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**WHAT IS GLOBALIZATION?**

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by [international trade](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/Trade_and_Globalization) and [investment](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/investment) and aided by [information technology](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/technology). This process has effects on the [environment](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/environment), on [culture](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/culture), on political systems, on [economic development](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_main/development) and prosperity, and on [human physical well-being](http://www.globalization101.org/issue_sub/health/healthintroduction/health_and_globalization) in societies around the world.

Globalization is not new, though. For thousands of years, people—and, later, corporations—have been buying from and selling to each other in lands at great distances, such as through the famed Silk Road across Central Asia that connected China and Europe during the Middle Ages. Likewise, for centuries, people and corporations have invested in enterprises in other countries. In fact, many of the features of the current wave of globalization are similar to those prevailing before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

But policy and technological developments of the past few decades have spurred increases in cross-border trade, investment, and migration so large that many observers believe the world has entered a qualitatively new phase in its economic development. Since 1950, for example, the volume of world trade has increased by 20 times, and from just 1997 to 1999 flows of foreign investment nearly doubled, from $468 billion to $827 billion. Distinguishing this current wave of globalization from earlier ones, author Thomas Friedman has said that today globalization is “farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.”

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This current wave of globalization has been driven by policies that have opened economies domestically and internationally. In the years since the Second World War, and especially during the past two decades, many governments have adopted free-market economic systems, vastly increasing their own productive potential and creating myriad new opportunities for international trade and investment. Governments also have negotiated dramatic reductions in barriers to commerce and have established international agreements to promote trade in goods, services, and investment. Taking advantage of new opportunities in foreign markets, corporations have built foreign factories and established production and marketing arrangements with foreign partners. A defining feature of globalization, therefore, is an international industrial and financial business structure.

Technology has been the other principal driver of globalization. Advances in information technology, in particular, have dramatically transformed economic life. Information technologies have given all sorts of individual economic actors—consumers, investors, businesses—valuable new tools for identifying and pursuing economic opportunities, including faster and more informed analyses of economic trends around the world, easy transfers of assets, and collaboration with far-flung partners.

Globalization is deeply controversial, however. Proponents of globalization argue that it allows poor countries and their citizens to develop economically and raise their standards of living, while opponents of globalization claim that the creation of an unfettered international free market has benefited multinational corporations in the Western world at the expense of local enterprises, local cultures, and common people. Resistance to globalization has therefore taken shape both at a popular and at a governmental level as people and governments try to manage the flow of capital, labor, goods, and ideas that constitute the current wave of globalization.

To find the right balance between benefits and costs associated with globalization, citizens of all nations need to understand how globalization works and the policy choices facing them and their societies.

### GLOBALIZATION ESSAY

Every day we hear it on the news, read it in the papers, overhear people talking about it… and in every single instance the word globalization seems to have a different meaning. So, what is globalization?  
  
At political and economic level, globalization is the process of denationalization of markets, politics and legal systems, it is the rise of global economy. Many international organizations, governmental institutions and the whole academic world discuss the consequences of this political and economic restructuring on local economies, human welfare and environment. It is one of the most important features of present world’s essay.

At a business level, the process of globalization is when companies decide to take part in the emerging global economy and establish themselves in foreign markets. They adapt their products or services to the linguistic and cultural requirements of different nations. Then, they might take advantage of the Internet revolution and establish a virtual presence on the international marketplace. More and more companies do their business online. E-commerce has changed traditional business practices by providing direct international access to information access to information and products.

Some scientists agree that globalization has also cultural and ecological connotations, and that it is not only political or economic phenomenon. It means that countries all over the world become interdependent in many possible ways. There is probably no area of human activities left that is not affected by globalization. We listen to the same music, eat the same food, wear the same clothes, and decide ecological and war and peace issues together.

But I think that the core sense of globalization is economic. In recent years more and more economic activity in the world seems to be taking place between people who live in different countries (rather than in the same country). It takes different forms, like international trade, growth of import and export, foreign investments, foreign loans and bonds, and many others. Economic globalization has different consequences on businesses all over the world and influences almost every other sphere of human life. Globalization has potential benefits on the one hand, and costs or risks on the other. Globalization increases economic development and reduces poverty. Globalization makes us vulnerable to changes all over the world. For example the huge market or foreign goods in the United States creates jobs overseas and keeps foreign workers employed. Similarly Psychology Articles, the health of the U.S. economy depends on how well American products sell in foreign countries.

Seven of the world’s leading industrial nations meet annually at a “Group of Seven” summit to coordinate policies for worldwide economic issues.

Each one of us is now more fully involved in a global economic system than were our parents or grandparents. There are probably no industries left that have much “natural protection” from international competition. Globalization in its core sense is the expansion of cross-border economic ties. Geographical distance does not matter any more.

# THE GLOBALIZATION DEBATE

[Globalization](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/globalization.asp) is the tendency of investment funds and businesses to move beyond domestic and national markets to other markets around the globe, allowing them to become interconnected with different markets. Proponents of globalization say that it helps developing nations "catch up" to industrialized nations much faster through increased employment and technological advances and Asian economies are often highlighted as examples of globalization's success. Critics of globalization say that it weakens national sovereignty and allows rich nations to ship domestic jobs overseas where labour is much cheaper. What is the real story on globalization? It largely depends on your personal perspective. In this article, we’ll examine the issue from both sides.

**THE VIEW FROM THE PENTHOUSE**

For business leaders and members of the economic elite, globalization is good. Cheaper labor overseas enables them to build production facilities in locations where labor and healthcare costs are low and then sell the finished goods in locations where wages are high.

**THE VIEW FROM THE STREET**

But globalization doesn't only affect high-net-worth individuals. Competition for jobs stretches far beyond the immediate area in a global marketplace. From technology call centers in India, to automobile manufacturing plants in China, globalization means that workers must compete with job applicants from around the world.

**THE VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE GROUND**

**In the globalization battleground, outsourcing is a double-edged sword.** On the one hand, low wages in foreign countries enable retailers to sell clothing, cars and other goods at reduced rates in western nations where shopping has become an ingrained part of the culture. This allows companies to increase their profit margins.

At the same time, shoppers save money when they buy these goods, causing some supporters of globalization to argue that while sending jobs overseas tends to lower wages, it may also lower prices at the same time.

**THE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION**

The ever-increasing flow of cross-border traffic in terms of money, information, people and technology isn't going to stop.

Some argue that it is a classic situation of the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. While global standards of living have risen overall as industrialization takes root in third-world countries, they have fallen in developed countries. Today, the gap between rich and poor countries is expanding as is the gap between the rich and poor within these countries.

Homogenization of the world is another result, with the same coffee shop on every corner and the same big-box retailers in seemingly every city in every country. So, while globalization does promote contact and exchange between cultures, it also tends to make them more similar to one another. At the market level, linked global financial markets propel local issues into international problems, such as meltdowns in Southeast Asia to Russian debt defaults.

**WHAT LIES AHEAD?**

Deviation from the status quo on this issue is likely to be minimal. The massive outsourcing of U.S. manufacturing jobs that began decades ago continues today. [White collar](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/w/whitecollar.asp) jobs, such as call center workers, medical technicians and accountants have also joined the outsource parade, leaving many to argue that those profiting from the arrangement have little incentive to change it, while those most impacted by it are virtually powerless.

Politicians have latched onto the idea of the disappearing middle class as a political issue, but none of their income redistribution schemes are likely to have any immediate substantial impact.

Public scrutiny has encouraged business leaders to begin to see that a rising tide doesn't necessarily lift all boats. In many cases low-wage workers get hurt because they don't have transferable skills. The concept of retraining workers is on the radar, but it's easier said than done.

Until a better solution is found, education, flexibility and adaptability are the keys to survival. So far, the only answer that politicians and business leaders agree on is the value of an educated, flexible, adaptable workforce.

**SURVIVAL OF THE WEAKEST, RETURN OF THE STRONG: THE DRIFT**

**TO GLOBAL DISORDER**

Don't be fooled by the title of Robert Harvey's [sweeping analysis](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#sweeping analysis#sweeping analysis) of post-Cold War chaos. He is not **advocating** some kind of [right-wing](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#right-wing#right-wing) philosopher's survival -of-the-fittest [utopia](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#utopia#utopia), in which the toughest strongman will stop the rot of the New World Disorder. On the contrary, the Return of the Strong is about the lack of control over the "strong" - **be they** greedy corporations, money-market manipulators, [rogue regimes](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#rogue regimes#rogue regimes) or [jackbooted nationalist leaders](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#jackbooted nationalist leaders#jackbooted nationalist leaders)}. **On top of that**, Harvey wants to put a stop to it by that most unfashionable of instruments: government. The bigger, the better. Preferably groups of governments acting together.

The title and his basic **thesis** are drawn from the 17th century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes and his successors, both British and American, who saw the "state of nature" as one in which the strong lived at the expense of the weak. Hobbes argued, says Harvey, for a triangular relationship between the strong, the weak and the state. The state's job would be to keep the strong and the weak apart.

Hobbes was criticized for advocating [absolutism](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#absolutism#absolutism) by demanding huge powers for the state. But what he really wanted, Harvey argues, was a state which existed to serve the people and protect them from each other's selfishness. Rights were natural and [inalienable](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#inalienable#inalienable) - both those of the strong to make their advances and those of the weak not to be exploited.

If that were all he was trying to say, this would be a dull book **indeed**. Instead, Harvey examines a range of current issues from the wars and political [turmoil](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=turmoil) [bedeviling](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#bedeviling#bedeviling) the post-Soviet world and the West's inability to deal with it; to the danger of East Asian, especially Chinese, rearmament; the [**spurious**](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=spurious) nature of Japanese democracy (disguising an authoritarian regime), and the temptation for China and others to follow the Japanese model - with or without the [democratic facade](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#democratic facade#democratic facade).

The [flaws](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#flaws#flaws) in the free market and the weaknesses and similarities to communist bureaucracy of international capitalist enterprise are further [grist to his philosophical mill](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#grist to his philosophical mill#grist to his philosophical mill) . Economically, he argues, global capitalism is not much different in its outlook and insensitivity to the nation - based capitalism of the end of the last century. It is [**complacent**](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=complacent), uncaring, authoritarian and (as the international debt crisis of the 1980s showed) incompetent. It is out of control and could engender a reaction in the 21st century not unlike the communist reaction that grew out of the capitalism of the 19th.

He [debunks the belief](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#debunks the belief#debunks the belief) of right-wing economists and philosophers that letting the market decide will eventually put the international economy right, arguing that the forces [unleashed](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=unleash) by global capitalism are too big for individual governments.

Far from undermining national [sovereignty](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=sovereignty), membership of big groups of countries with single currencies, such as the one proposed for the European Union, is the only hope left for governments too small individually to counter the [arbitrary](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=arbitrary) destruction [**wreaked**](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#wreaked#wreaked) by market forces. A world divided into a Euro-currency zone, a dollar zone and a yen zone would have the muscle to keep those forces in check. It would also have to co-operate economically as well as militarily. It could not avoid friction entirely - but the alternative would be economic instability and possibly war.

The peace dividend of the end of the Cold War is being [**squandered**](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=squander). The major powers at the end of this century, says Harvey, exude the same self-congratulation as at the end of the last. America is blindly and dangerously disengaging itself from Europe and the world; Germany and Japan are reverting to nationalism; China is rearming and throwing its weight about. Unless joint action is taken, we face the same global horrors as our great-grandfathers, but this time through a nuclear [haze](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=haze).

Joint action would mean an alliance, through NATO, (but including, flexibly, the Russians and the Japanese where necessary), to consistently enforce the rule that territory cannot be taken by force. The world must no longer have one rule for Iraq and another for Serbia.

In the vast sweep of this global review, one is occasionally left wondering where the author is heading. There are also a few [**glaring inconsistencies**](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre10.htm#glaring inconsistencies#glaring inconsistencies) and omissions. Having warned of the threat to global security of Chinese expansionism, for instance, he fails to deal with it in his chapter on military co-operation. That leaves a gaping hole in his strategic thinking. But, by the end, Harvey manages to deliver a coherent argument and a reasonably plausible set of solutions, although he recognizes the chances of getting governments to work together so smoothly are slim indeed.

Harvey has drawn on his enormous experience as a [parliamentarian](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=parliamentarian), foreign affairs analyst and writer to produce a book that is readable, despite its complexity and vast subject matter. **Whether** he can get the world to heed his warning that "Without a New World Order, there will be no order", remains to be seen.

**NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

It is generally well known that in a number of particularly dangerous parts of the world, for example the Middle East and the India/Pakistan [border](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=border) region, there are countries which either [possess](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=possess), or have the [technology](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=technology) to produce, nuclear [weapons](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=weapon). It is also worth remembering, however, that the country which possesses more [nuclear](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=nuclear) weapons than any other, the United States, is the only power ever to have used nuclear weapons against people.

Nuclear weapons were first developed in the United States during the Second World War, to be used against Germany. However, by the time the first [bombs](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=bomb) were ready for use, the war with Germany had ended and, as a result, the decision was made to use the weapons against Japan instead. Hiroshima and Nagasaki have suffered the [consequences](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=consequence) of this decision to the present day.

