29 members to 188 members. Its headquarters are in Washington.
- **The World Bank**: The World Bank (formerly the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) was designed to reduce the element of risk in foreign lending, thereby underpinning economic stability. Since the 1980s the Bank has geared its lending to 'structural adjustment', the reorientation of economies around market principles and their integration into the global economy. The World Bank's headquarters are in Washington.
- **The World Trade Organization (WTO)**: The WTO was established in 1995, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Created by the 'Uruguay round' of negotiations (1986–95), the WTO has wider and stronger powers than those of the GATT. The WTO's mission is to 'liberalize' world trade and create an 'open' global trading system. However, the 'Doha round', which started in 2001, broke down in 2006 because of disagreements between developed and developing states. The WTO had 157 members in 2012, with a further 27 countries applying to join. Its headquarters are in Geneva.

economy is the only reliable road to long-term economic success. Other strengths of the IMF are that it will often provide loans to countries that can find no other source of finance, and that its interest rates may be more competitive than those otherwise available. However, critics have seen the IMF, and global economic governance generally, as the political arm of neoliberal globalization, forcing poor and vulnerable countries to accept a US business model that better caters to the needs of western banks and corporations than it does to long-term development needs. The fact that IMF intervention has often caused more problems than it has solved stems, critics allege, from its flawed development model, which fails to recognize the possibility of market failure or the drawbacks of economic openness. In the wake of the 2007–09 global financial crisis, the IMF was roundly criticized for not having prevented the crisis by highlighting the instabilities and imbalances that had produced it. This led to calls for the reform of the IMF, particularly with a view to strengthening its ability to regulate the global financial system. However, this has so far resulted in little more than a minor adjustment of voting rights in favour of developing states.

In the early period, the World Bank concentrated on promoting postwar reconstruction. However, over time, promoting development became the principal focus of its work. During the 1970s, under the presidency of Robert McNamara, 1968–81, the Bank placed an increased emphasis on poverty reduction. This involved, for example, promoting projects in rural development and concentrating on meeting basic needs. From the early 1980s onwards, and in conjunction with the IMF, the Bank embraced a strategy of 'structural adjustment'. The market reforms that its programmes sought to promote were

Free trade

Free trade is a system of trading between states not restricted by tariffs or other forms of protectionism. In line with the theory of 'comparative advantage', liberals argue that international trade benefits all countries that participate in it, not least through greater specialization. The political case for free trade is that, in deepening economic interdependence and fostering international exchange, it makes war less likely and, perhaps, impossible. Critics point out that free trade widens economic inequalities by giving dominant powers access to the markets of weak states, while having little to fear themselves from foreign competition.

designed to re-establish as quickly as possible the credit-worthiness of developing countries in order to allow them to focus once again on the fight against poverty. During the 1990s, in face of growing criticism and the failure of many of its structural adjustment programmes, the Bank started to place less emphasis on macro-economic reform and greater emphasis on the structural, social and human aspects of development. This new strategy has been dubbed the 'post-Washington consensus'. Supporters of the World Bank highlight its success in transferring resources, through development projects, from wealthy countries to poorer ones. However, critics argue, variously, that its financing of development is insufficient; that its record of reducing poverty has often been poor; and that, together with the IMF and the WTO, it tends to uphold the imbalances and disparities of the global economic order, rather than challenge them.

In many ways, the emergence of the WTO was a response to the changing imperatives of the international trading system in the 1980s. The triumph of neoliberalism (see p. 144) and the acceleration of globalization created stronger pressure to advance the cause of free trade through a more powerful trade organization with broader responsibilities. The WTO is seen by some as a global economic government in the making. Its supporters argue that, in encouraging trade liberalization, it has made a major contribution to promoting sustainable growth in the world economy. Such a view is largely based on the belief that free and open trade is mutually beneficial to all the countries that engage in it. Trade liberalization is, thus, seen to sharpen competition, foster innovation and breed success for all. Nevertheless, the WTO has been no less controversial an organization than the IMF and the World Bank.

Many of the WTO's critics focus on its basic principles, arguing that, far from bringing benefit to all, trade liberalization is responsible for structural inequalities and the weakening of workers' rights and environmental protection. Furthermore, although decision-making within the WTO is based on consensus-building (as opposed to the system of weighted votes used by both the IMF and the World Bank, which are biased in favour of the USA and industrialized countries generally), it is widely argued that consensus decision-making favours states that have sizeable, well-resourced and permanent representation in the WTO's Geneva headquarters. A final criticism highlights the weakness of the WTO, and specifically its inability to reconcile strongly-held opposing views. This is evident in the near-collapse of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, which commenced in 2001. Negotiations have stalled because of disagreements, mainly over agricultural subsidies, between, on the one hand, developing countries and emerging economies, including China, and developed countries on the other hand. Such a failure has enabled the USA and the EU to maintain agricultural protectionism, while penalizing developing countries and the world's poor, who would benefit most from reducing barriers and subsidies in farming.

The United Nations

Role of the United Nations

The United Nations is, without doubt, the most important international organization created to date and the heart of the emerging system of global governance. Established through the San Francisco Conference of 1945, it is the only

Focus on . . .
How the United Nations works

- **The Security Council**: This is the most significant UN body. Its key purpose is to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, and so it is responsible for the UN's role as a negotiator, observer and peacekeeper. The Security Council has 15 members, but it is dominated by the P-5, its permanent 'veto powers' (the USA, Russia, China, the UK and France), which can block decisions made by other members of the Council.
- **The General Assembly**: This is the main deliberative organ of the UN, sometimes dubbed the 'parliament of nations'. The Assembly consists of all members of the UN, each of which has a single vote. The Assembly can debate and pass resolutions on any matter covered by the Charter, but it has no legislative role and does not oversee or scrutinize, in any meaningful sense, the Security Council or the Secretariat.
- **The Secretariat**: This serves the other principal organs of the UN and administers the programmes and policies laid down by them. At its head is the Secretary-General (since 2007, Ban Ki-moon), who functions as the public face of the UN, as well as its chief administrative officer. The main activities of the Secretariat take place in the UN's headquarters in New York.
- **The Economic and Social Council**: The ECOSOC consists of 54 members elected by the General Assembly. Its chief role is to coordinate the economic and social work of the UN. This involves overseeing the activities of a large number of programmes, funds and specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization. Its main areas of concern are human rights, development and poverty reduction, and the environment.
- **The International Court of Justice**: The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the UN. Its primary role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by states. Located in The Hague, Netherlands, the ICJ is composed of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, voting separately.

truly global organization ever constructed, having a membership of 193 states and counting. The UN is, nevertheless, a sprawling and complex organization, described by its second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, as 'a weird Picasso abstraction'. Beyond its five major organs, it encompasses the so-called 'three sisters' – the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO – and also bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Although this has created an organization that is highly cumbersome, often conflict-ridden and, some say, inherently inefficient, it also enables the UN to respond to myriad interests and to address an ever-widening global agenda.

The principal aims of the UN, spelled out by its founding Charter, are as follows:

- To safeguard peace and security in order 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'.
- To 'reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights'.
- To uphold respect for international law.
- To 'promote social progress and better standards of life'.