The real reasons why bombs were dropped on two heavily-populated cities are not altogether clear. A number of people in 1944 and early 1945 argued that the use of nuclear weapons would be unnecessary, since American [Intelligence](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=Intelligence) was aware that some of the most powerful and [influential](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=influential) people in Japan had already realized that the war was lost, and wanted to [negotiate](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=negotiate) a Japanese [surrender](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=surrender). It was also argued that, since Japan has few **natural resources**, a **blockade** by the American navy would force it to surrender within a few weeks, and the use of nuclear weapons would thus prove unnecessary. If **a demonstration of force** was required to end the war, a bomb could be dropped over an unpopulated area like a desert, in front of Japanese observers, or over an area of low population inside Japan, such as a forest. Opting for **this** course of action might minimize the loss of further lives on all sides, while the power of nuclear weapons would still be [adequately](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=adequate) demonstrated.

All of these arguments were [rejected](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=reject), however, and the general [consensus](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=consensus) was that the quickest way to end the fighting would be to use nuclear weapons against centers of population inside Japan. In fact, two of the more likely reasons why this decision was reached seem quite shocking to us now.

Since the beginning of the Second World War both Germany and Japan had adopted a policy of [genocide](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=genocide) (i.e. killing as many people as possible, including civilians). Later on, even the US and Britain had used the strategy of fire bombing cities (Dresden and Tokyo, for example) in order to kill, injure and **intimidate** as many civilians as possible. Certainly, the general public in the West had become used to hearing about the deaths of large numbers of people, so the deaths of another few thousand Japanese, who were the enemy **in any case**, would not seem particularly unacceptable - a bit of **'justifiable'** [revenge](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=revenge) for the [Allies](http://www.edict.com.hk/vlc/comp/compre11.htm#Allies#Allies)' own losses, perhaps.

The second reason is not much easier to comprehend. Some of the leading scientists in the world had **collaborated** to develop nuclear weapons, and this development had resulted in a number of major advances in technology and scientific knowledge. As a result, a lot of **normal, intelligent people** wanted to see nuclear weapons used; they wanted to see just how [destructive](http://www.edict.com.hk/scripts/cgi-bin/lexicon.cgi?SearchStr=destructive) this new invention could be. It no doubt turned out to be even more 'effective' than they had imagined.

**DEMOCRACY**

We live in a time when the call for freedom and democracy echoes across the globe. While the desire for freedom may be innate, the practice of democracy must be learned. The citizens of a democracy enjoy the right of individual freedom, but they also share the responsibility of joining with others to shape a future that will continue to embrace the fundamental values of freedom and self-government. The citizens of a democracy use their hard-won freedom to participate in the life of their society.

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pinning democratic labels upon themselves.

In the dictionary definition, democracy “is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system”. In the phrase of Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”.

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. For this reason, it is possible to identify the time-tested fundamentals of constitutional government, human rights and equality before the law that any society must possess to be called democratic.

All democracies are systems in which citizens freely make political decisions by majority rule. But rule by the majority is not necessarily democratic. In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of minorities. The rights of minorities do not depend upon the goodwill of the majority and cannot be eliminated by majority vote. The rights of minorities are protected because democratic laws and institutions protect the rights of all citizens.

Democracy is more than a set of constitutional rules and procedures how a government functions. In a democracy, government is only one element coexisting in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political parties, organizations and associations.

In an authoritarian society, all such organizations would be controlled, licensed, watched or otherwise accountable to the government. In a democracy, the powers of the government are, by law, clearly defined and sharply limited. As a result, private organizations are free of government control. Other groups, concerned with the arts, the practice of religious faith, scholarly research or other interests, may choose to have little or no contact with the government at all.

In a democratic society, citizens can explore the possibilities of freedom and the responsibilities of self-government – unpressured by the potentially heavy hand of the state.

Governments in a democracy are created to protect fundamental freedoms that every individual possesses by virtue of his or her existence. Inalienable rights include freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and the rights to equal protection before the law. The detailed formulation of laws and procedures concerning these basic human rights will necessarily vary form society to society, but every democracy is charged with the task of building the constitutional, legal and social structures that will ensure their protection.

Freedom of speech and expression is the lifeblood of any democracy. To debate and vote, to assemble and protest, to worship, to ensure justice for all – these all rely upon the unrestricted flow of speech and information. Democracy is communication: people talking to one another about their common problems and forging a common destiny. Before people can govern themselves, they must be free to express themselves.

Citizens of a democracy live with the conviction that through the open exchange of ideas and opinions, truth will eventually win out over falsehood, the values of others will be better understood, areas of compromise more clearly defined and the path of progress opened. The greater the volume of such exchanges, the better. The press in a democracy is reliable and useful not because of its good character but because of its great diversity.

It may seem a paradox, but in the name of free speech, a democracy must sometimes defend the rights of individuals and groups who themselves advocate such non-democratic policies as repressing free speech. Citizens in a democratic society defend this right out of the conviction that, in the end, open debate will lead to greater truth and wiser public actions. Without the right to gather and be heard, freedom of speech would be devalued. For this reason, freedom of speech is considered closely linked to, if not inseparable from the right to gather, protest and demand change.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”. This children’s rhyme is quoted by David Hamlin. His point is that words and acts are entirely distinct form one another. Acts, he says, can be harmful, but nit words, “for no word ever committed a crime, no name ever violated a law, no speech ever broke a bone”. And yet, words do have consequences. Words can inspire people to do great deeds. They can also lead to crimes.

If speech can produce such consequences, should we ban harmful speech? Who is to decide what is harmful? History is full of examples of ideas that later generations accepted as sublime truths. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified as an insurrectionist. Four centuries earlier, a jury in Athens found Socrates guilty of “corrupting youth” and sentenced him to death. In seventeenth-century Italy, Jesuits forced Galileo tom recant his view that the earth moved round the sun, because it seemed to contradict the Bible.

The problem, of course, is that different people see things differently, especially over the course of time. Once upon a time, women were arrested at public beaches for wearing bathing suits that showed their thighs. At that time, books that are now considered works of art, such as D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover and James Joyce’s Ulysses, were banned.

**IS DEMOCRACY A WESTERN OR UNIVERSAL VALUE?**

Democracy is often described as one of the greatest gifts the West has given to the world. It certainly is one of the greatest gifts to humanity. But is it “Western” or more universal a principle? The previous table suggests there is some universality.

A common Euro-centric view of world history describes ancient Greek democracy as Western democracy, with ancient Greece as part of that Western/European identity.

Yet, as John Hobson writes in his anti Euro-centric book, The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation, (Cambridge University Press, 2004), ancient Greece and Rome were not considered as part the “West” until much later; that is, Greece and Rome were part of a whole Middle East center of civilization, in some ways on the edge of it, as more was happening further Eastward.

Western Europe adopted or appropriated ancient Greek achievements in democracy as its own much later when it needed to form a cohesive ideology and identity to battle the then rising Islam and to counter its defeats during the Crusades.

And, as also noted much further below, it was the Middle East in the 9th – 12th centuries that preserved a lot of Ancient Greek and Roman achievements after Rome collapsed (which Europe then thankfully also preserved when the Middle East faced its own invasion and collapse — by the Mongols.

The point here is that democracy is perhaps more universal than acknowledged and that there is a lot of propaganda in how history is told, sometimes highlighting differences amongst people more than the similarities and cross-fertilization of ideas that also features prominently in history. After all, great battles throughout the ages are often celebrated far more than cross cultural fertilization of ideas which require more study and thought and doesn’t make for epic tales!

As discussed further below, there are elements within both Western and non-Western societies that are hostile to democracy for various reasons.

The word democracy can often be overloaded! (George Orwell)

In the case of a word like DEMOCRACY, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using the word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.

While most countries claim themselves to be democratic, the degree to which they are varies, according to Freedom House, which surveys political and human rights developments, along with ratings of political rights and civil liberties:

Perhaps it is no wonder Churchill once said,

Democracy is the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried. — Sir Winston Churchill

On the one hand then, there has never been as much democracy as present. And yet, many countries suffer from poor representations, election anomalies and corruption, “pseudo democracy”, etc. While these issues will be explored further below, first a look at some of the fundamentals of a democratic system.

## Pillars of a functioning democracy

In a democratic government key principles include free and open elections, the rule of law, and a separation of powers, typically into the following:

* Legislature (law-making)
* Executive (actually governing within those laws)
* Judiciary (system of courts to administer justice)

It is felt that separating these powers will prevent tyrannical rule. Critics of this may argue that this leads to extra bureaucracy and thus inefficient execution of policy.

Not all countries have or need such a complete separation and many have some level of overlap. Some governments such as the US have a clear separation of powers while in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, a parliamentary system somewhat merges the legislature and executive.

An edition of a Wikipedia article looking at the [separation of powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) noted that “Sometimes systems with strong separation of powers are pointed out as difficult to understand for the average person, when the political process is often somewhat fuzzy. Then a parliamentarian system often provides a clearer view and it is easier to understand how ‘politics are made’. This is sometimes important when it comes to engaging the people in the political debate and increase the citizen.”

This suggests that education of politics is also important. The US for example, attempts to teach children about their system of governance. In the UK, for example (also writing from personal experience) this is not typically done to the same extent (if at all). This may also be a factor as to why further separation of powers in the US has been reasonably successful.

Some people talk of the difference between a minimalist government and direct democracy, whereby a smaller government run by experts in their field may be better than involving all people in all issues at all time. In a sense this may be true, but the risk with this approach is if it is seen to exclude people, then such governments may lose legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate. Direct democracy, on the other hand, may encourage activism and participation, but the concern is if this can be sustained for a long period of time, or not.

The historical context for some countries may also be a factor. Many examples of successful democracies include nations that have had time to form a national identity, such as various European or North American countries.

Other nations, often made up of many diverse ethnic groups, may find themselves forced to live together. A major example would be most African countries, whose artificial borders resulted from the 1885 Berlin Conference where European colonial and imperial powers, (not Africans) carved up Africa (for the colonial ruler’s own benefit, not for Africans).

Such nations may find themselves in a dilemma: an intertwined set of branches of government may allow democratic institutions to be strengthened, but it may also lead to corruption and favoritism of some groups over others. Furthermore, many such countries have been emerging from the ravages of colonialism in the past only to be followed by dictatorships and in some cases social and ethnic tensions that are freed from the restraints of authoritarian rule. As such, many poor nations in such a situation do not have the experience, manpower or resources in place to put in an effective democracy, immediately.

It is therefore unclear if what is determined as best practice for an established democracy is necessarily, or automatically, the recipe for a newly emerged democracy. For example, a country coming out of dictatorship may require a strong leadership to guide a country towards further democracy if there are still elements in the society that want the old ways to come back. This might mean more integration of powers, to prevent instability or the old rulers attempting to manipulate different branches of government, for example. However, in this scenario, there is of course a greater threat that that strong leadership would become susceptible to being consumed by that power, and it may become harder to give it up later.

Getting this one aspect of governance right, let alone all the other issues, is therefore incredibly challenging in a short time. As such, an effective democracy may not be easy to achieve for some countries, even if there is overwhelming desire for it.

In addition to those formal aspects of a functioning democracy, there are other key pillars, for example,

* Civilian control of the military
* Accountability
* Transparency.

Civilian control over the military is paramount. Not only must the military be held to account by the government (and, be extension, the people), but the military leadership must fully believe in a democratic system if instability through military coups and dictatorships are to be avoided. (This is discussed further below.) Indeed, some nations do not have full-time professional armies for the reason that coups and military take-over is less likely. Others, notably the more established powers, typically do have it, because they have had a recent history of war and their place in the world stage may make it seem a necessary requirement.

To achieve the openness that transparency and accountability gives, there is an important need for a free press, independent from government. Such a media often represents the principle of the universal right to free speech. This combination is supposed to allow people to make informed choices and decisions thereby contributing to political debate, productively.

Transparency and accountability also requires more bureaucracy as decisions and processes need to be recorded and made available for the general public to access, debate and discuss, if necessary. This seems easy to forget and so it is common to hear concerns raised about the inefficiency of some governmental department.

Efficiency, however, should not necessarily be measured in terms of how quickly a specific action is completed or even how much it costs (though these can be important too). The long-term impact is often important and the need to be open/transparent may require these extra steps.

A simple comparison on procuring a service may help highlight this:

* A responsible government may request a tender for contract. An open process to document these and how/why a final choice was made is important so that there is openness, understanding, and accountability to the people. For example, the media, and citizenry can use this to determine whether or not decisions have been made with the best interests in mind. Some of the higher profile issue may require sustained public discourse and expensive media coverage, too.
* With a private company, the same process could be followed, but all workers (especially in a large company) and shareholders are not equal, and the company’s board is usually entrusted to make many decisions quickly. They do not have to record every single detail or even request an open tender for contract if they don’t want to. The “market” and the shareholders will presumably hold the company to account.

Even when companies are subject to these same requirements of openness, governments may have requirements that companies do not have, such as providing universal access to a service such as health care. Companies, however, can chose what market segments they wish to go for.

A government may therefore incur costs and expenditures that are not needed by a private company. This raises legitimate concerns about excessive drives for privatization being led by misguided principles, or the wrong type of efficiency. Conversely, one could hide behind the excuse of democratic accountability if accused of not acting quickly and decisively enough. Openness, transparency, independent media, etc. are therefore key to assuring such processes are not abused in either direction.

[Side note: To avoid claims of inefficient government being just based on ideology, perhaps the cost of being open and transparent in all decision making could be more thoroughly factored into these economic calculations. This is something not typically required in private companies and organizations, for example, which can then appear more efficient. There is also the counter point that some things cannot be efficiently done or developed by committee, but instead by specialized groups that get to focus on the task at hand.

There are, of course, many legitimate concerns and examples of unnecessary/wasteful bureaucratic processes in government, as well as in the private sector which do require addressing.

**DIFFERENT VIEWS OF POLITICS**

The word “politics” is derived from polis (Greek), literally meaning city-state. (Ancient Creek society was divided into a collection of independent city-states, each of which possessed its own system of government). The modern from of this definition is therefore ‘what concerns the state’. To study politics is in essence to study government, or more broadly, the exercise of authority.

Politics is what takes place within a polity, a system of social organizations centered upon the machinery of government.

Politics is therefore practiced in cabinet rooms, legislative chambers government departments and the like and it is engaged in by a limited and specific group of people. Businesses, schools and other educational institutions, community groups, families and so on are in the sense ‘nonpolitical because they are not engaged in ‘running the country’.

The definition can be narrowed still further. This is evident in the tendency to treat politics as equivalent of party politics. In other words, the realm of ‘the political’ is restricted to those state actors who are consciously motivated by organization such as a political party.

The link between politics and the affairs of the state also helps to explain why negative images have so often been attached to politics. This is because in the popular mind, politics is closely associated with the activities of politicians. But brutally, the politicians are often seen as power-seeking hypocrites who conceal personal ambitions behind the rhetoric of public service and ideological conviction. This rejection of the personnel and machinery of conventional political life is clearly evident in the use of derogatory phrases such as ‘office politics’ and ‘politicking’. But without some kind of mechanisms for allocating authoritative values, society would simply disintegrate into a civil war of each against all. The task is therefore not to abolish politicians and to bring politicians and to bring politics to an end, but rather to ensure that politics is conducted within a framework of checks and constraints that ensure that government power is not abused.

Thus, politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live.

Politics is also an academic subject, it is clearly concerned with the study of this activity.

Politics is also linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation (the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests guarantees disagreement about the rules under which people live). This is why the heart of politics is often portrayed as a process of conflict resolution, in which rival views or competing interests are reconciled with one another.

Politics as the art of government. ‘Politics is not a science ... but an art’. Chancellor Bismarck is reputed to have told the German Reichstag. The art Bismarck had in mind was the art of government, the exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decisions. This is perhaps the classical definition of politics, developed from the original meaning of the term in Ancient Greece.

Politics as public affaires. The second and broader conception of politics moves it beyond the narrow realm of government to what is thought of as ‘public life’ or ‘public affairs’. On the basis of ‘public/private’ division, politics is restricted to the activities of the state itself and responsibilities are properly exercised by public bodies (the apparatus of government, the courts, the police, the army, the society-security system and so forth).

Politics as compromise and consensus. The third conception of politics relates not so much to the arena within which politics is conducted as to the way in which decisions are made. Specifically, politics is seen as a particular means of resolving conflict, that is by compromise, conciliation and negotiation, rather than through force and naked power. This is what is implied when politics is portrayed as ‘the art of the possible’. Such a definition is inherent in the everyday use of the term. For instance, the description of a solution to a problem as a ‘political’ solution implies peaceful debate and arbitration, as opposed to what is often called a ‘military’ solution.

Politics as power. The fourth definition of politics is both the broadest and the most radical. This view sees politics at work in all social activities and in every corner of human existence. At its broadest, politics concerns the production, distribution and use of resources in the existence of scarcity. The simple fact that, while human needs and desires are infinite, the resources available to satisfy them are always limited, politics can therefore be seen as a struggle over scarce resources, and power can be seen as the means through which this struggle is conducted.

**REGIMES OF THE MODERN WORLD**

1. Western polyarchies.

Western polyarchies are broadly equivalent of regimes categorized as liberal democracies’ or even simply ‘democracies’. Their heartlands are therefore North America, Western Europe and Australia, although states ranging from India and Japan to the ‘new’ South Africa all exhibit strongly polyarchial features.

The term ‘polyarchy’ is preferable to liberal ‘democracy’ for two reasons. First, liberal democracy is sometimes treated as a political ideal. Secondly, the use of ‘polyarchy’ acknowledges that these regimes fall short, in important ways, of the goal of democracy.

All states that hold multiparty elections have polyarchical features. Nevertheless, western polyarchies have a more distinctive and particular character. They are market not only by representative democracy and a capitalist economic organization, but also by a widespread acceptance of liberal individualism.

Western polyarchies are not all alike, however. Some of them are biased in favour of centralization and majority rule, and others tend towards fragmentation and pluralism. A system of consociational democracy is particularly appropriate to societies that are divided by deep religions, ideological, regional, cultural or other differences. Consensual or pluralistic tendencies are often associated with the following features:

* Coalition government
* A separation of power between the executive and the assembly
* An effective bicameral system
* A multiparty system
* Proportional representation
* Federalism or devolution
* A codified constitution and a bill of rights

1. Post communist regimes.

The collapse of communism in the eastern Europe revolutions of 1889-91 undoubtedly unleashed a process of democratization that drew heavily on the western liberal model. The central features of this process were the adoption of multiparty elections and the introduction of market-based economic reforms. In that sense, it can be argued that most (some would say all) former communist regimes are undergoing a transition that will eventually make them indistinguishable from western polyarchies. Nevertheless, for the time being at least, there are reasons for treating these systems as distinct. In the first place, the heritage of their communist past can not be discarded overnight, especially when, as in Russia, the communist system had endured for 70 years. Secondly, the process of transition itself has unleashed forces and generated problems quite different from those that confront western polyarchies. One feature of Post communist regimes is the need to deal with the politico-cultural consequences of communist rule. A second set of problems stem from the process of economic transition. The ‘shock therapy’ transition from central planning to laissez-faire capitalism, advocated by the International Monetary Fund, unleashed deep insecurity because of the growth of unemployment and inflation, and it significantly increased social inequality. Important differences between Postcommunist states can also be identified. The most crucial of these is that between the more industrially advanced and westernized countries of ‘central’ Europe and the backward ‘eastern’ states. In the former group, market reform has proceeded swiftly and relatively smoothly; in the latter, it has either been grudging and incomplete or it has given rise to deep political tensions.

1. East Asian Regimes.

The rise of East Asia in the late twentieth century may ultimately prove to be a more important world-historical event than the collapse of communism. Certainly, the balance of the world’s economy has shifted markedly from the West to the East in the period. However, the notion that there is a distinctively East Asian political form is a less familiar one. The widespread assumption has been that modernization means westernization. Translated into political terms, this means that industrial capitalism is always accompanied by liberal democracy. However, this interpretation fails to take account of the degree to which polyarchial institutes operate differently in an Asian context from the way they do in a western one. Most importantly, it ignores the difference between cultures influenced by Confucian ideas and values ones shaped by liberal individualism.

East Asian regimes tend to have similar characteristics. First, they are orientated more around economic goals than political ones. Secondly there is broad support for ‘strong’ government. Powerful ‘ruling’ parties tend to be tolerated, and there is general respect for the state. Although, with low taxes, and relatively low public spending (usually below 30 per cent of GDP/gross product/), there is little room for the western model of the welfare state, there is nevertheless general acceptance that the state as a “father figure” should guide decisions of private as well as public bodies, and draw up strategies for national development. This characteristic is accompanied, thirdly, by a general disposition to respect leaders because of the Confucian stress on loyalty, discipline and duty. Finally, great emphasis is placed on community and social cohesion, embodied in the central role accorded to the family. The resulting emphasis on what the Japanese call ‘group think’ restricts the scope for the assimilation of ideas such as individualism and human rights, at least as these are understood in the West.

1. Islamic regimes

The rise of Islam as a political force has had a profound affect on politics in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. In some cases, militant Islamic groups have challenged existing regimes, often articulating the interests of an urban poor. Islam is not, however, and never has been, simply a religion. Rather, it is a complete way of life, defining correct moral, political and economic behavior for individuals and nations alike. Political Islam aims at the construction of a theocracy in which political and other affairs are structured accounting to ‘higher’ religious principles. Nevertheless, political Islam has assumed clearly contrasting forms, ranging from fundamentalism to pluralist extremes.

1. Military regimes

Whereas most regimes are shaped by a combination of political, economic, cultural and ideological factors, some survive through the exercise, above all, of military power and systematic repression. In this sense, military regimes belong to a broader category of authoritarianism. Military authoritarianism has been most common in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and South East Asia, but it also emerged in the postwar period in Spain, Portugal and Greece. The key feature of a military regime is that the leading posts in the government are filled on the basis of the person’s position within the military chain of command. Normal political and constitutional arrangements are usually suspended, and institution through which opposition can be expressed, such as elected assemblies and a free press, are either weakened or abolished.

Although all forms of military rule are deeply repressive, this classification encompasses a number of regime types. In some military regimes, the armed forces assume direct control of government. The classical form of this is the military junta, most commonly found in Latin America. This operates as a form of collective military government centered on a command council of officers who usually represent the three armed services: the army, navy and air force. The second form of military regime is a military-backed personalized dictatorship. In these cases, a single individual gains preeminence within the junta or regime. In the final form of military regime, the loyalty of the armed forces is the decisive factor that upholds the regime, but the military leaders content themselves with ‘pulling the strings’ behind the scenes.

**WHAT IS POLITICAL IDEOLOGY?**

Ideology is one of the most controversial concepts encountered in political analysis. Although the term now tends to be used in a neutral sense, to refer to a developed social philosophy or ‘world view’, it had in the past heavily negative or pejorative connotations. During its sometimes tortuous career, the concept of ideology has commonly been used as a political weapon to condemn or criticize rival creeds or doctrines.

The term ‘ideology’ was coined in 1796 by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836). He used it to refer to a new ‘science of ideas’ (literally an idea-ology) that set out to uncover the origins of conscious thought and ideas.

From a social-scientific viewpoint, an ideology is a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides a basis for organized political action, whether this is intended to preserve, modify or overthrow the existing system of power relationships.

All ideologies therefore

* 1. offer an account of the existing order, usually in the from of a ‘world view’,
  2. provide a model of a desired future, a vision of the Good Society and
  3. outline how political change can and should be brought about.

Ideologies are not, however, hermetically sealed systems of thought; rather, they are fluid sets of ideas which overlap with one another at a number of points. At a ‘fundamental’ level, ideologies resemble political philosophies; at an ‘operative’ level, they take the form of broad political movements.

**THE END OF IDEOLOGY?**

Much of the debate about ideology in the late twentieth century was focused on predictions of its demise, or at least of its fading relevance. This has come to be known as the ‘end of ideology’ debate. It was initiated in the 1950s, stimulated by the collapse of fascism at the end of the Second World War and the decline of communism in the developed West. In ‘The End of Ideology?: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the 1959s’ (1960), the US sociologist Daniel Bell declared that the stock of political ideas had been exhausted. In his view, ethical end ideological questions had become irrelevant because in most western societies parties competed for power simply by promising higher levels of economic growth and material affluence. In short, economics had triumphed over politics. However, the process to which Bell drew attention was not so much an end of ideology as the emergence of a broad ideological consensus amongst major parties that led to the suspension of ideological debate. The ideology that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s was a form of welfare capitalism, which in the UK and elsewhere took the form a Keynesian-welfarist consensus.

A more recent contribution to this debate was made by Francis Fukuyama(his essay ‘The End of History?’, 1989). Fukuyama did not suggest political ideology had become irrelevant, but rather that a single ideology, liberal democracy, had triumphed over all its rivals, and that this triumph was final. This essay was written against the background of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe, which Fukuyama interpreted as indicating the demise of Marxism-Leninism as an ideology of world-historical importance. An alternative way of interpreting these developments, however, is offered by postmodernism, which suggests that the major ideologies, or ‘grand narratives’, were essentially products of a period of modernization that has now passed. On the other hand, the very assertion of an end of ideology, an end of history, or an end of modernity can be seen as ideological in itself. Rather than heralding the final demise of ideology, such assertions may merely demonstrate that ideological debate is alive and well, and that the evolution of ideology is a continuing and perhaps unending process.

**LIBERALISM AND CONSERVATISM**

Any account of political ideologies must start with liberalism. This is because liberalism is, in effect, the ideology of the industrialized West, and is sometimes portrayed as a meta – ideology that is capable of embracing a broad range of rival values and beliefs. Although liberalizm did not emerge as a developed political creed until the early nineteenth century, distinctively liberal theories and principles had gradually been developed during the previous 300 years.

The central theme of classical liberalism is a commitment to an extreme from of individualism. The state is regarded as a “necessary evil”. It is “necessary” in that, at the very least, it establishes order and security. However, it is ‘evil’ in that it imposes a collective will upon society, thus limiting the freedom and responsibilities of the individual. In the form of economic liberalism, this position is underpinned by a deep faith in the mechanisms of the free market and the belief that the economy works best when left alone by government.

*Modern liberalism* is characterized by a more sympathetic attitude towards state intervention. Modern liberals abandoned their belief in *laissez-faire capitalism,* largely as a result of J. M. Keynes insight that growth and prosperity could only be maintained through a system of managed or regulated capitalism, with key economic responsibilities being placed in the hands of the state.