Maintaining peace and security

The chief purpose of the UN is to maintain international peace and security, with responsibility for this being vested in the Security Council. Indeed, the performance of the UN can largely be judged in terms of the extent to which it has saved humankind from deadly military conflict. It is, nevertheless, difficult to assess the extent of the UN's contribution to ensuring that the two world wars of the twentieth century have not been followed by World War III when other factors, not least the 'balance of terror' between the USA and the USSR, have also contributed. However, what is clear is that, being a creature of its members, the UN's capacity to enforce a system of collective security (see p. 411) is severely limited. It can do no more than its member states, and particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, permit. As a result, its role has essentially been confined to providing mechanisms that facilitate the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. During the Cold War, the UN was routinely paralyzed by superpower rivalry that led to deadlock in the Security Council. The UN, therefore, was a powerless spectator when the USSR invaded Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979), and it failed to curtail the USA's escalating military involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s. A further weakness is that the UN has never been able to develop an armed force of its own, so that it has always had to rely on troops supplied by individual member states.

The end of the Cold War, however, produced optimism about the capacity of an activist UN to preside over the 'new world order'. The UN approved the US-led expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War, and, in a few short years, the number of UN peacekeeping operations had doubled, and the annual budget for peacekeeping had quadrupled. Hopes for a more effective UN in the post-Cold War period were nevertheless dashed, both by a declining willingness of states, freed from East–West rivalry, to accept neutral, multilateral intervention, and by the eroding support, financial and military, of the USA. Despite some genuine successes in peacekeeping (such as in Mozambique and El Salvador) and in peace-building (East Timor), the UN's reputation was badly damaged by its failure to prevent large-scale slaughter in the mid-1990s in Rwanda and Bosnia.

Economic and social development

As the membership of the UN expanded as a result of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, giving the developing world much greater influence over the General Assembly, the promotion of economic and social development became an increasingly prominent UN concern. The main areas of UN economic and social responsibility are human rights, development and poverty reduction, and the environment. In the case of human rights, the centrepiece of the international regime that has developed since World War II to promote and protect such rights has been the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948. The incorporation of the Declaration into a legally-binding codification of human rights – in effect, human rights law – was achieved through the adoption in 1966 of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Collectively, the 1948 Declaration and the two covenants are commonly referred to as the 'International Bill of Human Rights'. However, the UN's record of standing up to dictators, condemning human rights violations and intervening to prevent genocide and other compa-

Tackling climate change: doomed to failure?

Events: The 1992 Rio 'Earth Summit' (the UN Conference on Environment and Development) was the first international conference to give significant attention to the issue of climate change. It did so by establishing the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), and by calling for greenhouse gases to be stabilized at 'safe' levels. Although it was accepted by 181 governments, the FCCC was no more than a framework for further action and contained no legally binding targets. The Kyoto Protocol to the FCCC, negotiated in 1997, went further, in that, for the first time, legally binding targets were set (for the period to 2012) for states to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Its chief limitation was that the USA (the world's largest emitter) failed to ratify the treaty. In addition, as targets were only set for developed states, emerging powers such as China (which, in 2008, overtook the USA to become the world's largest emitter) and India were excluded. In 2009, the UN Climate Change Conference was convened in Copenhagen to develop a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. The conference, nevertheless, merely agreed to 'take note of' the so-called 'Copenhagen Accord'. This pledged to prevent rises in global temperature of more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, but failed to create any new legally binding obligations on any country to cut emissions, or even to set a global target for emissions cuts. The final opportunity to extend the Kyoto process came with the 2012 Doha conference.

Significance: Some have argued that Rio, Kyoto and Copenhagen mark a record of steady, if unspectacular, international progress on the issue of climate change. Rio created a framework within which the issue could be addressed; Kyoto set binding targets for the developed world; and Copenhagen, for all its limitations, moved beyond Kyoto in that it was marked by the participation of the two biggest players, the USA and China. Yet, the dominant response to these events has been one of frustration and disappointment, with some warning that the failure of the international community to take robust action over climate change will ultimately have catastrophic implications. Why, when some argue that climate change is the most urgent and important challenge currently confronting the international community, has international cooperation over the issue been so difficult to achieve?

A number of obstacles stand in the way of concerted international action over climate change. First and foremost, although all states acknowledge the threat posed by climate change, tackling the issue imposes major costs on individual states, in terms of investment in sometimes expensive strategies, and accepting lower levels of economic growth. In such circumstances, states are encouraged to be 'free riders', enjoying the benefits of a healthier environment without having to pay for them. A second obstacle is tension between developed and developing states, based on what the FCCC refers to as their 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities'. Many in the developing world believe that targets should be set to reflect the fact that developed countries have a historic responsibility for the accumulated stock of carbon emitted since the beginning of the industrial age, which has provided the basis for their level of economic growth and prosperity. Attempts by the developed world to ensure that the costs of tackling climate change are shared globally, are, therefore, seen as morally unfounded and a denial of the developing world's right to prosperity. Finally, many in the green movement trace increased emissions levels, or 'carbon industrialization', back to the spread of materialist and consumerist values that ensure that economic and political systems have come to be geared towards growth and rising living standards. Unless this ideological and cultural dimension of the problem is addressed, international action is destined to remain weak and ineffective.

rable acts has been poor – a product, perhaps, of the moral relativism (see p. 453) that has taken hold as the UN's membership has expanded.

In the case of development and poverty reduction, the principal vehicle has been the UN Development Programme (UNDP), created in 1965. The UNDP has a presence in some 177 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges, and also helps developing countries to attract and use aid effectively. By focusing on the notions of 'human development' and 'human security' (see p. 418), the UNDP has fostered innovative thinking about poverty and deprivation, moving away from a narrowly economic definition of poverty. In the case of the environment, the UN's Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 laid the foundations for environmental action at an international level and prepared the way for the launch of the UN's Environmental Programme (UNEP). Over time, the issue of climate change has come to dominate the UN's environmental agenda, as a succession of high-profile conferences on the issue has been convened, albeit often with disappointing outcomes (see p. 440).

An indispensable body?

The UN is no stranger to controversy and criticism. Some, indeed, regard it as fundamentally flawed. In this view, the UN is a proto-world government, and has all the drawbacks of a would-be world government – a lack of legitimacy, accountability and democratic credentials. Not only does the UN interfere in the affairs of states, thereby eroding their sovereignty, but it also disrupts the workings of the balance-of-power system, thus endangering the very peace and stability that it was set up to maintain. Others decry the UN's ineffectiveness, rather than its capacity to meddle in world affairs. As is commonly pointed out, there have been more wars since the creation of the UN than there had been before, and the organization is routinely sidelined as major world events unfold, not least because the Security Council can be so easily paralyzed by conflict amongst the 'Big Five'. Further criticisms highlight the dysfunctionality of a body that functions as 'two UNs', one of which serves as a voice for the great powers and operates through the Security Council, while the other articulates the interests of the developing world and operates through the General Assembly. While the former has huge potential power but seldom exercises it, the latter acts as little more than a debating society.

For all its flaws and failings, one central fact must be borne in mind: the world is a safer place with the UN than it would be without it. Although the UN will never be able to prevent all wars and resolve all conflicts, it provides an indispensable framework for cooperation, should the international community choose to use it. The UN serves, however imperfectly, to increase the chances that international conflict can be resolved without a resort to war and that, if war breaks out, military conflict will quickly lead to peacemaking and peace-building. Moreover, the UN did not fossilize around its initial mission but, rather, succeeded in redefining itself in the light of new global challenges. Not only has the UN developed into the leading organization promoting economic and social development worldwide, but it has also helped to shape the agenda as far as new global issues are concerned, ranging from climate change and gender equality to population control and dealing with pandemics. In short, if the UN did not exist, it would have to be invented.