*Neoliberalism* is an updated version of classical political economy. The central pillars of neoliberalism are the market and the individual. The principal neoliberal goal is to ‘roll back the frontiers of the state, in the belief that unregulated market capitalism will deliver efficiency growth and widespread prosperity. In this view, the ‘dead hand’ of the state saps initiative and discourages enterprise; government, however well intentioned, invariably has a damaging effect upon human affairs, this is reflected in the liberal New Right’s concern with the politics of ownerships, and its preference for private enterprise over state enterprise or nationalization. *The nanny state is seen* to breed a culture of dependency and to undermine freedom, which is understood as freedom of choice in the market place. Instead, faith is placed in self-help, individual responsibility and entrepreneurialism.

*Conservative ideas* and doctrines first emerged in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century as a reaction against growing pace of economic and political change.

From the very outset, divisions in conservative thought were apparent. In continental Europe, a form of conservatism emerged that was characterized by the attitude rejecting out of hand any idea of reform. A more flexible, more cautious, and ultimately more successful from of conservatism developed in the UK and the USA that was characterized by belief in ‘change in order to conserve’. This stance enabled conservatives to embrace the cause of social reform under the paternalistic banner of ‘One Nation’.

*The New Right* represents a departure in conservative thought that amounts to a kind of counter-revolution against both the postwar drift towards state intervention and spread of liberal or progressive social values. However, the New Right does not so much constitute a coherent and systematic philosophy as an attempt to marry two distinct traditions usually termed ‘neoliberalism’ and ‘neoconservatism’.

*Neo-conservatism* reasserts nineteenth-century conservative social principles. The conservative New Right wishes, above all, to restore authority and return to traditional values, notably those linked to the family, religion and the nation. Authority is seen as guaranteeing social stability, while shared values and common culture are believed to generate social cohesion and make civilized existence possible. The enemies of neo-conservatism are therefore permissiveness, the cult of the self. Another aspect of neo-conservatism is the tendency to view the emergence of multicultural and multireligious societies with concern, on the basis that they are conflict-ridden and inherently unstable. It is sceptical about both immigration and the growing influence of supranational bodies such as the United Nations and the European Union.

**A NEW WORLD ORDER**

The birth of the post-Cold-War world was accompanied by a wave of optimism and idealism. The superpower era had been marked by East-West rivalry that extended across the globe and led to a nuclear buildup that threatened to destroy the planet. As communism collapsed in eastern Europe, and Soviet power was in retreat both domestically and internationally, ‘one world’ speaking with ‘one voice’ appeared to have into existence. The ‘new world order’ was going to be based not on ideological conflict and a balance of terror, but on a common recognition of international norms and standards of morality. Central to this emerging world order was the recognition of the need to settle disputes peacefully, to resist aggression and expansionism, to control and reduce military arsenals, and to ensure the just treatment of domestic populations through respect for human rights. What is more, the 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 which, through the Gulf War of 1991, brought about the expulsion of Iraqi forces. The disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 saw the first use of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in December 1994) as a mechanism for tackling both the Warsaw Pact and NATO.

In many ways, the linchpin of the hoped-for new world order was the USA. A bipolar world order had given way to a unipolar one, with the USA, the only power with the military capacity and political authority to intervene effectively, playing the role of the ‘world’s police force’.

There are several reasons, however, for questioning this image of USA –sponsored international fraternity and world peace. In the first place, there are those who challenge the idea that the USA is a disinterested world power, and doubt that there is anything ‘new’ about the new world order. For example, the anti-Iraq coalition of 1990-91 perhaps only reflected the fact the US and broader western concerns about oil supplies coincided with regional anxieties amongst Islamic powers such as Syria and Saudi Arabia about a ‘Greater Iraq’. In other words, rhetoric about international law and national sovereignty merely camouflaged power politics and the pursuit of national interest. The very idea of a new world order might, indeed, be a piece of historical engineering aimed at safeguarding US interests and maintains the USA’s mastery of the global economy.

There are also doubts about the capacity of the USA to play the role of the world’s police force, even if this were thought to be desirable. In the first place, preponderant nuclear power does not always translate into effective military capacity. At a deeper level, however, it is questionable whether the USA has the economic resources to sustain its global role, particularly in a context of relative decline highlighted by the economic resurgence of Japan and Germany. One manifestation of this has been an upsurge in isolationism. How long will Americans be prepared to pay the price of the USA being “number one”? In the same way as after the First World War, the idea of the USA disengaging itself from international affairs (‘leaving the world to sort itself out’) has come to have a potent appeal in the USA, and this may grow still stronger.

Further stresses within the new world order have been generated by the releasing of tensions and conflicts that the Cold War had helped to keep under control. The existence of an external threat (be it international communism or capitalist encirclement) promotes internal cohesion and gives societies a sense of purpose and identity. To some extent, for instance, the West defined itself through antagonism towards the East, and vice versa. There is evidence that, in many states, the collapse of the external threat has helped to unleash centrifugal pressures, usually in the form of racial, ethnic and regional tensions.

As opposed to the world being policed and orderly, the emerging international scene seems to be typified by lawlessness and inaction; it appears to resemble more a new world disorder. This may, indeed, be the natural condition of a multipolar world order. Whereas bipolarism is structured, albeit by mutual hostility, multipolarism creates more fluid and less predictable conditions in which major actors are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Thus the USA, a German-led Europe, Russia, Japan and South East Asian; tigers’, China, and possibly the Islamic world are all engaged in redefining themselves as international actors freed from the straight-jacket that superpower rivalry imposed. However, the very instability of post-Cold-War politics illustrates its transitionary character. The USA-USSR superpower period may have passed, but a new and stable world order has yet to come into existence. The central question is whether this order will come about through cooperation, engineered by international bodies such as the UN and the EU, or whether it will be imposed through economic domination and military force.

**TOWARDS WORLD GOVERNMENT**

One of the most significant features of twentieth-century politics has been the growing importance of international organizations. These are organizations that are transnational in that they exercise jurisdiction not within a single state, but within an international area comprising several states. Typically, they have been set up by a number of sovereign states to facilitate international cooperation. International organizations thus now reflect a growing recognition of national interdependence in an increasingly shrinking world.

The principal reason for the growth in the number and importance of international organizations is the recognition by states that, in a number of areas, they provide a more effective means of pursuing national interests. This applies particularly to nation security and economic development. Quite simply, an anarchic international order in which states refuse to acknowledge an authority higher than themselves is inevitable biased towards conflict, protectionism and war. Whereas splendid isolation was a luxury that states could afford in the nineteenth or early twentieth century, this option is no longer available in a world of nuclear weapons and economic globalization. State survival is now dependent on collective security, and economic development requires guaranteed access to international and global markets. Both these goals can only be achieved through cooperation under the auspices of international organizations such as NATO and the OSCE on the one hand, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the IMF on the other. Growing awareness of ecological problems, such as global warming and acid rain, makes the need to construct effective international and supranational bodies all the more pressing.

In addition to providing a way of tackling problems that are beyond the power of national governments to solve, international organizations have also managed to acquire a momentum and identity of their own. Once seen as peripheral and untested, many international bodies have become established and seemingly indispensable features of world politics. This is clearly illustrated by the contrasting histories of the League of Nations and the UN.

It is not possible, however, to explain the drift towards supranational organizations simply in terms of convenience and the pursuit of national self-interest. To some extent, it reflects an idealistic commitment to internationalism and the belief that such institutions embody a moral authority that is higher than that commanded by nation-states. In this respect, international organization has given renewed impetus to the notion of a global state or world government, an idea that can be traced back to Imperial Rome. To examine how viable such a project is in modern circumstances, it is instructive at look at the experience of European integration, and the progress that has been made by the UN.

The ‘European idea’ (broadly, the belief that, regardless of historical, cultural and linguistic differences, Europe constitutes a single political community) was born long before 1945. However, until the second half of the twentieth century, such aspirations proved to be hopelessly Utopian. Since the Second World War, Europe has undergone a historically unprecedented process of integration, aimed, some argue, at the creation of what Winston Churchill in 1946 called a ‘United States of Europe’. Indeed, it is sometimes suggested that European integration provides a model of political organization that will eventually be accepted worldwide as the deficiencies of the nation-state become increasingly apparent.

The EU is a very difficult political organization to categorize. In strict terms, it is no longer a confederation of independent states (as the EEC and EC were at their inception). For, the result is a political body that has both intergovernmental and supranational features, the former evident in the Council of Ministers and the latter primarily in the Court of Justice. The EU may not yet have created a federal Europe, but because of the superiority of European law over the national law of the member states, it is perhaps accurate to talk of a federalizing Europe.

**UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL POLITICS**

The recognition that there is an international dimension to politics is as old as the discipline itself.

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of world politics in the sense that patterns of conflict and cooperation amongst states and international organizations extended across the globe.

As the twentieth century was drawing to a close there was a growing recognition that the very parameters of political life had been changing. This called into question the conventional distinction between a domestic realm and an international realm of politics. These complex and multifaceted changes have increasingly been referred to as ‘globalization’.

The emergence of global interdependence has been a consequence of a variety of processes and developments. In the first place, it was one of the results of the superpower rivalry that characterized the Cold War period. Both the world wars of the twentieth century were hegemonic conflicts fought between powers seeking worldwide military dominance. However, the capabilities and resources of the post-1945 superpowers (the USA and the USSR) were so overwhelming that they were able to extend their influence into virtually every region of the world. Secondly, the spread of international trade and the transitional character of modern business organizations have brought a global economy into existence. As the significance of national economies has declined, the world economy has increasingly been characterized by rivalry amongst regional trading blocs. Thirdly, globalization has been fueled by technological innovation. This has effected almost every realm of existence, ranging from the development of nuclear weapons and the emergence of global pollution problems such as acid rain and ozone depletion to the introduction of international telephone links, satellite television, and the ‘information superhighway’. Fourthly, globalization has an important politico-ideological dimension. One aspect of this has been the spread of western-liberal political values, portrayed as the worldwide triumph of liberal democracy. But globalization can also be linked to the growth of Islam as a transnational political creed, and to the growing interest in Green ideas and philosophies.

**THEORIES OF DECISION-MAKING**

The making of decisions, and specifically of bundles of decisions, is clearly central to the policy process. Although policy making also relates to the acts of initiation and implementation, the making of decisions and reaching of conclusions is usually seen as its key feature. However, it may be difficult to establish how and why decisions are made. Decisions are undoubtedly made in different ways by individuals and by groups, within small bodies and within large organizations, and within democratic and authoritarian structures, nevertheless, many general theories of political decision-making have been advanced.

*Rational actor models*

Decision-making models that emphasise human rationality have generally been constructed on the basis of economic theories which have themselves been derived from utilitarianism. At the heart of such theories lies the nation of so-called ‘economic man’, a model of human nature that stress the self-interested pursuit of material satisfaction, calculated in terms of utility. In this light, decisions can be seen to be reached using the following procedures:

* The nature of the problem is identified.
* An objective or goal is selected on the basis of an ordering of individual preferences.
* The available means of achieving this objective are evaluated in terms of their effectiveness, reliability, costs and so on.
* A decision is made through the selection of the means most likely to secure the desired end.

The best example of such an approach to decision-making is found in the use of cost-benefit analysis in the making of business decisions.

Certainly, politicians and others are inclined to portray their actions as both goal-oriented and the product of careful thought and deliberation. When examined more closely, however, rational calculation may not appear to be a particularly convincing model of decision-making. In the first place, the model is more easily applied to individuals, who may have an ordered set of preferences, than it is to groups, within which there are likely to be a number of conflicting objectives. Organizations may therefore only be said to make rational decisions if they are highly centralized and possess a strict command structure,

A second problem is that, in practice, decisions are often made on the basis of inadequate and sometimes inaccurate information, and the benefits of various actions may in any case not be comparable. The final drawback of rational actor models is that they ignore the role of perceptions about reality, rather than by reality itself.

*Incremental models*

Incrementalism is usually portrayed as the principal alternative to rational decision-making. This position holds that policy making is a continuous, exploratory process; lacking overriding goals and clear-cut ends, policy makers tend to operate within an existing pattern or framework, adjusting their position in the light of feedback in the form of information about the impact of earlier decisions. Indeed, incrementalism may suggest a strategy of avoidance or evasion, policy makers being inclined to move away from problems, rather than trying to solve them.

However, the model has also been criticized as profoundly conservative, in that it justifies a bias against innovation and in favour of inertia. Policy makers who embrace incrementalism are more likely to be concerned with day-to day problems than with indulging in long-term visionary thinking. Their energy is channeled into keeping the ship on course, not on reflecting on where that course is leading. A further difficulty is that incrementalism sheds little light on those political decisions that are radical, even revolutionary, in character. In view of such difficulties, the idea of ‘mixed scanning’, which attempts to bridge the gap between the rational approach and incrementalism was proposed. Mixed scanning allows for decision-making being carried out in two distinct phases. First, decision makers broadly evaluate, or scan, all the available policy options in terms of their effectiveness in meeting pre-existing objectives. Then, a narrower and more incremental approach is adopted as the details of a selected policy option are reviewed. In this way, for example, a broad decision to cut public spending must be accompanied by a series of more narrowly focused decisions relating to the specific areas or programmes that may be affected.

*Bureaucratic and organisation model*

Both rational actor and incremental models are essentially ‘black box’ theories of decision-making; neither pays attention to the impact that the structure of the policy making process has on the resulting decisions. Bureaucratic or organisational models, on the other hand, try to get inside the black box by highlight the degree to which process influences product. Two contrasting, but related, models exist. The first, usually called the ‘organisational process’ model, highlights the impact on decisions of the values, assumptions and regular patterns of behaviour that are found in any large organization. Rather than corresponding to radical analysis and objective evolution, decisions are seen to reflect the entrenched culture of the government departmently or agency that makes them. The second theory, the ‘bureaucratic politics’ model, emphasises the impact on decisions of bargaining between personal and agencies, each pursuing differently perceived interests. The approach dismisses the idea of the state as a monolith united around a single view or a single interest, and suggests that decisions arise from an arena of contest in which the balance of advantage is constantly shifting.