SUMMARY

● The end of the Cold War led to proclamations about the advent of a 'new world order'; however, this new world order was always imprecisely defined, and the idea quickly became unfashionable. Instead, bipolarity came to be seen to have been replaced by unipolarity – the USA, as the sole remaining superpower, having become a 'global hegemon'.

● The implications of US hegemony became particularly apparent following September 11, as the USA embarked on the so-called 'war on terror'. This, nevertheless, drew the USA into deeply problematic military interventions, which highlighted the limitations of the USA's unrivalled military strength.

● Twenty-first century world order increasingly has a multipolar character. This is evident in the relative decline of the USA and rise of so-called 'emerging powers', notably China; however, it is also a consequence of wider developments, including the advance of globalization and global governance, and the growing importance of non-state actors.

● Global governance is a broad, dynamic and complex process of interactive decision-making at the global level. Liberal theorists argue that there is an unmistakable (and perhaps irresistible) trend in favour of global governance, reflecting growing interdependence and a greater willingness of states to engage in collective action. However, the USA's role in promoting global governance for reasons of national interest has also been significant.

● The trend towards global governance has been particularly prominent in the economic sphere, where it has been associated with three bodies: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. These bodies have, nevertheless, each, in their different ways, been drawn into controversy through their association with neoliberal globalization.

● The United Nations is the only truly global organization ever constructed, and it operates as the heart of the emerging global governance system. Its principal aims have been to maintain international peace and security, and to promote economic and social development. Although the UN has been no stranger to controversy and criticism, it is widely regarded as an indispensable framework for cooperation, should the international community choose to use it.

Questions for discussion

● Was the idea of a 'new world order' merely a tool to legitimize US hegemony?

● How has the 'war on terror' affected the global status of the USA?

● Is China in the process of becoming the next global hegemon?

● Is tension between the USA and 'the rest' a growing fault line in world politics?

● Should emerging multipolarity be welcomed or feared?

● How far does modern world politics operate as a functioning global governance system?

● Why is global governance most advanced in the economic sphere?

● How effective has the UN been in maintaining peace and security?

● What impact has the UN had on economic and social issues?

Further reading

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

Weiss, T. G. *What's Wrong with the United Nations (and How to Fix it)* (2009). A stimulating diagnosis-and-cure approach that considers why the United Nations and its system of related agencies seem to be perpetually in crisis.

Whitman, J. (ed.) *Global Governance* (2009). An authoritative and incisive collection of essays that examine the nature and implications of global governance.

Young, A., J. Duckett and P. Graham (eds) *Perspectives on the Global Distribution of Power* (2010). A collection that reviews the shifting global distribution of power and examines the changing power resources of key protagonists.

A Crisis in Politics?

'Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards'

MAX WEBER, 'Politics as a vocation' (1919)

PREVIEW
In this concluding chapter, we return to some of the themes discussed in Chapter 1, and, in the process, draw together some of the themes set out at different points in the book. This is done by examining the nature and health of politics itself, taking particular account of how and why politics – and especially conventional, or 'mainstream', politics – has been subject to increasing criticism. Of course, there is nothing new about politics being viewed in a negative light – the term has long been used as a 'dirty' word, implying an activity that is distasteful, even demeaning – but criticism seems to have risen to unprecedented levels in recent decades. Politicians, needless to say, have usually borne the brunt of these attacks, with popular associations with 'politician' commonly including 'liar', 'corrupt', 'careerist' and 'untrustworthy'. Politics, moreover, appears to be losing its ability to engage and enthuse, as witnessed by declining levels of voter turnout and falling party membership – trends that are most pronounced in mature democracies and particularly affect younger people. However, this may be a deeply misleading picture. Anxieties about growing civic disengagement, for instance, may ignore the extent to which political participation is not declining but changing, through, amongst other things, the rise of protest movements of various kinds or the spread of internet-based activism. It is also far from clear that the trends mentioned above can be laid at the door of politics and politicians; other possible culprits include the media and, perhaps, the public themselves. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction with politics may have a deeper, even philosophical, dimension, in the form of confusion about what, exactly, politics is 'for', and how the performance of political systems should be judged. These questions, however, touch on some of the most intractable normative debates within the discipline of itself.

KEY ISSUES
- Is civic engagement in crisis?
- What do the phenomena of 'new politics' and 'anti-politics' tell us?
- Who, or what, is to blame for civic disengagement?
- What are the most important outcomes of the political process?
- How do different political systems perform in relation to these outcomes?

● **Civic engagement**: The participation of citizens in the life of their community, although this may range from formal political participation to wider communal activities or even 'civic-mindedness'.

POLITICS UNDER ASSAULT?

On the face of it, it seems odd to suggest that politics is in crisis. In some respects, politics has never been healthier. Dramatic demonstrations of 'people power' have brought authoritarian regimes to their knees, as occurred in the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989–91 and the Arab Spring (see p. 88), and the seemingly remorseless advance of democratization (see p. 272) has led to a major expansion of political and civic rights. Insofar as politics (in the sense of compromise and consensus-building, see pp. 8–9) constitutes a distinctively non-violent means of resolving conflict, the long- and short-term decline in violence that has occurred mainly, but not only, in western societies (Pinker, 2011) surely provides evidence of both the effectiveness of politics and its wider use. Yet, in other respects, a heavy cloud hangs over politics. In particular, growing numbers of people appear to be disengaging from the political process, or expressing disenchantment with it. Why is politics coming under attack? Has politics become a problem, rather than a solution?

Declining civic engagement?

It has long been assumed that the level of **civic engagement** is an indication of the health of a political system. Democratic theorists have certainly argued that one of the key strengths of democratic rule (examined more fully in the final section of this chapter) is that it offers wider opportunities for popular participation than any other form of rule, ensuring not merely government *for* the people, but also government *by* the people. Yet, however hard-won the rights of political participation may have been, especially the right to vote in free and fair elections, there is evidence (from mature democracies in particular) that citizens are becoming less interested in using these rights.

For instance, in the period 1945–97, average voter turnout in UK general elections usually remained above 75 per cent, with a postwar high of 84 per cent being achieved in 1950. The turnout in the 2001 general election nevertheless fell to 59 per cent, the lowest figure since 1918. Although the turnouts in 2005 and 2010 rose marginally (to 61 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively), these figures were still more than 10 per cent below the 1945–97 average, and occurred despite the wider use of postal voting (in 2005) and the first use of televised leaders' debates (in 2010). In Canada, voter turnout in federal elections plummeted during the 1990s from levels, once again, usually above 75 per cent to an average of 61.5 per cent in the elections held between 2000 and 2011. As elsewhere, declining voter turnout in Canada has been particularly evident amongst younger voters, creating a situation in which only about one third of first-time voters now actually vote, half the rate of a generation ago. Similar trends can be found across Western Europe, in Japan and in parts of Latin America, leading to the estimate that voter turnout has decreased globally by about 5 percentage points since the 1950s (Lijphart, 1996).

Civic disengagement goes well beyond non-voting, however. As discussed in Chapter 10, political parties in many parts of the world appear to be failing in their traditional role as agents of popular mobilization and political participation. This has been evident at a number of levels. Fewer people 'identify' with political parties than they once did, in the sense of having a psychological attach-

ment or loyalty towards a party. This trend is called partisan dealignment (see p. 217), and has been associated with more volatile voting behaviour and a growing willingness to vote for 'fringe' parties. There is also evidence of a major long-term decline in party membership across established democracies. During the 1980s and 1990s, party membership dropped by one million or more in Italy, France and the UK, around half a million in Germany, and close to half a million in Austria. Norway and France have lost well over half their party members since the 1980s, while fewer than 1 per cent of adults in the UK belong to political parties, down from 7 per cent some fifty years ago.

Declines in party membership are also matched by declines in levels of party activism. Party members have increasingly become 'cheque book members', who are prepared to pay their membership fees but are less inclined to attend regular meetings or, in particular, get involved in canvassing or campaigning. Civic disengagement may nevertheless go beyond conventional forms of political participation, such as voting, party membership and campaigning, and affect wider civic participation, in the form of church attendance, membership of professional societies, sports clubs, youth groups and parent-teacher associations, and the like. Robert Putnam (see p. 176) has interpreted such trends as evidence of declining 'social capital' (see p. 175) in the USA and, by extension, other industrialized countries, and of the emergence of a 'post-civic' generation.

However, the notion that modern societies suffer from a 'participation crisis' has also been criticized. The problem may not be so much that the overall level of political participation has fallen, but that there has been a shift from one kind of participation to another. In particular, as disillusionment and cynicism with **mainstream politics** has grown, there has been an upsurge in interest in pressure group politics, protest movements and the use of 'new media' to facilitate political debate and activism (see p. 190). The rise of what has been called the 'new politics' – reflecting more fluid, participatory, non-hierarchical and, possibly, more spontaneous styles of political participation – has been linked, variously, to the emergence of post-industrial societies (as discussed in Chapter 7) and to the spread of 'postmaterialist' values (as discussed in Chapter 8). As such, it may reflect a shift from a traditional conception of citizenship to a kind of 'reflexive' citizenship, through which citizens seek a more critical and reciprocal relationship with the structures of power.

The politics of 'anti-politics'

The perception that politics is in crisis arises not merely from concerns about civic disengagement, but also from evidence of growing cynicism about, and even anger towards, mainstream political parties and politicians. What appears sometimes to be a breakdown in trust (see p. 87) between the public and the political class in general, sometimes seen as the rise of 'anti-politics', does not simply encourage citizens to turn away from politics and retreat into private existence. Instead, it has spawned new forms of politics, which, in various ways, seek to articulate resentment or hostility towards conventional political structures. Although such hostility is based on a common perception that established political elites are 'out-of-touch', 'privileged', 'corrupt' or 'self-serving', anti-political groups and movements have taken very different forms. Certain forms of anti-politics clearly overlap with 'new politics', as in the case of the upsurge in

● **Mainstream politics**: Political activities, processes and structures that are regarded as normal or conventional; the dominant trend in politics.

Debating . . .
Should political participation be widened and deepened whenever possible?

Although the link between political participation and democratic rule is widely accepted, there is significant debate about the desirable level of citizens' engagement with politics. Why have some seen virtues in low-participation societies, and even warned against the dangers of 'excessive' political participation? But why, also, have exponents of 'participatory democracy' viewed participation as a good in itself, and called for political participation to be widened and deepened whenever this is possible?

YES	NO

YES

Making better citizens. Political participation is often defended on educational or developmental grounds. Participatory democrats, such as J. S. Mill (see p. 198) and, more recently, Pateman (1970), argue that the great benefit of citizens becoming directly involved in making political decisions is that it extends their moral, social and political awareness, and even their intellectual development. As people participate in the life of their community, they not only acquire a better appreciation of their own and others' civic rights and responsibilities; they are also encouraged to reflect on often complex moral issues and to gain a better understanding of how their society works.

Meaningful democracy. A direct link can be made between the level of political participation and the health of a democratic system. This is based on the instrumental argument in favour of participation, which is that participation is a means of promoting or defending the interests of ordinary citizens. Quite simply, the more people participate in politics, the louder their voice becomes. A strong participatory culture therefore forces politicians to act in line with the public interest. By the same token, low levels of participation lead to a 'hollowed-out' democratic system, in which politicians become self-serving and, increasingly, heedless of public opinion.

Common good before private good. Political participation can also be justified on communitarian grounds. By participating in making collective decisions on behalf of their community, people acquire a stronger sense of social belonging, recognizing that there is more to life than their own narrow or selfish existence. Such arguments can be traced back to Aristotle's (see p. 6) assertion that human beings are 'political animals', who can only live the 'good life' as members of a political community. In Rousseau's (see p. 97) view, the direct and continuous participation of all citizens in political life helps to bind the state to the common good.

NO

Virtues of apathy. High levels of popular participation may be a recipe for discord, incivility and the breakdown of social order. This is because as people become more involved in politics, they take their loyalties and allegiances more seriously and pursue their views with greater passion and determination. A high-participation society may, therefore, be a society of political zealots. The great virtue of apathy and political passivity is, thus, that they increase the likelihood that citizens will 'put up with' political decisions with which they disagree, or which conflict with their interests, something that is essential to any stable and peaceful political system.

Manageable democracy. Democratic systems may function best when political participation extends little beyond the act of voting every few years. For theorists such as Schumpeter (see p. 202), the essence of democracy is not popular participation, but a competition for leadership that forces those in power to act broadly in accordance with the public interest. Similar thinking is evident in the 'sleeping dogs' theory of democratic culture, which implies that low participation indicates broad satisfaction with government (Almond and Verba, 1989). Thus, as the performance of government improves, not least through the promotion of economic growth, participation rates are likely to fall.

The right to disengage. Low-participation or non-participation is not a cause for concern because it results from choices made by free individuals. Non-voting, for instance, may be perfectly rational, as it reflects the fact that a single vote is highly unlikely to affect the outcome of an election. Infrequent and brief civic engagement, what has been called 'attention deficit democracy' (Berger, 2011), may occur simply because people calculate that they have better things to do with their time and energy than engage in politics. While 'private' life is seen as vibrant and stimulating, 'public' activities are deemed to be worthy but essentially boring.

anti-capitalist or anti-globalization protests since the late 1990s. The anti-capitalist movement has embraced an activist-based, theatrical style of politics that is sometimes called the 'new' anarchism. Its attraction, particularly to young people, is its resistance to compromise for the sake of political expediency, borne out of a suspicion of structures and hierarchies of all kinds (including governmental arrangements and conventional parties), and the fact that it offers a form of politics that is decidedly 'in the moment'.

However, anti-politics has also been articulated though a range of right-wing groups and movements that have arisen in recent decades. In many parts of Europe, for example, far right or 'neo-fascist' groups have emerged that mix an appeal based on opposition to immigration, multiculturalism (see p. 167) and globalization (see p. 142) with avowed support for the 'common man' in the face of 'corrupt' economic and political elites. Similar tendencies have been evident in the Tea Party movement in the USA, which has emerged since 2009–10. Taking its name from the 1773 Boston Tea Party (a political protest against colonial British tax policies, in which tea was thrown into Boston Harbour), the Tea Party has built a separate and distinct political identity for itself around the commitment to tax cuts, reductions in federal government's spending, support for unregulated markets, limited government and a strictly literal interpretation of the US constitution. The overwhelming target of the Tea Party's lobbying and agitation has been 'Washington', represented both by the Obama administration and its supposed imposition of 'big government', and 'weak willed', mainstream conservatives in the Republican Party, in both Congress and the states. Nevertheless, there has been disagreement about the extent to which the Tea Party should be viewed as a genuine spontaneous, grass-roots 'anti-political' movement, or as the creation of wealthy interests, intent on using populism (see p. 307) to further the agenda of a small number of rich individuals in the USA.