Although these models undoubtedly draw attention to important aspects of decision to important aspects of decision-making, they also have their drawbacks. In the first place, the organisational process model allows little scope for political leadership to be imposed from above. It would be foolish, for example, to suggest that all decisions are shaped by organizational pressures and perceptions, for this would be to ignore the personal role played by the leaders. Secondly, it is simplistic to suggest, as the bureaucratic politics model does, that political actors simply hold views that are based on their own position and on the interests of the organisations in which they work, for personal sympathies and individual goals cannot be altogether discounted. Finally, to explain decisions entirely in terms of black-box considerations is to fail to give any weight to the external pressures that emanate from the broader economic, political and ideological context.

*Belief system models*

Although decision makers may believe that they are being rational, rigorous and strictly impartial, their social and political values may act as a powerful filter, defining for them what is thinkable, what is possible, and what is desirable. Certain information and particular options are therefore not appreciated or even considered, while other pieces of information and other courses of action feature prominently in the calculus of decision-making. Indeed, without a mechanism to filter information, decision makers would simply be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data confronting them.

However, there are different views about the origin and nature of this filtering process. A policy system may include not only interlocking groups of politicians, civil servants and interest groups, but also researchers, academics and journalists concerned with that area. Within these subsystems, ‘advocacy coalitions’ emerge that comprise collections of individuals who share broadly similar beliefs and values. These beliefs nevertheless operate on three different levels:

* deep core beliefs (fundamental moral or philosophical principles)
* near-core beliefs (policy preferences)
* secondary beliefs (views about implementation or application).

The importance of such beliefs is that they provide the ‘glue’ of politics, binding together people on the basis of shared values and preferences. However, while core beliefs are highly resistant to change, a greater measure of disagreement and flexibility is usually found at the near-core and secondary levels. Using this framework, policy change could largely be understood in terms of shifting balance of forces within a policy subsystem, in particular through the dominance of one advocacy coalition over others. This process may nevertheless be seen to be rational insofar as debate within a belief system, and rivalry between beliefs systems, promotes ‘policy oriented learning’

**THE GOVERNMENT**

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, was one of the first, who studied the workings of government. His ideas about people and politics were based on his own experience with the *polis,* the city-state of ancient Greece. These self-governing city-states were small and independent communities. According to Aristotle the political unit like *polis* was the only natural way for people to live.

In the modern world an independent political unit called the “state” is equivalent of Aristotle’s *polis*. Although “state” is the most correct term, people more commonly use such terms as *nation, country* to mean generally the same thing. Georgia, our homeland, is among the existing states in the world. Though all these states are very different, they share four basic characteristics: population, territory, government, and sovereignty. One of the above-mentioned four - government is within the scope of our discussion.

The trace of the first organized government goes back to more than 5 000 years ago. Four places in the world are considered the birthplaces of civilization – Mesopotamia in western Asia; Egypt, along the Nile in northern Africa; the Yellow River plains in northern China; and the Indus Valley in northeast India.

The history of Georgian government dates back to the ancient kingdoms of Kolchis and Iberia, it reached the peak of its political and economic strength during the reign of King David and King Tamar in 11th and 12th centuries.

Georgia is a democratic presidential republic, with the President as the head of state, and the Prime Minister as the head of government. The power is divided between the three branches: executive, legislative and judicial.

The executive branch is made up of the President and the Cabinet of Georgia. The President is elected for a term of five years and his constitutional successor is the Chairman of the Parliament. The Cabinet is headed by the Prime Minister appointed by the President, and ministers. It should be underlined that the ministers of defense and interior affairs are directly subordinated to the President of Georgia and thus are not the members of the Cabinet. The legislative branch is represented by the Parliament of Georgia. It is *unicamera*l and is made up of 150 members elected for a four year term. The members of Parliament are known as deputies. 75 deputies are proportional representatives and 75 are elected through single-member district plurality system, representing their constituencies. The judicial branch consists of a Supreme Court, with judges elected by the Parliament on the President’s recommendation and a Constitutional Court. More detailed description of the Georgian judiciary will be given in the next chapters.

## CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY

There have been numerous cases where democracies have seen leaders elected on low voter turnouts. In the US for example, in recent elections, the President has been elected with roughly 25% (one quarter) of the possible votes because a full 50% did not vote, and the “close” election race saw the remaining 50% of the votes split almost equally between the final Democrat and Republican candidates. Other countries, such as the UK has also seen such phenomenons.

What does it mean for the health of a democracy if 75% of the electorate, for whatever reason, did not actually vote for the “winner”?

Such a low voter turnout however, represents a concern for a genuine democracy as a sufficient percentage of the electorate has either chosen not to vote, or not been able to vote (or had their votes rejected).

Some countries mandate voting into law, for example, Holland. Others require a clear percentage of votes to be declared a winner which may result in the formation of coalitions (oftentimes fragile) to get enough votes in total.

As far as I can find, there are no countries that entertain the thought of negative votes, or voting for a list of candidates in order of preference that may help provide some further indications as to which parties are really the popular ones.

For example, many accused Ralph Nader for Al Gore’s loss to George Bush in the infamous 2000 US elections—ignoring for the moment accusations that Bush never won in the first place. If there had been the ability to list your preferred candidates in order of preference, would many of Nader’s supporters put Gore as their second option. Many right-wing alternatives may have put George Bush as their alternatives too, but perhaps this would have encouraged those who do not normally vote—such as those believed that their vote for a third candidate would have been pointless—to vote?

There are numerous reasons for low voter turnout, including

* Voter apathy
* Disenfranchisement
* Parties not representing people
* Voter intimidation

The common criticism leveled at those who do not vote seems to be to blame them for being apathetic and irresponsible, noting that “with rights come responsibilities.” There is often some truth to this, but not only are those other reasons for not voting lost in this blanket assumption of apathy, but voting itself isn’t the only important task for an electorate.

Being able to make informed decisions is also important. In many nations, including prominent countries, there is often a view that the leading parties are not that different from each other and they do not offer much to the said voter. Is choosing not to vote then apathy or is it an informed decision? In other cases, the media may not help much, or may be partisan making choices harder to make.

In some countries voter intimidation can take on violent forms and discourage people to vote for anyone other than a militia’s favored group. (A recent example is that of Zimbabwe where the leading opposition felt they had to withdraw from the election process as voter intimidation by militias supporting Robert Mugabe was getting too violent. Mugabe’s government decided to carry on with the elections anyway, which seemed pointless to most but not to him; as he obviously would—and did—win.)

These concerns will be explored further later on.

Democracy, with all its problems, also has its paradoxes. For example,

* People may vote in non-democratic forces
* Democracies may discriminate the minority in favor of the majority
* Those with non-democratic political ambitions may use the ideals of democracy to attain power and influence
* More propaganda may be needed in democracies than some totalitarian regimes, in order to gain/maintain support for some aggressive actions and policies (such as waging war, rolling back hard-won rights, etc.)
* Regular elections lead to short government life-time. This seems to result in more emphasis on short term goals and safer issues that appeal to populist issues. It also diverts precious time toward re-election campaigns
* Anti-democratic forces may use the democratic process to get voted in or get policies enacted in their favor. (For example, some policies may be voted for or palatable because of immense lobbying and media savvy campaigning by those who have money (individuals and companies) even if some policies in reality may undermine some aspects of democracy; a simple example is how the free speech of extremist/racist groups may be used as an excuse to undermine a democratic regime)
* Those with money are more able to advertise and campaign for elections thus favoring elitism and oligarchy instead of real democracy
* Deliberate confusion of concepts such as economic preferences and political preferences (e.g. Free Markets vs. Communism economic preferences, and liberal vs authoritarian political preferences) may allow for non-democratic policies under the guise of democracy
* Democracies may, ironically perhaps, create a more effective military as people chose to willingly support their democratic ideals and are not forced to fight.

Some of these are discussed further, here:

Two examples of this paradox are the following:

Hitler and his party were voted in. He then got rid of democracy and started his gross human rights violations and genocidal campaigns as a dictator.

Hamas was also recently voted in by Palestinians. The “International community” withheld funds and aid because Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organization. The lack of aid, upon which the Palestinians have been quite dependent contributed to friction amongst Palestinians who support Hamas and those that do not and this has been amplified by the worsening economic situation there. The Israel/Lebanon conflict also affected the Gaza Strip contributing to the in-fighting between various Palestinian factions.

The Hitler example highlights the importance media and propaganda play and the need for continued open self-criticism to guard against these tendencies.

The Hamas example is complicated by the general Middle East situation and the view on the one hand that American/Israeli power and influence in Palestine is undermining peace between Israel and Palestine, while on the other hand, the terrorist activities of Hamas and other organizations push American and Israel to even more authoritarian reactions.

That the majority of Palestinian people would vote in Hamas suggests that they have not seen the fruit of any recent attempts at a peace process (which has long been regarded by the “international community” – minus the US and Israel – as one-sided) and this has driven people to vote for a more hard line view.

Another criticism of democracy is that sometimes what the majority votes for or prefers, may not necessarily be good for everyone. A common example plaguing many countries which have diversity in race and religion is that a dominant group may prefer policies that undermine others.

Some quick examples include Nigeria which has large Christian and Muslim populations; some Muslims there, and in other countries, want Sharia Law, which not all Muslim necessarily want, let alone people of other faiths. If only a very slight majority can override a very large minority on such an important issue as how one should live, then there is a real chance for tension and conflict.

Another example is India, often help us an example of pluralism throughput the ages, despite all manner of challenges. Yet, unfortunately an [Indian government report finds that its claims to religious integration and harmony are on far shakier grounds than previously believed](http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=35395). Muslims in India, for example, a large minority, are also under-represented and seem to be seen as India’s new ‘underclass.’

Wealthier countries also have similar problems, ranging from France with its challenge to integrate/assimilate a large foreign population, to Spain which struggles with a large Basque population wanting independence, to the US where large immigrant populations are struggling to integrate.

To address such potential issues requires more tolerance, understanding, and openness of society, such that people are not insecure due to the presence of others (and so that they do not, as a result, turn to more extreme/fundamental aspects of their own beliefs). This can come through various outlets, including, a diverse mainstream media, institutions such as religious and legal ones, schooling, family upbringings, etc.

Equally important are the underlying economic conditions and situations of a country. Generally, it seems, where economically people are generally doing well, where the inequality gap is not excessive, people have less of a reason to opt for more defensive, reactionary or aggressive policies that undermine others.

At the same time, concerns of undesirable social engineering would also need to be addressed, and it is likely that in different countries there will be different “formulas” for this to be successful, for the historical context within which people live, the specific circumstances of the day and various other factors will differ amongst and within nations.

People often see democracy as an equalizing factor that should not allow the elite or wealthy in a society to rule in an autocratic, despotic, unaccountable manner. Instead they have to respond to the will of the people, and ultimately be accountable to them. Furthermore and ideally, it should not only be the wealthy or elite that hold the power. There should be some form of equality when representing the nation.

However, this has also meant at least two accompanying phenomena:

* Democracy is seen as a threat to those in power, who worry about the masses, referring to them as a “mob”, or some other derogatory phrase (“tyranny of the majority” is another), and
* To get votes, parties may appeal to populist issues which are often sensational or aim for short-term goals of elections.

Interestingly, leading up to the 2006 US mid-term elections, amidst all sorts of [allegations of corruption](http://www.democracynow.org/2006/10/2/a_swashbuckling_spectacle_of_corruption_bill) coming to light, in an interview by Democracy Now!, writer James Moore, provided a classic example of political utility: Karl Rove, the influential, but controversial, advisor and strategist for President George W. Bush, despite actively campaigning to get the “Religious Right” to support Bush was not religious at all (and possibly despised the evangelical Christian extremists that he actively worked to get the votes of) and Bush himself apparently called them “wackos” years earlier:

James Moore: What people do not realize about [Karl Rove] is that everything about him is political utility. When he looked at what was going on with the megachurches ... Karl decided he was going to take these gigantic churches on the Christian right and to turn them into a gigantic vote delivery system. And that’s precisely what he has done. This is not a man who has deeply held religious faith. It’s a man who believes that faith can be used to drive voters to the polls. In fact, his own president, in an interview with—or an offhand unguarded moment aboard the press plane with my co-author, Wayne Slater, had referred to the Christian right and the fundamentalists north of Austin as “whackos.” They hold these people in more disdain than these individuals are aware of.

This is just one example, where parties have simply targeted people to get votes for power. And yet, [many in the religious right believe that Bush represents them and some even see him as an instrument of God](http://www.democracynow.org/2004/10/20/god_the_presidency_an_in_depth), showing just how effective political utility and manipulation has been.