Explaining civic disengagement

Although there is ongoing, and possibly irresolvable, debate about whether the overall level of political participation has declined, evidence of voter **apathy** cannot be lightly dismissed. As all modern democracies are representative democracies, elections lie at their very core. The level of voter turnout must, therefore, be an important indication of the health of the larger democratic system. But who, or what, is to blame for declining participation rates and, in particular, for falling voter turnout? A number of possible culprits have been identified, as follows:

- politics
- politicians and parties
- the media
- the public
- modern society.

● **Apathy**: The absence of interest in or enthusiasm for things that are generally considered to be interesting.

Blame politics

Although it is common for civic disengagement to be laid at the feet of politicians – they, after all, are the target of most of the criticism and abuse – the chief

culprit may be politics itself. It is easy to defend politics as a beautiful and civilizing activity, as, following Aristotle (see p. 6), political thinkers have done through the ages. Apart from its other virtues, politics allows people to live together in, at least, relative peace despite their differing views, values, ideas and interests. When politics fails, the result is likely to be fear, death, destruction and tyranny. Despite this, politics is 'consistently disappointing' (Dunn, 2000). Politics is doomed to disappoint: as the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live, compromise – and, therefore, dissatisfaction – lie at its very heart. Indeed, politics may be most effective when this dissatisfaction is universalized, no group in society getting exactly what it wants. Moreover, the political process, the process through which competing claims and demands are discussed and assessed, is necessarily messy and cumbersome. Nevertheless, although this may help to explain why politics can be dismissed as boring, even as distasteful, it fails, at least in itself, to explain the trend in favour of civic disengagement, as the nature of politics has not changed over time. Other factors, then, must be considered.

Blame politicians and parties

Although the reputation of politicians may be tainted by the frustrations and disappointments that inevitability attaches to politics as an activity, there are at least three further reasons why politicians are held in low regard. The first and, in a sense, 'classical' attack on politicians stresses the link between power and corruption, famously expressed in Lord Acton's aphorism: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (quoted in Lazarski (2012).

But how does power corrupt? According to Blaug (2010), it corrupts by distorting people's perceptions in ways that include a:

● growing *personal aggrandisement*, arrogance and loss of control
● progressive *contempt* for subordinates, suspicion and arbitrary cruelty
● gradual *separation* from others and a choice of advisors who always agree
● total *lack of awareness* that any corruption is happening.

For Acton, the association between power and corruption followed naturally from liberal assumptions about human nature. Human beings are, first and foremost, individuals, inclined to place their own interests ahead of anyone else's interests. If placed in a position of power, they will therefore use their post or office to benefit themselves, in all likelihood at the expense of others. In simple terms, egoism plus power equals corruption. According to Acton's logic, corruption will grow as the span of a politician's power increases. This analysis suggests that all politicians, but especially political leaders, are not to be trusted, and that government is, as Thomas Paine (see p. 199) put it, a 'necessary evil'. Our only protection from politicians comes from constitutional devices that fragment or check political power. Anarchists take such thinking further than liberals, in viewing all forms of political rule, including constitutional rule, as nakedly tyrannical.

Second, politicians cannot avoid having 'dirty' hands. This is because they make the difficult decisions that the public would rather not think about, and certainly not wish to make themselves. Decision-making in the political sphere invariably involves grappling with practical and moral dilemmas, and making

trade-offs that are, at best, ethically imperfect (Flinders, 2012). So embedded in political life are hypocricy, deception and double-dealing, that the public is routinely left with a choice between, in Runciman's (2008) words, 'different kinds of lies and different kinds of truth'.

Third, democratic systems create further difficulties for politicians by forcing them to operate in a market in which each seeks to out-bid the others, inflating expectations and making disappointment yet more certain. In short, democratic politicians are always likely to promise more than they can deliver. In view of this, it is no surprise that attempts have sometimes been made to replace politics with **technocracy**, as has occurred in Italy (see p. 450). Once again, however, the unchanging nature of these tendencies and pressures suggests that they are not the cause of the modern trend towards civic disengagement. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why may be held in their public standing may have fallen even further in recent decades. These include the following:

- **Lack of vision**. The shift from programmatic political parties to so-called 'catch-all' or 'de-ideological' parties (as discussed in Chapter 10) helps to explain why modern politicians often appear to lack vision and a sense of moral purpose. As modern politicians and political parties increasingly seem to believe in nothing except getting elected, politics has become an end in itself, and being a politician has become just another professional career.
- **Age of 'spin'**. One of the consequences of the modern media-obsessed age is that politicians have become over-concerned about communication and news management (as discussed in Chapter 8). The growth of what is called 'spin' creates the impression that politicians are less trustworthy than before, and more willing to be 'economical with the truth'.
- **'All the same'**. The declining significance of the left/right divide and the emergence of managerial politics in place of ideological politics, means that, regardless of their party allegiance, all politicians have come to look the same and sound the same. The problem with this is both that, by abandoning major issues and 'big' choices, electoral battles have become less gripping and less meaningful, and that politicians have maintained their adversarial rhetoric by dramatically over-stating minor or technical divisions – a psychological tendency that Sigmund Freud referred to as 'the narcissism of small differences'.
- **'In it for themselves'**. The growth, in recent decades, of an industry of professional lobbying has focused greater attention on politicians' 'outside interests' and on their sources of revenue other than from politics. This has strengthened the image of politicians as self-serving and dishonest, and created anxiety, generally, about declining standards in public life.

Blame the media

As discussed in Chapter 8, the media is sometimes charged with having created a climate of cynicism amongst the public, leading to growing popular disenchantment with politics generally, and a lack of trust in governments and politicians of all complexions (Lloyd, 2004). This has occurred, in large part, because increasingly intense commercial pressures have forced the media to make their coverage of politics 'sexy' and attention-grabbing. Routine political debate and policy analy-

● **Technocracy**: Literally, 'rule by the skilled'; government or control by an elite of technical experts.

Italian government: technocracy displaces politics?

Events: On 12 November 2011, Mario Monti was appointed prime minister of Italy, following the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi. Monti, however, was not a politician and had never held elective office. He was a respected economist who had been an EU Commissioner during 1994–2004, serving, in his final five years, as Competition Commissioner, one of the most powerful positions on the Commission. Monti went on to appoint a cabinet entirely composed of technocrats like himself. The Monti government, nevertheless, comfortably passed motions of confidence in both the Italian Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, with only members of the Northern League voting against. During December 2011, the Monti government outlined a package of austerity measures, which included increased taxes, pension reforms and steps to curtail tax evasion. In January 2012, a further package of measures, dealing in particular, with labour market flexibility were unveiled.

Significance: These exceptional events took place in highly pressured circumstances. Their backdrop was the 2007–09 global financial crisis, and the eurozone crisis (see p. 396) that it precipitated. With EU–IMF bailouts having already been agreed for Greece and Ireland, 10-year interest rates in Italy had risen above 7 per cent, creating the 'unthinkable' prospect of a bailout for the eurozone's third largest economy. In this context, a recourse to technocracy had a number of advantages. The key justification for Monti's appointment was, quite simply, that 'politics as normal' had ceased to work. Italy's highly-fragmented party system, long viewed as dysfunctional, had engendered such political paralysis (referred to by Monti as a 'deficiency of government') that the Berlusconi government was incapable of taking the bold measures thought necessary in the face of a mounting financial and economic crisis. At the same time, no alternative coalition of parties appeared to have enough popular support, or sufficient unity of purpose, to take its place. Monti's appointment calmed financial markets, reassured by the fact that, unlike an elected government, a technocratic government would do 'what had to be done', unhindered by political in-fighting and unconcerned about short-term unpopularity. Moreover, it highlighted the seriousness of the crisis that Italy faced, thereby helping to prepare the Italian public for the exceptional – and, inevitably, painful – political actions that were to come. Some have even suggested that technocracy may have the deeper advantage that, by pushing

popular delusions and the 'madness of crowds' to one side, it allows public policy to be informed by reason, rather than partisanship, ensuring that national interests prevail over party interests.