Noting that different people refer to, and think of democracy in different ways, (even some despots have called themselves democratic!), Bernard Crick concedes that,

We must not leap to the conclusion that there is a “true democracy” which is a natural amalgam of good government as representative government, political justice, equality, liberty, and human rights. For such volatile ingredients can at times be unstable unless in carefully measured and monitored combinations. Is “good government” or “social justice” unequivocally democratic, even in the nicest liberal senses? Probably not. Tocqueville wrote in the 1830s of the inevitability of democracy, but warned against “the dangers of a tyranny of the majority.” Well, perhaps he cared less for democracy than he did for liberty. But even Thomas Jefferson remarked in the old age that “an elective despotism was not what we fought for”; ... John Stuart Mill whose Essay on Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government are two of the great books of the modern world, came to believe that every adult (yes, women too) should have the vote, but only after compulsory secondary education had been instituted and had time to take effect.

In a democracy, people are generally accustomed to questioning their government, and should be empowered—and encouraged—to do so.

In some countries, healthy cynicism has given way to outright contempt or excessive cynicism at anything a government official promises!

What this does mean, however, is that those with ambitions of power and ulterior agendas have to therefore resort to even more propaganda and media savvy manipulation, as Crick notes:

“Totalitarian” ... was a concept unknown and unimaginable in a pre-industrial age and one that would have been impossible but for the invention and spread of democracy as majority power. For both autocrats and despots depend in the main on a passive population; they had no need to mobilize en masse.... Napoleon was to say: “the politics of the future will be the art of mobilizing the masses.” Only industrialization and modern nationalism created such imperatives and possibilities.

Media co-opting is one strategy that may be employed as a result, as Australian journalist, John Pilger notes:

Long before the Soviet Union broke up, a group of Russian writers touring the United States were astonished to find, after reading the newspapers and watching television, that almost all the opinions on all the vital issues were the same. “In our country,” said one of them, “to get that result we have a dictatorship. We imprison people. We tear out their fingernails. Here you have none of that. How do you do it? What’s the secret?”

**CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY**

Most conceptions of democracy are based on the principle of ‘government **by** the people’.

Although ‘the people’ is now accepted as meaning virtually all about citizens, the term can be construed in a number of different ways. The people, for instance, can be viewed as a single, cohesive body, bound together by a common or collective interest: in this sense, the people are one and indivisible. Alternatively, as division and disagreement exist within all communities, ‘the people’ may in practice be taken to mean ‘the majority’. In this case, democracy comes to mean the strict application of the principle of majority rule in which the will of the majority or numerically strongest overrides the will of the minority. This can nevertheless mean that democracy degenerates into ‘the tyranny of the majority’. Finally, the people can be thought of as a collection of free and equal individuals, each of whom has a right to make autonomous decisions. Not only does this view clearly contradict any form of majoritarianism, but it also implies that, in the final analysis, only unanimous decisions can be binding upon the *demos*,and so dramatically restricts the application of democratic principles.

This implies that, in effect, people govern themselves that they participate in making the crucial decisions that structure their lives and determine the fate of their society. This participation can take a number of forms, however. In the case of **direct democracy**, popular participation entails direct and continuous involvement in decision-making, through devices such as referendums, mass meetings, or even interactive television. The alternative and more common form of democratic participation is the act of voting which is the central feature of what is usually called **representative democracy**. When citizens vote, they do not so much make the decisions that structure their own lives as choose who will make those decisions on their behalf. What gives voting its democratic character, however, is that, provided that the election is competitive, it empowers the public to ‘kick the rascals out’, and thus makes politicians publicly accountable.

There are also models of democracy that are built on the principle of ‘government **for** the people’, and that allows little scope for public participation of any kind, direct or indirect. The most grotesque example of this was found in the so-called **totalitarian democracies** which developed under fascist dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler. The democratic credentials of such regimes were based on the claim that the ‘leader’, and the leader alone, articulated the genuine interests of the people, thus implying that a ‘true’ democracy can be equated with an absolute dictatorship. In such cases, popular rule means nothing more than ritualized submission to the will of an all-powerful leader, orchestrated through rallies, marches and demonstrations. This was sometimes portrayed as **plebiscitary democracy**. Totalitarian democracies demonstrate the tension that can exist between ‘government by the people’ (or popular participation), and ‘government by the people’ (rule in the public interest). Advocates of popular participation in polities, for example, have wished to confine popular participation in polities to the act of voting, precisely because they fear that the general public lack the wisdom, education and experience to rule wisely on their own behalf.

An alternative view of democracy is often developed by, for example, socialists and redical democrats. In **redical democracy,** democracy is not seen as a means of laying down a framework within which individuals can go about their own business, but rather as a general principle that is applicable to all areas of social existence. People are seen as having a basic right to participate in the making of any decisions that affect their lives, with democracy simply being the collective process through which this is done. Instead of endorsing mere political democracy, socialists have therefore called for ‘**social democracy**’ or ‘**industrial democracy’**. Feminists, similarly, have demanded the democratisation of family life, understood as the right of all to participate in the making of decisions in the domestic or private sphere. From this perspective, democracy is regarded as a friend of liberty, not as its enemy. Only when such principles are ignored can oppression and exploitation flourish.

**DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE: RIVAL VIEWS**

The origins of the term democracy can be traced back to Ancient Greece. Like other words ending in ‘cracy’ (for example, autocracy, aristocracy and bureaucracy), democracy id derived from the Greek word *kratos,* meaning power, or rule. Democracy thus means ‘rule by the *demos’* (the *demos* referring to ‘the people’, although the Greeks originally used this to mean ‘the poor’ or ‘the many’). However, the simple notion of ‘rule by the people’ does not get us very far. The problem with democracy has been its very popularity, a popularity that has threatened the term’s undoing as a meaningful political concept. In being almost universally regarded as a ‘good thing’, democracy has come to be used as little more than a ‘hurrah! Word’, implying approval of a particular set of ideas or system of rule. A term that can mean anything to anyone is in danger of meaning nothing at all. Amongst the meanings that have been attached to the word ‘democracy’ are the following:

* a system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged
* a form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the need for professional politicians or public officials
* a society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy and privilege.
* a system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities.
* a system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule
* a system of rule that secures the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority
* a means of filling public offices through a competitive struggle for the popular vote
* a system of government that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life.

Perhaps a more helpful starting point from which to consider the nature of democracy is Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, delivered in 1864 at the height of the American Civil War. Lincoln extolled the virtues of what he called ‘government **of** the people, **by** the people, and for the people’. What this makes clear is that democracy links government to the people, but that this link can be forged in a number of ways: government **of**, **by** and **for** the people. The precise nature of democratic rule has been the subject of fierce ideological and political debate. This boils down to the attempt to answer three central questions:

* Who are the people?
* In what sense should the people rule?
* How far should popular rule extend?

Although there continues to be controversy about which is the most desirable form of democracy, much of contemporary debate revolves around how democracy works in practice. There is broad, even worldwide, acceptance of a particular model of democracy, generally termed liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, there is a considerable amount of disagreement about the meaning and significance of liberal democracy. In short, this form of democracy is interpreted in different ways by different theorists. The most important of these interpretations are advanced by: pluralism, elitism, corporatism, the New Right and Marxism.

**A. Pluralist view** recognizes both the existence of diversity or multiplicity in society, and the fact that such multiplicity is desirable. The key feature of such a system of pluralist democracy is that competition between parties at election time, and the ability of interest or pressure groups to articulate their views freely, establishes a reliable link between the government and the governed, and creates a channel of communication between the two. While this may fall a long way short of the ideal of popular self-government, its supporters nevertheless argue that it ensures a sufficient level of accountability and popular responsiveness for it to be regarded as democratic.

However, the relationship between pluralism and democracy may not be a secure one. In other words, the system of rule by multiple minorities may simply have been a device to prevent the majority (the propertyless masses) from exercising political power. A further problem is the danger of what has been called ‘pluralist stagnation’. This occurs as organized groups and economic interests become so powerful that they create a log jam, resulting in the problem of government ‘overload’. In such circumstances, a pluralist system may simply become ungovernable. Finally, there is a problem, notably that the unequal ownership of economic resources tends to concentrate political power in the hands of the few and deprive it from the many.

**B. Elitist view** developed as a critique of egalitarian ideas such as democracy and socialism.

Whereas classical elitists strove to prove that democracy was always a myth, modern elitists have tended to highlight how far particular political systems fall short of the democratic ideal.

Certain elite theorists have nevertheless argued that a measure of democratic accountability is consistent with elite rule. Whereas the power-elite model portrays the elite as a cohesive body, bound together by common or overlapping interests, competitive elitism (sometimes called democratic elitism) highlights the significance of elite rivalry. In other words, the elite, consisting of the leading figures from a number of competing groups and interests, is fractured. The electorate can decide which elite rules, but cannot change the fact that power is always exercised by an elite.

To the extent, the model is accurate, its virtue is that is allows considerable scope for political leadership by placing decision-making in the hands of the best-informed, most-skilled, and most politically committed members of society. On the other hand, although competition for power undoubtedly creates a measure of accountability, competitive elitism must at best be considered a weak form of democracy. Not only can one elite only be removed by replacing it with another, but the role allotted to the general public (that of deciding every few years which elite will rule on its behalf) is likely to engender apathy, lack of interest, and even alienation.

**C. Corporatist views:** The origins of corporatism date back to the attempt in fascist Italy to construct a so-called ‘corporate state’ by integrating both managers and workers into the processes of government. In the form of neocorporatism, or liberal corporatism, this gave rise to the specter of ‘*tripartite government’,* in which government is conducted through organizations which allow state officials, employers’ groups and unions to deal directly with one another.

Most commentators, however, see corporatism as a threat to democracy. In the first place, corporatism only advantages groups that are accorded privileged access to government. ‘Insider’ groups therefore possess a political voice, while outsider groups are denied one. Secondly, corporatism can work to the benefit of the state rather than major economic interests, in that the **peak associations** that the government chooses to deal with can be used to exert discipline over their members and to filter out radical demands. Finally, corporatism threatens to subvert the processes of electoral or parliamentary democracy. Policy is made through negotiations between government officials and leaders of powerful economic interests rather than through the deliberations of a representative assembly.

**D. New Right view:** The emergence of the New Right from the 1970s onwards has generated a very particular critique of democratic politics. This has focused upon the danger of what has been called ‘democratic overload’: the paralysis of a political system that is subject to unrestrained group and electoral pressures. One aspect of this critique has highlighted the unsavoury face of corporatism. New Right theorists are keen advocates of the free market, believing that economies work best when left alone by gonernment.

Government ‘overload’ can also be seen to be a consequence of the electoral process. Both voters and politicians are held to blame here. Voters are attracted by promises of higher public spending. Politicians, consumed by the desire to win power, attempt to outbid one another by making ever more generous spending pledges to the electorate. The economic consequences of unrestrained democracy are high levels of inflation fuelled by public borrowing, and a tax burden that destroys enterprise and undermines growth.

The New Right theorists therefore tend to see democracy in strictly protective terms, regarding it essentially as a defence against arbitrary government rather than a means of bringing about social transformation.

**E. The Marxist view** of democratic politics is rooted in class analysis. In this view, political power cannot be understood narrowly in terms of electoral rights, or in terms of the ability of groups to articulate their interests by lobbying and campaigning. Rather, at a deeper level, political power reflects the distribution of economic power and, in particular, the unequal ownership of productive wealth. The Marxist critique of liberal democracy thus focuses upon the inherent tension between democracy and capitalism, that is, between the political equality which liberal democracy proclaims and the social inequality that a capitalist economy inevitably generates. Liberal democracies are thus seen as ‘capitalist’ or ‘bourgeois’ democracies that are manipulated and controlled by the entrenched power of a ruling class.

**DEMOCRACY PERFORMANCE**

Whereas stability, material prosperity and citizenship are all outcomes or products of government, democracy is essentially concerned with the process itself, with how decisions are made, rather than what decisions are made. Democracy means popular rule.

From the democratic perspective, the purpose of politics is to empower the individual and enlarge the scope of personal autonomy. Autonomy has been seen as both an end itself and a means to and end. Classical theorists of democracy portrayed political participation as a source of personal development and self-realisation.

Taken to its 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. For example, Athenian democracy mounted 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 – has tended to be defended on the grounds, for example, that the existence of voting rights checks the abuse of government power and that party competition helps to generate social consensus.

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 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 only be removed 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 in the spread of inertia, apathy and the 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 worker’s 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 participation, and thus to all forms of direct democracy, is simply that ordinary people lack the time, maturity and specialist knowledge to rule wisely on their own behalf. 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 upon 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.

**FIFTEEN QUESTIONS FOR THE DOWN OF THE MILLENNIUM**

The convergence of multiple world political trends in the twilight of the twentieth century points toward a new, transformed world order but one whose character has not yet developed sharp definition and vivid coloration. Thus U.S. President George Bush, commenting in late 1991 on the post-Cold War world, justifiably cautioned that ‘the enemy is uncertainty. The enemy is unpredictability’.

What is certain is that the pace of change will challenge the wisdom of old beliefs and orthodox visions of the world. Because turmoil and turbulence govern contemporary international affairs, they require our asking unconventional questions about conventional ideas.

In the final Unit fifteen questions are posed about the future based on the analyses of contemporary world politics. How these questions are answered will significance shape world politics during this century.

1. Are Nations-States Obsolete?

The changing environment of world politics undermines the traditional preeminence of the territorial nation-state, the primary actor in world politics for more than three centuries.

One of the hallmarks of human history in the late twentieth century was the increasing internationalization of the world: in production, trade, finance, technology, treats to security, communications, research, education, and culture. One major consequence of this is that the mutual penetration of economic political, and social forces among the nations of the world is increasingly salient; and it may be the case that the governments of nation-states are progressively losing degrees of direct over the global forces that affect them.