Nevertheless, serious concerns have been raised about Monti's appointment and Italy's substitution of technocracy for democracy. The most obvious of these was that the principles of popular control and public accountability were effectively abandoned. It is possible to see Monti's appointment as a kind of 'regime change' imposed on Italy by pressure from financial markets that were unchecked by the European Central Bank (ECB). In this view, the ECB orchestrated the fall of an elected political leader and, in the process, usurped the role of the Italian electorate. Lacking any democratic authority, the ECB went well beyond the legitimate role of a central bank, in acting to manipulate a stubborn citizenry. Furthermore, the notion that technocrats make decisions that are somehow more rational or enlightened than democratic politicians is highly questionable. If this were the case, technocrats and other experts would tend to think alike, their views converging around a set of agreed, wise beliefs. This, patently, is not the case, especially in the field of economics, a discipline notorious for disagreement over both theoretical and policy matters. What made Monti an attractive appointee from the perspective of the ECB and financial markets was not so much his expertise, as his support for the policy options they favoured; that is, bold austerity.

sis therefore receive less and less attention, as the media focuses instead on – or 'hypes' – scandals of various kinds and allegations of incompetence, policy failure or simple inertia. No longer are there 'problems', 'challenges' or 'difficulties' in politics; everything is a 'crisis'. Although the tabloid press in the UK is often seen as the most advanced example of a media-driven 'culture of contempt', similar trends are evident elsewhere. Healthy scepticism, which serves the interests of democracy and freedom, may, thus, have turned into corrosive and aggressive negativity.

Blame the public

Are 'we' the problem? Is civic disengagement a 'demand-side' problem (stemming from the attitudes and behaviour of the public), rather than a 'supply-side' problem (stemming from the performance of politics or politicians)? The argument that ordinary citizens bear much of the blame for civic disengagement is rooted in the allegation that consumerist attitudes and instincts, already widely evident in society at large, are increasingly being applied to politics. It is in the nature of consumerism (see p. 159) that people seek to acquire as much as possible, but pay as little as possible in return. Insofar as citizenship is in the process of being remodelled on consumerist lines, this implies that citizens are becoming ever-more demanding of politics and politicians whilst, at the same time, being less and less prepared to contribute to the maintenance of the political system in which they live. Are we becoming a society of politically-apathetic '**free-riders**', who enjoy all the benefits of citizenship (schools, roads, free speech, economic progress, public order and so forth) without accepting the associated costs, and, especially, without bothering to vote? If this is the case, it is difficult to see how the people can complain about the behaviour of politicians, or about allegedly declining standards in public life – we get the politicians we deserve. Those who explain civic disengagement in such terms, either wholly or in part, tend to advocate one of two solutions. Either they call for improved education (for example, compulsory citizenship classes in schools) to counteract consumerism, or they support ways in which political participation can be made easier and more convenient (such as postal voting or 'e-voting').

Blame modern society

The weakness in blaming the public for civic disengagement is that it suggests that popular attitudes and perceptions emerge in a vacuum, when they are, in important ways, shaped by the character of modern society. The social and economic circumstances of modern society may have fostered civic disengagement in two main ways. First, the spread of consumerist attitudes towards politics – and, for that matter, other things – is less a consequence of rational decision-making by independent citizens, and more a by-product of the growth of consumer capitalism combined with modern technology. The advance of neoliberal economic structures (as discussed in Chapter 6), which emphasize aspiration and individual self-striving, weaken people's capacity to think collectively and tend to make forms of communal activity – the basis of civic engagement – progressively less meaningful. The spread of neoliberalism (see p. 144) has, moreover, damaged the image of politics in at least two ways. First, by suggesting that political involvement in matters of economics and social

● **Free-rider**: A person or group that enjoys collectively-provided benefits without needing to pay associated costs, which are shouldered by others.

exchange is non-legitimate, it has forced political debate to revolve around technical or managerial issues, rather than major projects of social transformation. Second, it has associated politics with inefficiency and unwarranted interference, certainly by comparison with the supposedly 'higher' sphere of private enterprise. Modern information technologies have contributed to such tendencies, in particular by allowing communication to take place without the need for face-to-face interaction. Robert Putnam (2000), for instance, associated the decline of social capital with, in particular, the growth of television.

The second major social and economic trend that has been linked to civic disengagement is globalization. Globalization is often said to have contributed to the advance of a culture of consumer capitalism, which has, as discussed above, tended to 'hollow out' citizenship. Of no less significance, however, is the tendency of globalization to diminish the capacity of political actors to 'deliver the goods', leading to a profound crisis of both legitimacy and confidence in the process of political deliberation (Hay, 2007). National politicians have thus been placed in the uncomfortable position that, while they are confronted by rising demands and expectations on the part of the population at large, their ability to respond to these has shrunk, as domestic circumstances have increasingly been shaped by events that are beyond their control. The 'tyranny' that global markets appear to exercise over national economic decision-making may be the most obvious, but certainly is not the only, example of this.

ASSESSING POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

Anxieties about politics that stem from trends in civic engagement and questions about who, or what, may be responsible, reflect concern about the circumstances in which modern politics takes place. However, underlying these issues are deeper and abiding questions about the purpose of politics and, therefore, about how governments and political systems should be assessed. What, in short, is the political process 'for'? Such questions uncover some of the most intractable issues in political theory. For example, it is impossible to know what the political process is for without addressing issues such as the nature of justice and the desirable balance between freedom and authority – in other words, without having a vision of the 'good society'.

As views about such matters differ fundamentally, the standards against which political performance can be judged vary greatly. Four contrasting standards can, however, be identified, each shedding a very particular light on the purpose of politics and the assessment of political performance. These are as follows:

- stability and order
- material prosperity
- citizenship
- democratic rule.

Stability performance

It can reasonably be claimed that the maintenance of stability and order (see p. 400) is the most basic function of politics. With the exception of anarchists, who

argue that social order will emerge from the spontaneous actions of free individuals, all political thinkers and philosophers have endorsed the political process, and especially government, as the only means of keeping chaos and instability at bay. In Thomas Hobbes's (see p. 61) words, in the absence of government, life would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. From this perspective, the core purpose of government is to govern, to rule, to ensure stability through the exercise of authority. This, in turn, requires that government is able to perpetuate its own existence and ensure the survival of the broader political system. System performance can thus be judged on the basis of criteria such as longevity and endurance, as the simple fact of survival indicates a regime's ability to contain or reconcile conflict.

However, there are differing views about how this goal can best be achieved. These views fall into two broad categories. The first stems from the essentially liberal belief that a stable system of rule must be rooted in consensus (see p. 8) and consent. In this view, what ensures the long-term survival of a political system is its responsiveness to popular demands and pressures. This is expressed in the language of systems theory as the ability to bring the 'outputs' of government into line with the various 'inputs'. This capacity has often been identified as a particular strength of western liberal democracies. Advocates of liberal democracy (see p. 270) stress that, as it is based on consent, it embodies mechanisms that ensure that it is responsive, and so guarantees a high degree of systemic equilibrium. Government power is won through a competitive struggle for the popular vote, and can be lost when that support diminishes. A vigorous civil society also allows citizens to exert influence through autonomous groups and associations.

To some extent, it has been the ability of liberal democracy to generate political stability that explains the seemingly ever-wider adoption of liberal-democratic practices such as electoral democracy and party competition in the modern world. Nevertheless, liberal democracy also has its drawbacks in this respect. Chief amongst these is that responsiveness may generate instability, insofar as it heightens popular expectations of government and fosters the illusion that the political system can meet all demands and accommodate all 'inputs'. From this perspective, the central dilemma of stable government is that responsiveness must be balanced against effectiveness. Government must be sensitive to external pressures, but it must also be able to impose its will on society when those pressures threaten to generate irreconcilable conflict.

This latter fear underpins the alternative view of stability and order. Conservative thinkers have traditionally linked stability and order, not to responsiveness, but to authority. Thomas Hobbes presented this idea as a stark choice between absolutism (see p. 268) and anarchy, between the acceptance of an unquestionable and sovereign power and a descent into the chaos and disorder of the state of nature. However, conservatives have been particularly concerned to stress the degree to which political authority is underpinned by shared values and a common culture. In this view, stability and order are largely the product of social and cultural cohesion, underpinning the capacity of society to generate respect for authority and maintain support for established institutions.

This position is clearly reflected in neoconservative fears about permissiveness and moral and cultural relativism, leading to calls for the restoration of 'traditional', 'family' or 'Christian' values. It is also possible, from this perspective, to suggest that East Asian states that subscribe to some form of Confucianism (see p. 278), as well as Islamic states, have a greater capacity to maintain political

stability than do western liberal-democratic systems. However, the weakness of this view of stability is that, since it relies on authority being exerted from above, it may not place effective constraints on the exercise of government power. If stability is seen as an end in itself, divorced from considerations such as democratic legitimacy, social justice and respect for human rights (see p. 342), the result may simply be tyranny and oppression. Saddam Hussein, after all, was able to perpetuate the existence of his Iraqi regime, despite economic sanctions and opposition from Shi'a Moslems and Kurds, largely through systematic terror and brutal repression, until US intervention brought the regime down in 2003.

Material performance

The idea that political systems can and should be judged by their material performance is a familiar one. Electoral politics, for example, is invariably dominated by economic issues and the so-called 'feel good' factor. Governments are usually re-elected in periods of growth and widening prosperity, and defeated during recessions and economic crises. Similarly, there can be little doubt that the success of the broader political system is linked to its capacity to 'deliver the goods'. Widespread poverty and low levels of economic growth in developing states have deepened social and ethnic tensions, fuelled corruption, and undermined attempts to establish constitutional and representative government. The collapse of the state socialist regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR was also linked to the failure of central planning and, in particular, to its inability to deliver the levels of material prosperity and range of consumer goods that were available in the capitalist West. Moreover, it is no coincidence that advanced industrialized states have enjoyed both the greatest levels of political stability and the highest living standards in the world.

Considerable debate has taken place about the most reliable means of generating wealth and achieving material prosperity. In some senses, this debate reflects the traditional ideological divide between capitalism and socialism; the former places its faith in the market and competition, and the latter relies on nationalization and planning. However, the Eastern European revolutions of 1989–91 dramatically changed the terms of this debate by (apparently) undermining the validity of any form of socialism qualitatively distinct from market capitalism. In other words, even socialists came to accept that the market, or at least some form of market competition, is the only reliable mechanism for generating wealth. The 'capitalism or socialism?' debate has therefore developed into a 'what kind of capitalism?' debate, as examined in Chapter 5. However, this issue is not merely about how wealth can be *generated*, but also about how it is *distributed*; that is, it is about who gets what. As such, it is closely linked to debate about the desirable balance between the market and the state, and the degree to which government can, and should, modify market outcomes to achieve greater equality.

The central dilemma that arises from the use of material prosperity as a performance indicator is that economic growth must be balanced against fairness. This is the difficulty of being concerned both about the size of the cake and about how the cake is cut. Two contrasting views of this problem can be identified. The free-market view, advanced by theorists such as Friedrich von Hayek (see p. 37) and Milton Friedman (see p. 138), holds that general prosperity is best achieved by a system of unregulated capitalism. This is what Titmuss (1968) referred to as the

'industrial–achievement' performance model. From this perspective, economic growth is best promoted by material incentives that encourage enterprise and endeavour, and penalize laziness. The welfare state should therefore only act as a safety net that protects individuals from absolute poverty, in the sense that they lack the basic means of subsistence. Although this system is likely to increase social inequality, the theory suggests that it benefits even the less well-off, who receive a smaller proportion of a much larger cake, so ending up better off. Free-market economists refer to this theory as the 'trickle down' effect. Such policy priorities have guided New Right governments since the 1980s in their attempts to break away from the 'fiscal crisis of the welfare state'. In this view, burgeoning social budgets led to a growing tax burden that, in turn, hampered wealth generation.

The rival social-democratic view, which Titmuss called the 'institutional– redistributive' model, highlights the moral and economic benefits of equality. Not only is unregulated competition condemned for promoting greed and conflict, it is also seen as inefficient and unproductive. The virtue of social justice is that, by taking the distribution of wealth away from the vagaries of the market, it ensures that all citizens have a stake in society and that each of them has an incentive to contribute. In tolerating wide social inequality, free-market policies thus run the risk of promoting social exclusion, reflected in the growth of an underclass that is a breeding ground for crime and social unrest. Long-term and sustainable prosperity therefore requires that material incentives operate within a broader framework of fair distribution and effective welfare.

Citizenship performance

The idea that citizenship is the proper end of government can be traced back to the political thought of Ancient Greece. For instance, in 431 BCE, in his famous funeral oration, Pericles stated that:

> An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are origi nators, we are all sound judges of policy.

A citizen is a member of a political community or state, endowed with a set of rights and a set of obligations. Citizenship is therefore the 'public' face of indi vidual existence. People are able to participate in the life of their communities to the extent that they possess entitlements and responsibilities. Civil participation is, in turn, linked to the advance of constitutional government, as reflected in the extension of political rights and civil liberties (see p. 404).

In his classic contribution to the study of citizenship rights, T. H. Marshall (1950) distinguished between three 'bundles of rights': civil rights, political rights and social rights. Civil rights were defined by Marshall as 'rights neces sary for individual freedom'. These include freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, freedom of conscience, the right to equality before the law, and the right to own property. Civil rights are therefore rights that are exercised within civil society; they are 'negative' rights in the sense that they limit or check the exercise of government power. Political rights

provide the individual with the opportunity to participate in political life. The central political rights are thus the right to vote, the right to stand for election, and the right to hold public office. The provision of political rights clearly requires the development of universal suffrage, political equality (see p. 90), and democratic government. Finally, and most controversially, Marshall argued that citizenship implies social rights that guarantee the individual a minimum social status and, in so doing, provide the basis for the exercise of both civil and political rights. Marshall defined these 'positive' rights, somewhat vaguely, as the right 'to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society'.

As the concept of citizenship is usually seen as a distinctively western invention, it is perhaps not surprising that liberal democracies have performed particularly well in this respect (previously discussed concerns about declining civic engagement notwithstanding). Civil and political rights clearly imply the form of constitutional and representative government commonly found in the industrialized West. The idea of social rights, however, has stimulated significant divisions, because it implies a level of welfare provision and redistribution that (as discussed earlier) classical liberals and the New Right regard as unjustifiable and economically damaging. Marxists and feminists have also criticized the idea of citizenship; the former on the grounds that it ignores unequal class power, and the latter because it takes no account of patriarchal oppression.