Can the nation-state cope with the challenges it now faces? ‘A myth’ is what John F. Kennedy called ‘the untouchability of national sovereignty’. Henry Kissinger, a former U.S. secretary of state, labeled the nation-state ‘inadequate’ and the emergence of a global community an ‘imperative’. Zbigniwe Brzezinski, a former U.S. presidential adviser, similarly asserted that ‘we are witnessing the end of the supremacy pf the nation-state on the international scene’ and noted that although ‘this process is far from consummated … the trend seems irreversible’. These views question the nation-state’s capacity to handle global challenges.

The nineteenth-century French sociologist Auguste Comte argued that societies create institutions to address problems and meet human needs, and that institutions disappear when they can no longer perform these functions. Today, the nation-state’s managerial capabilities everywhere, irrespective of form of government, fail to inspire confidence. As a recent report concluded:

‘The sovereignty of states is eroding. A wide variety of forces has made in increasingly more difficult for any state to wield power over its people and address issues it once considered its sole prerogative. Among these forces are the communications revolution, the rise of transnational corporations, increasing migration, economic integration, and the global nature of economic and environmental problems.

The increasing lack of control, an inability to solve pressing problems, and the fact that few states’ boundaries or interests coincide with the nationalities within have exacerbated mistrust of political leaders and institutions in many states. Governments are perceived as not representing the interests of, not delivering security to, and not providing for the well-being of their constituents. As a result, peoples are looking elsewhere for representation of their views and provision of their needs, further eroding the authority of states.’ (The Stanley Foundation, 1993).

Other forces infuse the nation-state with vigor and encourage its persistence, however. ‘Obviously in some respects the nation-state is flourishing and the others it is dying’, observes French political scientist Pierre Hassner (1968), adding, ‘it can no longer fulfill some of the most important traditional functions. Yet it constantly ‘assumes new ones which it alone seems able to fulfill’, thus, at the core of contemporary international politics lies a paradox: ‘at a time when the nation-state has appeared to be functionally obsolete, it has been reaffirmed by the same process which would call for its transcendence’ (Morse, 1976).

2. Is Interdependence a Cure or a Curse?

Global Interdependence lies at the heart of the internationalization of domestic politics. It poses a singular threat to the nation-state. Interdependence expands the range of global issues while making their management more difficult, as mutual vulnerabilities reduce states’ autonomy and curtail their control of their own destinies.

From one perspective, global interdependence may draw the world’s diverse components together in pursuit of mutual survival and welfare. Awareness of the common destiny of all, alongside the inability of sovereign states to address many shared problems through unilateral national action, may energize efforts to put aside national competition. Conflict will recede, according to this reasoning, as few states can afford to disentangle themselves from the interdependent ties that bind them together in the common fate on which their welfare depends. From this perspective, then, we should welcome the continued tightening of interstate linkages, for they strengthen the seams that bind together the fragile tapestry of international relations.

From another, more pessimistic perspective, interdependence will not lead to transnational collaboration, regardless of how compelling the need or how rewarding the benefits may be. Instead, contact and mutual dependence will bread conflict. The absence of a community of nations remains, and nostalgia for the more autonomous nation-state abounds. Intertwined economies will not necessarily prevent relations to sour or the hammer of trade sanctions to fall. Under conditions of fierce competition and resurgent nationalism, the temptations to seek isolation from foreign economic dependence by creating barriers to trade and other transactions may be irresistible. So, too, may be the temptation to use force.

Thus, the tightening web of global interdependence foretells both opportunity and danger. If, on balance, the advantaged of interdependence outweigh the disadvantages, then leaders must harness the means for accelerating its development. Conversely, if global interdependence undermines nation and international welfare and security, the must try to contain and perhaps reverse its effects.

3. What Is the ‘National Interest’?

What goals should nation-states pursue? In earlier times, the answer was easy: The state should promote the internal welfare of its citizens, provide for the common defense, and preserve the nation’s values and way of life.

Leaders pursue the same goals today, but increasingly their domestic and foreign policy options ate limited. We live in an age of tradeoffs, as many problems can be resolved only at the risk of exacerbating others. Under such conditions, the quest for narrow self-advantage often carries prohibitively high costs. The historic tendency to define the national interest chauvinistically – my country, right or wrong – can be counterproductive domestically as well as internationally, as no country can long afford to pursue the quest for power in ways that reduce the security and welfare of its competitors.

Those who questioned orthodox definitions of the national interest in the past seldom found support, but this is changing. As the eminent anthropologist Margait Mead mused, ‘Substantially we all share the same atmosphere today, and we can only save ourselves by saving other people also. There is no longer a contradiction between patriotism and concern for the world’. Former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance voiced a similar idea, observing that ‘more than ever cooperative endeavors among nations are a matter not only of idealism but of direct self-interest’.

H. Carr (1939), a pioneering political realist, was convinced of the realism of idealism, maintaining that opposition to the general interest of humankind does not serve one’s self-interest. Nor is it served by a failure to recognize that the plight of others can ultimately threaten oneself – a view underscored by Martin Luther King Jr., who urged that ‘injustice anywhere is a treat to justice everywhere’.

4. Is Technological Innovation a Blessing or a Burden?

Technological innovations, like interdependence, offer solution to some problems but cause others. As notes economist Wassily Leontief warned in 1987, ‘Technology is now, for better or worse, the principle driving force behind the ongoing rapid economic, social, and political change. Like any irrepressible force, the new technology can bestow on us undreamed of benefits but also inflict irreparable damage’. It can create new ways of preventing disease but also new ways of destroying others in war. Discoveries in microelectronics, information processing, transportation, energy, agriculture, communications, medicine, and biotechnology profoundly affect our lives and shape our future.

New technologies propel growth and alter behavior patterns. Still, there appears to be a fundamental lag between the current rate of technological change and the rate of adjustment to these changes among decision-makers. The technological catalyst of change will promote progress only if it properly and constructively managed and if the interconnectedness of technological innovation and economic, political, and military imperatives is recognized.

5. Of What Value IS Military Power?

Military might in the past enabled states to project power, exercise influence, and dominate others. Today the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and sophisticated conventional and unconventional weapons makes their use risky. Moreover, their threatened use is less convincing than ever. Yet, continuing proliferation raises new questions alongside old ones. Security is a psychological phenomenon, but does the acquisition of more weapons augment it? Or are preparations for war and defense responsible for the security dilemma that all countries face?

To be sure, most leaders agree with the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who argued that ‘a people without walls is a people without choice’. Hence most assume that preparing for war is necessary for peace. Yet, as Henry Kissinger explained, ‘the paradox of contemporary military strength is that the capacity to destroy is difficult to translate into a plausible threat even against countries with no capacity for relation’. Today, the treat of force often lacks credibility. Military power has become impotent by its very strength.

Weapons may deter resort to force, but if military might no longer exacts compliance from others, then weapons have lost their role as a basis, or substitute, for diplomacy. And if military power is impotent, why pay the price of vigilance? Since no amount of military might can guarantee a state invulnerability, preparations for war can be assessed only in terms of other consequences. Thresholds may exit beyond which the addition of greater destructive power is meaningless, and excessive preparations for war may leave a country heavily fortified with little left to defend, as U. S. President Eisenhower warned in 1961. U Trant, former secretary general of the United Nations, echoed this point when he noted that ‘the massive sums devoted to armaments … serve to feed the escalating arms race, to increase insecurity, and to multiply the risks to human survival’.

The end of the Cold War has further eroded justifications for the pursuit of military power. The urge for military preparedness will nonetheless continue in a multipolar world. Hence the relative costs and benefits of preparations for war must be weighed against the kinds of threats to national security that still arise.

6. Will Geo-economics Supercede Geopolitics?

Through most of recorded history, countries have competed with each other military for position and prominence in the global hierarchy of power. Word politics, accordingly, his largely been a record of countries preparing, waging, and, recovering from wars with each other (Morgenthau, 1985). Military might was equated with prestige, and military conquest was regarded as a means to hegemonic rule. Perhaps now, however, the relationship of economic to national security and national structure has changed rather profoundly. Successful trading states in the competitive global marketplace are the world’s leaders. They lead in the prosperity they provide for their citizens and in their capacity to give them the living standards that make for a full and complete life. Economically dynamic states lead in their ability to defend themselves and to exert military and diplomatic pressure along with their economic might. Successful trading states command international respect and envy; they enjoy that position and prominence that traditionally with large standing armies. With commercial clout also political influence.

To some, the next battlefield in world politics will center on economic issues. National destinies will be determined by commercial competition, not military conquest. To the extent that so-called geo-economics (Luttwah, 1993) continues to grow in importance and impact relative to conventional geopolitics, the foreign politics of countries – and how they organize their foreign affairs bureaucracies for the management of economic relations – will be required to change.

Whether those transformations will produce a more secure and prosperous world remains to be seen. Trade partners may understand that their best interest lie in trading – not squabbles – with each other. As wealth is converted into political muscle nationalistic pride can give rise to competition and self-assertiveness. Economic interdependence and tight commercial relationships can collapse in trade disputes and political rivalry, especially in periods of recession. Yet, regardless of the direction that geo-economics eventually takes, the shift of priorities to the economic dimensions of international relations is certain to influence and reorder where individual states will rank in the pyramid of twenty-first-century power.

7. Is War Obsolete?

As noted, ideals and institutions wither away when they cease to serve their intended purpose, as the examples of slavery, dueling, and colonialism illustrate. Is war subject to this same phenomenon? Since World War II, legal prohibitions against the use of military force have expanded, and war and interventions have been largely confined to battles among and in developing countries. The period since 1945 has been the longest span of great-power peace since the seventeenth century, thus raising expectations that the major powes have ’retreated from doomsday’ (Mueller, 1989). Hence the obsolescence of major war may be on the horizon, even if the emergence of trade wars is a distinct possibility.

Whether the seemingly unthinkable use of today’s most destructive weapons has truly made war unthinkable is, of course, debatable. Instead, war may eventually disappear in another, far more frightening way – because resort to weapons of mass distruction will obliterate humankind. Thus the puzzle is when and by what means war will become obsolete. As Martin Luther King Jr. put it, ‘The choice is either nonviolence or nonexistence’.

8. Can Culture Conflict Be Controlled?

Throughout the world’s history, when distinct cultures have come unto contact, the collisions have sparked communication. At times, this has produced a healthy respect for diversity, as the members of each cultural tradition have learned from each other, to their mutual benefit. But on many other occasions, familiarity has bred contempt. Especially when followers embraced the ethnocentric view that their own group’s values are inherently superior, animosity and disrespect for differences have been characteristic. Often clash and warfare followed.

Today the ideological contest between communism and capitalism has disappeared, and ancient cultural cleavages and hatreds have reappeared. Tribalism, religious fanaticism, and hypernational ethnicity are again on the move. Ethnic conflict and secessionist revolt are prevalent, and they are now the world’s greatest killers. Hypernationalist beliefs rationalize large-scale violence and the subjugation of other nationalities. With ethno cultural contact and clashes have come ‘ethnic cleansing’ efforts to destroy unprotected subgroups and even genocide. Hypernationalistic movements respect neither liberty nor life.

Minorities are at risk throughout the globe. They have been denied basic human rights, and prejudice has made them the victims of aggression, repression, and persecution. Minorities have had to flee as refugees across borders in order to survive. In 1993 one of every 125 humans on the planet, the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees estimated, had to escape his or her homeland in search of asylum and sanctuary.

Armies are not prepared or trained to defend those victims. (Often, they are trained to victimize the defenseless minorities.) likewise, international organizations are not empowered, in the absence of widespread multilateral cooperation, to stop the carnage. The fact that the weak, the poor, the exploited have no power contributes to their victimization.

Because most states are multiethnic societies, the predictable consequence of ethnonationalism is the disintegration of existing states into smaller and smaller units. The process of national self-determination is not likely to occur often through the ballot, as liberals advocated.

Today liberals are beginning to recoil, because at the same time that economic interdependence is emptying sovereignty of substance, demands for sovereignty are multiplying – leading to a proliferation of conflicts and the risk of endless challenges to existing borders in a futile quest for the perfect ‘pure’ nation state. Meanwhile, migrations old and new have made it almost impossible to avoid the presence of minorities on the soil of any conceivable unit (unless it succeeds in closing off its borders completely and in expelling all such minorities – another recipe for disorder and tragedy).

Of great concern therefore is whether the international community has the modicum of moral outrage necessary to put an end, through concerted action, to the ethnic and cultural conflict that now rages out of control. Will a humanitarian concern for the plight of ethnic minorities crystallize in collaborative responses? Or will the victims of cultural clash perish in a sea of indifference?

9. The End of Empire?

Much of world history is written in terms of drams of dreams of world conquest, the quest of rulers for world domination, and the efforts of others to prevent it. Some leaders continue to think and act as though they believe others still actively plan territorial conquest. But the past five decades have witnessed the great powers’ race to relinquish their overseas empires, not expand them. Even the Soviet Union, the last world empire of any size, has now disintegrated – by choice, not by coercion from abroad.

Why has the quest for empire seemingly ended? A plausible explanation is that empire did not benefit the imperial powers materially. Political scientist William Langer, writing in the early 1960s, when the decolonization process was at its peak, argued similarly.