A major dilemma nevertheless confronts those who employ citizenship as a performance criterion: the need to balance rights against duties and, thereby, apportion responsibilities between the individual and the community. Since the early 1980s, this issue has been taken up in the growing debate between liberals and communitarians. Communitarian theorists such as Alisdair MacIntyre (1981) and Michael Sandel (1982) have dismissed the idea of an unencumbered self, arguing that the 'politics of rights' should be replaced by a 'politics of the common good'. In this view, liberal individualism (see p. 158), in effect, eats itself. By investing individuals with rights and entitlements, it simply breeds atomism and alienation, weakening the communal bonds that hold society together. From this perspective, non-western societies that may appear to perform poorly in relation to citizenship indicators (for example, having poor records on human rights) may nevertheless succeed in creating a strong sense of community and social belonging.

Democracy performance

Whereas stability, material prosperity and citizenship are all outcomes, or products, of the political process, democracy is concerned essentially with the process itself, with *how* decisions are made, rather than with *what* decisions are made. Democracy means popular rule – in crude terms, the widest possible dispersal of political power and influence. From the democratic perspective, the purpose of politics is to empower the individual and enlarge the scope of personal autonomy (see p. 457). Autonomy has been seen as both an end in itself and a means to an end. Classical theorists of democracy, such as J.-J. Rousseau (see p. 97) and J. S. Mill (see p. 198), portrayed political participation as a source of personal development and self-realization. Democracy is thus the stuff of freedom, or, as Rousseau put it, freedom means 'being one's own master'.

Taken to its logical extreme, the idea of popular self-government implies the abolition of the distinction between the state and civil society through the establishment of some form of direct democracy (see p. 92). For example, Athenian democracy (see p. 95) amounted to a form of government by mass meeting, in which citizens were encouraged to participate directly and continuously in the life of their *polis*, or city-state. Modern notions of democracy, however, have shifted away from this utopian vision and, instead, embrace democracy more as a means to an end. The more familiar machinery of representative democracy – universal suffrage, the secret ballot, and competitive elections – tends to be defended on the grounds that, for example, the existence of voting rights checks the abuse of government power, and party competition helps to generate social consensus. The ability of the people to 'kick the rascals out' therefore helps to ensure that government is limited and that there is, at least, a measure of public accountability.

However, most political systems fare poorly by the standards of personal autonomy and popular rule. What passes for democracy in the modern world tends to be a limited and indirect form of democracy: liberal democracy. This operates as an 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter, 1942). This 'institutional arrangement' has been criticized by radical democrats for reducing popular participation to a near meaningless ritual: casting a vote every few years for politicians who can be removed only by replacing them with another set of politicians. In short, the people never rule, and the growing gulf between government and the people is reflected, as we have seen, in the spread of inertia, apathy and a breakdown of community.

This perspective is, therefore, linked to calls for radical, even revolutionary, political and social change. For example, government power should be decentralized so as to bring power 'closer' to the people. This could, for instance, require the break-up of the nation-state, as it is difficult, in practical terms, to see how a community the size of a modern nation could govern itself through direct and continuous participation. Similarly, insofar as the democratic principle is applied in modern societies, it is confined to a narrowly 'political' set of decisions. If democracy is understood as self-mastery – the ability to shape decisions that affect one's life – surely economic power must also be democratized, presumably through the machinery of workers' control and self-management.

As with the performance criteria examined above, democracy also poses its own set of dilemmas. The most important of these is the need for a balance between the twin goals of government *by* the people and government *for* the people. This highlights the tension between the competing virtues of popular participation and rule in the public interest. The most fundamental objection to all forms of participatory democracy is simply that ordinary people lack the time, maturity and specialist knowledge to rule wisely on their own behalf. The earliest version of this argument was put by Plato (see p. 13), who advanced the idea of rule by the virtuous; that is, government by a class of philosopher kings. In this form, the case for government *for* the people amounts to an argument in favour of an enlightened despotism. The concern about the capabilities of ordinary people can, however, be dealt with more modestly, through the provision of representative processes that allow for a division of labour in political life. A

further dilemma is that the empowerment of the individual must be balanced against the empowerment of the community. To give priority to personal autonomy is necessarily to place limits on public authority. However, to extol the virtues of popular rule is to risk subordinating the individual to the will of the public, or the majority. The tension between the individual and society not only raises major practical difficulties, but also highlights what some would argue has always been, and remains, the central issue in political theory.

SUMMARY

- Concerns about a crisis in politics stem largely from evidence of growing civic disengagement, reflected, in particular, in declining rates of voter turnout and falling levels of party membership and campaigning. However, such trends may not so much betoken a crisis in political participation, as indicate a shift from one kind of participation to another – as, for instance, protest movements rise in importance and 'new media' are more widely used to facilitate political debate and activism.

- Growing cynicism about, and even anger towards, mainstream political parties and politicians has been expressed in the phenomenon of 'anti-politics'. 'Anti-politics', nevertheless, does not encourage citizens to turn away from politics and retreat into private existence. Instead, it tends to spawn new groups and movements that express resentment or hostility towards established political structures, although these may range from anti-capitalist protests to far-right anti-immigration campaigns.

- Evidence of growing voter apathy cannot easily be disregarded, as modern democracies are all representative democracies, in which elections play a vital role. However, the task of explaining declining levels of formal political participation is fraught with difficulties, not least because of the number of possible culprits. The most significant of these are politics, politicians and parties, the public, the media and modern society.

- Political systems can be judged only in terms of their impact on the larger society, for good or ill. However, as this raises normative questions, there is no consensus about the desirable 'outcomes' of the political process. The most commonly used indexes of a government's or system's performance include its ability to maintain stability and order, deliver material prosperity, promote citizenship and foster democratic rule.

- Evaluating political systems is difficult because each performance indicator embodies complexities. Stability can be promoted through consent and popular responsiveness, or through a shared culture and greater respect for authority. The quest for material prosperity may be hampered by policies designed to ensure that wealth is more equally distributed. The spread of citizenship rights may undermine civic duty and weaken the sense of community. The extension of democratic rule may simply lead to a majoritarian despotism that places restrictions on individual freedom or personal autonomy.

Questions for discussion

- Is the 'participation crisis' in modern politics largely a myth?
- What is the significance of the rise of 'anti-political' groups and movements?
- Why is politics 'doomed to disappoint'?
- Do we get the politicians we deserve?
- Is there such a thing as a right of non-participation?
- Are consumerism and citizenship incompatible?
- Is there an inevitable tension between democracy and liberty?
- Are people the best judges of what is good for them?
- Which political system comes closest to achieving the 'good society'?

Further reading

Bauman, Z. *In Search of Politics* (1999). An examination of how a growing sense of transience and insecurity is undermining meaningful social bonds and threatening the 'private/public' space.

Flinders, M. *Defending Politics: Why Democracy Matters in the 21st Century* (2012). A fresh and engaging analysis of the nature of political rule, and a defence of politics against its key threats.

Hay, C. *Why We Hate Politics* (2007). An investigation into the origins of growing cynicism and negativity about politics, which focuses particularly on the impact of neoliberalism and globalization.

Stoker, G. *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work* (2006). A stimulating analysis of why democratic politics is doomed to disappoint and how civic participation can be revived.