It is highly unlikely that the modern world will revert to the imperialism of the past. History has shown that the nameless fears which in the late nineteenth century led to the most violent outburst of expansionism were largely unwarranted. The Scandinavian states and Germany since Versailles have demonstrated that economic prosperity and social well-being are not dependent on the exploitation of other peoples, while better distribution of wealth in the advanced countries has reduced if not obviated whatever need there may have been to seek abroad a safety-valve for pressures building up at home. Even in the field of defense, the old need for overseas bases or for the control of adjacent territories is rapidly being outrun. (1962)

If imperialism, empire building, and territorial acquisition are no longer in state’s self-interest, why should it continue to prepare for military defense against the imagined expansionist aims of others?

10. What Price Preeminence?

The quest for world conquest has waned, but national competition for status in the global peeking order continues. Prestige, respect, and wealth remain the core values of many states and the central goals for which they strive. To become or remain first in the international arena means competing for the political and economic means of bend others to one’s will.

The potential long-term result of this competition are disquieting. The problems of primacy are numerous, the disadvantages of advantage many. With global leadership comes the burden of responsibility and the necessity of setting the peace and maintaining world order. Moreover, dominant countries are often the targets of other states resentment, envy, hostility, fear, and blame.

The quest for military superiority may lose much of its rationale in the aftermath of the Cold War. Today, the increasingly high costs of military preeminence have quieted its appeal in many national capitals. Military spending reduces industrial growth. Weakens economic competitiveness, and, ultimately, undermines states ability to pursue and preserve dominance.

‘It has been a common dilemma facing previous “number-one” countries that even as their relative economic strength is ebbing, the growing foreign challenges to their position have compelled them to allocate more and more of their resources into the military sector, which in turn squeezes out productive investment and, over time, leads to the downward spiral of slower growth, heavier taxes, deepening domestic splits over spending priorities and a weakening capacity to bear the burdens of defense. (Kennedy, 1987)

Many will not take this message seriously, however, as the one predicament that nearly every country finds worse than being preeminent is being subject to another’s dictates. Thus the pursuit of preeminence continues.

11. Is ‘realism” Still Realistic and Relevant?

Since the eve of the Second World War, by far the most prevalent theoretical respective for viewing world affairs has been through the lens of political realism. Leaders and scholars alike have organized their thoughts and images almost exclusively in term of this dominant paradigm. This reliance on realism to explain and predict international developments was understandable. Realism found a fertile ground in which to nourish during the conflict-ridden fifty-year period between 1939 and 1989. The lust for power, appetite for imperial expansion and struggle for hegemony, a pervasive arms race, and obsession with security were in strong evidence. Realism accounted for these phenomena better than did any other theoretical perspective.

But now, in the wake of the Cold War conflict, a window has opened to expose quite different dimension of world politics heretofore largely neglected. The global agenda has shifted as new issues and problems have using to prominence.

Joseph S. Nye Jr., a U. S. political scientist, who worked in the Clinton administration writes, ‘The problem … today is not new challengers for hegemony; it is the new challenge of transnational interdependence’. ‘Welfare, not warfare, will shape the rules and global threats like ozone holes and pollution will dictate the agenda’ (Joffe, 1990).

To a number of theorists, the broadened and transformed post-Cold War global agenda goes beyond what realism can realistically be expected to address. To their mind, ‘realist preoccupations operate as a gigantic distraction from the deeper challenges associated with the political, economic, and social restructuring’ that has occurred in international affairs (Falk, 1992), and ‘international relations have parts which realist theory cannot reach’ (Scholte, 1993). ‘The approach of classical realism’, political scientist Robert Jervis (1992) predicts, ‘will not be adequate guide for the future of national politics’.

Other to anticipate the democratic revolutions that accompanied the Cold War’s end, the voluntary retreat of the Soviet Union, and global change and cooperation generally. ‘The wisdom that calls itself ‘realism’, scolds political scientist Stanley Hoffmann (in Friedman, 1993), ‘is utter nonsense today’. Realism was predicatively weak. Moreover, critics charge that realism is scientifically inaccurate and fails ‘to provide an adequate understanding of the dynamics of peace and war which are at the heart of the paradigm (on the topics that realism to provide the best answers) … An entirely new theoretical approach may be needed, that will put both existing findings and unresolved questions into a perspective that makes sense of both’. (Vasquez, 1993).

If these critics of realism’s receding accuracy and relevance are correct, then the question ‘Is realism finished?’ (Zakaria, 1992-1993) will be asked increasingly in the future. Pressure will mount for a new theoretical parading to replace orthodox realism and neorealism.

What a new theory will or should look like is not presently obvious, as challengers to realism theories are divergent in their prescriptions. Yet many agree with the general view that it is time for a new, more rigorous idealist alternative to realism and that ‘there are good reasons for examining aspects of the liberal international legacy once again’ (Fukuyama, 19920 by giving Woodrow Wilson’s liberal vision the fair test it has never received. Perhaps a reconstructed theory that fuses the best properties of realism and the new (neo) liberal theories that are emerging will provide the intellectual framework needed to understand world politics in the twenty-first century.

12. Is The World Preparing for the Wrong War?

To preserve peace, one must prepare for war. That remains the classical formula for national security. But would states not be wiser to prepare to conquer the conditions that undermine prosperity, freedom, and welfare? ‘War for survival is that destiny of all species’, observes philosopher Martin J. Siegel. ‘In our case, we are courting suicide by waging war against one another. The world powers should declare war against their common enemy – the catastrophic and survival-of-the-fittest forces that destroyed most of the species of life that came before us’.

Not all world leaders succumb to the single-mindedness of preparing to wage the wrong war. Voices that challenge the prevailing penchant are increasingly heard. President Miguel development la Madrid of Mexico in 1983 noted that ‘scarce resources are being used’ to sustain the arms race, thereby hindering the economic development of nations and international cooperation. Similarly, President Rrancois Mitterrand of France warned in the same year that ‘together we must urgently find the solutions to the real problems at hand – especially unemployment and underdevelopment. This it the battlefield where the outlines of the years 2000 and on will be drawn’. And India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi predicted that ‘either nuclear war will annihilate the human race and destroy the earth, thus disposing of any future, or men and women all over must raise their voices for peace and for an urgent attempt to combine the insights of different civilizations with contemporary knowledge. We can survive in peace and goodwill only by viewing the human race as one, and by looking at global problems in their totality’.

Each of these rhetorical positions doubtless reflected the problems and self-interests the leaders faced at home and abroad, but they nonetheless reveal a minority view – point. The war of people against people goes on. Humankind may consequently plummet, not because it lacks opportunities, but because of its collective inability to see and to seize them. ‘Perhaps we will destroy ourselves. Perhaps the common enemy within us will be too strong for us to recognize and overcome’, the eminent astronomer Carl Sagan lamented. ‘But’, he continued, ‘I have hope … Is it possible that we humans are at last coming to our senses and beginning to work together on behalf of the species and the planet?’

13. What Is Human Well-Being in an Ecologically Fragile Planet?

The once popular ‘limits to growth’ proposition has been replaced by the maxim of sustainability, which emphasizes ‘the growth of limits’. Thus sustainable development’ means learning to live off the earth’s interest, without encroaching on its capital.

Gross national product is the common measure of economic well-being throughout the world and ‘is closely bound up with human welfare … Human welfare has dimensions other than the economic one. But it is rightly held that the economic element is very important, and that the stronger the economy the greater the contribution to human welfare’ (Daly and Cobb, 1989).

A rise in a state’s economic output has different consequences for people currently living in poor societies compared with those in rich societies. For the inhabitants of most Third World countries, growth in GNP may mean food, better housing, better education, and an increased standard of living. Because the affluent people living in the First World already have these basic amenities, additional increment to their income usually lead to the satisfaction of comparatively trivial needs.

The impact on the global commons of population growth and the continued striving for economic growth is critical nonetheless. ‘The incremental person in poor countries contributes negligibly to production, but makes few demands on world resources’, explains economist Herman Daly. By contrast, ‘the incremental person in the rich country contributes to his country’s GNP, and to feed his high standard of living contributes greatly to depletion of the world’s resources and pollution of its spaces’. In both cases, then, continued population growth is detrimental – for poor societies, because it inhibits increases in performance-capita income and welfare, and for rich societies, because in further burdens the earth’s delicate ecological system. Unbridled exploitation and consumption, unhinged from responsibility to other ultimately self-destructive. As Mikhail Gorbachev warned, we must halt ‘humanity’s aggression against nature’.

An alternative to perpetual growth for the world’s rich countries is a steady-state economy that seeks a constant stock of capital and population combined with as modest a rate of production and consumption of goods as possible. Because most advanced industrial countries have already approached zero population growth, or a steady state, realizing zero economic growth would require profoundly altered attitudes toward production and consumption. It would also require an alteration in attitudes toward cultural norms regarding leisure and satisfaction. Citizens would have to maximize the durability of goods and recycle more products. And they would have to restrain the profit motive that justifies the need for growth and the craving for unnecessary material goods. Similarly, policymakers would have to devise means of managing conflict other than by doling out increments of an ever-expanding pie –for in a steady-state economy the pie would no longer grow.

These ideas challenge the very foundations of Western civilization. Sustainable development is a more realistic prospect, but even it will be hard to realize. Minimally, it requires rethinking the meaning of human welfare. Economic welfare remains critical to human welfare, but the first question to ask is whether growth in the economy as measured by GNP actually contributes to the total well-being of people. Sustainable economic welfare, like sustainable development, requires sensitivity not only to economic growth but also to natural resource depletion, environmental damage, and the value of leisure and liberty (UNDP, 1993). But is there an alternative? Can growth in a finite would proceed infinitely? How long can finite energy sources sustain uncontrollable consumption before automobiles sputter to a stop, industries grid to a halt, and lights government out> how many pollutants can the atmosphere absorb before irreparable environmental damage is done? And how many people can a delicately balanced ecosystem support?

14. The End of History?

To many observers, the history of world affaires is the struggle between tyranny and liberty. The contest has taken various forms since antiquity: between kings and sovereign peoples; authoritarianism and republicanism; despotism and democracy; ideological principle and pragmatic governance. Label are misleading and sometimes dangerous, but they form the vocabulary of diplomacy and inform theoretical discourse about governance and statecraft. History, in this image, is a battle for the hearts and minds of civilization, an ideological contest for the allegiance of humankind to a particular form of political, social, and economic organization.

Since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 brought socialism to power in Russia and made Marxism a force in international affairs, the fight for allegiance in the twentieth century was dominated by the contests between communism in World War II and the collapse of the international communist movement a generation later, it has become fashionable to argue that we have witnessed the end of a historic contest of epic proportions – and hence ‘the end of history’.

‘The twentieth century saw the developed world descend into a paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism. Then bolshevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war. But the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seemed at its close to be returning full circle to where it started; not to an ‘end of ideology’ of a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to the unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism. (Fukuyama).

The abrupt reputation of communism in Moscow and Eastern Europe, China’s embrace of a free market economy, and communism’s probable demise in Cuba and Vietnam raise expectations that history has indeed ‘ended’ in the sense that democratic governments practicing free market capitalism at home and free trade abroad will become the rule throughout the world. To believers of the liberal faith, this is heartwarming. World order, they believe, can be created best by free governments practicing free trade. As Woodrow Wilson argued, making the world ‘safe for democracy’ would the world itself safe. From this neoliberal perspective, the diffusion of democratic capitalism bodes well for the future of world politics in the next millennium.

Contrariwise, a less reassuring possibility is that has not 'ended' and that neither the battle between totalitarian and democratic governance nor the inclination of states to struggle among themselves for power is over. Instead, with the end of the ideological dimension to the Cold War, we may be witnessing not history’s and but a watershed that, like previous turning points in history, signals history’s resumption: the return to the ageless search for barriers against the resurgence of tyranny, nationalism, and war. Especially to followers of realpolitik, the most salient feature of world politics – the relentless competitive struggle for power – is permanent. The end of the Cold War does not assure us that the international community has moved beyond tyranny or interstate competition and war. As former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev noted in May 1992, ‘In the major centers of world politics, the choice, it would seem, has today been made in favor of peace, cooperation, interaction and overall security’. However, he warned, ‘A major international effort will be needed to render irreversible the shift in favor of a democratic world – and democratic for the whole of humanity, not just half of it’.

15. A Reordered Global Agenda?

The paradox of contemporary world politics is that a world liberated from the paralyzing grip of the Cold War must now face a series of challenges every bit as threatening and as potentially intractable. Global interdependence without the rigidity of the Cold War bipolarity has simultaneously enlarged the responsibilities and expanded the issue to be confronted. As former U. S. President Bill Clinton summarized the globe’s circumstances, ‘Profound and powerful forces shaking and remaking our world. And the urgent question of time whether we can make change our fiend and not our enemy’.

Alongside the resurgence of nationalism, ethnic conflict, and separatist revolt, the sea changes in recent years have spawned a diffusion of new kinds of threats to world order: acid rain, AIDS, drug trafficking, ozone depletion, global warming, energy and food insecurity, desertification, chronic dent, and neomercantism and trade protectionism, among others.

The potential impact of these new threats is potent because emerging trends suggest that, alongside the continuing threat of arms and ethnic and regional conflict, nonmilitary dangers will multiply. Accordingly, the distinction between high politics and low politics may disappear. ‘In the post-Cold War world low politics is becoming high politics’ (Moran).

Previously established patterns and relationships have been obliterated. Something revolutionary, not simply new, has unfolded.

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