

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

September 11 and global security

Events: On the morning of 11 September 2001, a coordinated series of terrorist attacks were launched against the USA using four hijacked passenger jet airliners (the events subsequently became known as September 11, or 9/11). Two airliners crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, leading to the collapse first of the North Tower and then the South Tower. The third airliner crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Department of Defence in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington DC. The fourth airliner, believed to be heading towards either the White House or the US Capitol, both in Washington DC, crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers on board tried to seize control of the plane. There were no survivors from any of the flights. A total of 2,995 people were killed in these attacks, mainly in New York City. In a videotape released in October 2001, responsibility for the attacks was claimed by Osama bin Laden, head of the al-Qaeda (see p. 295) organization, who praised his followers as the 'vanguards of Islam'.



Significance: September 11 has sometimes been described as 'the day the world changed'. This certainly applied in terms of its consequences, notably the unfolding 'war on terror' and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and their ramifications. It also marked a dramatic shift in global security, signalling the end of a period during which globalization and the cessation of superpower rivalry appeared to have been associated with a diminishing propensity for international conflict. Globalization, indeed, appeared to have ushered in new security threats and new forms of conflict. For example, 9/11 demonstrated how fragile national borders had become in a technological age. If the world's greatest power could be dealt such a devastating blow to its largest city and its national capital, what chance did other states have? Further, the 'external' threat in this case came not from another state, but from a terrorist organization, and one, moreover, that operated more as a global network rather than a nationally-based organization. The motivations behind the attacks were also not conventional ones. Instead of seeking to conquer territory or acquire control over resources, the 9/11 attacks were carried out in the name of a religiously-inspired ideology, militant Islamism (see p. 199), and aimed at exerting a symbolic, even psychic, blow against the cultural, political and ideological domination of the West. This led some to see 9/11 as evidence of an emerging

'clash of civilization' (see p. 190), even as a struggle between Islam and the West.

However, rather than marking the beginning of a new era in global security, 9/11 may have indicated more a return to 'business as normal'. In particular, the advent of a globalized world appeared to underline the vital importance of 'national' security, rather than 'international' or 'global' security. The emergence of new security challenges, and especially transnational terrorism, re-emphasized the core role of the state in protecting its citizens from external attack. Instead of becoming progressively less important, 9/11 gave the state a renewed significance. The USA, for example, responded to 9/11 by undertaking a substantial build-up of state power, both at home (through strengthened 'homeland security') and abroad (through increased military spending and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq). A unilateralist tendency also became more pronounced in its foreign policy, as the USA became, for a period at least, less concerned about working with or through international organizations of various kinds. Other states affected by terrorism have also exhibited similar tendencies, marking a renewed emphasis on national security sometime at the expense of considerations such as civil liberties and political freedom. 9/11, in other words, may demonstrate that state-based power politics is alive and kicking.

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Fall of the Berlin Wall

Events: On November 9, 1989, a weary East German government spokesman announced that travel restrictions would be lifted. Flustered and subjected to further questioning, he then stated that this would take effect 'immediately'. The effect of the announcement was electric. Inspired by the heady excitement that had been generated by the collapse of communist regimes in Poland and Hungary and by weekly mass demonstrations in Leipzig and, on a smaller scale, in other major East German cities, West and East Berliners rushed to the Wall. A euphoric party atmosphere rapidly developed, with people dancing on top of the Wall and helping each other over in both directions. By the morning of November 10, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the chief symbol of the Cold War era, had begun. Over the following days and weeks, the borders between the two Germanies and the two parts of Berlin were increasingly opened up. Just as the fall of the Berlin Wall had been inspired by events elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it, in turn, proved to be a source of inspiration. Communist rule collapsed in Czechoslovakia in December, and in Romania rioting first forced the Communist leader Ceaușescu and his wife Elena to flee by helicopter, before they were captured and summarily executed on Christmas Day.

Significance: The fall of the Berlin Wall was the iconic moment in the momentous year of 1989, which witnessed the Eastern Europe Revolutions that effectively rolled back the boundaries of communism to the borders of the Soviet Union and ignited a process of reform that affected the entire communist world. 1989 is widely, and with justification, viewed as one of the most significant dates in world history, ranking alongside 1648 (the birth of the European state-system), 1789 (the French Revolution), 1914 (the outbreak of WWI) and 1945 (the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War). The momentum generated in 1989 led directly to a series of world-historical events. First, Germany was reunified in 1990, starting a process through which Europe would be reunified through the subsequent eastward expansion of



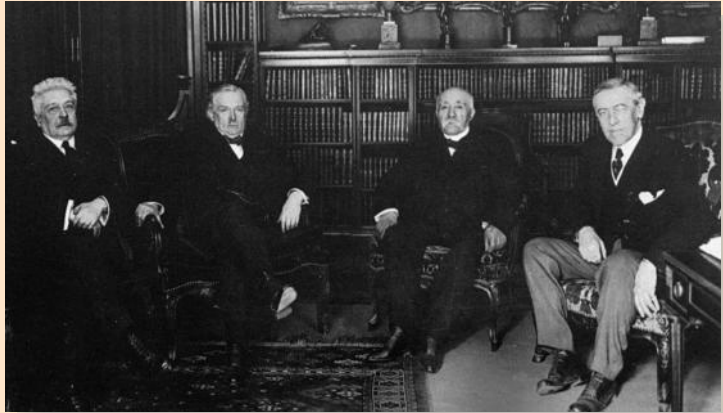
the EU (see p. 505) and, to some extent, NATO. Also in 1990, representatives of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, the military faces of East–West confrontation, met in Paris formally to declare an end to hostilities, officially closing the book on the Cold War. Finally, in December 1991, the world's first communist state, the Soviet Union, was officially disbanded.

For Francis Fukuyama, 1989 marked the 'end of history', in that the collapse of Marxism–Leninism as a world-historical force meant that liberal democracy had emerged as the sole viable economic and political system worldwide (for a fuller discussion of the 'end of history' thesis, see pp. 512–13). For Philip Bobbitt (2002), the events precipitated by 1989 marked the end of the 'long war' between liberalism, fascism and communism to define the constitutional form of the nation-state. Nevertheless, some have questioned the historical significance of 1989, as represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall. This has been done in two ways. First, it is possible to argue that there is significant continuity between the pre- and post-1989 periods, in that both are characterized by the hegemonic position enjoyed by the USA. Indeed, 1989 may simply mark a further step in the USA's long rise to hegemony. Second, 1989–91 may have marked only a temporary weakening of Russian power, which, as Russia emerged from the crisis years of the 1990s and started to reassert its influence under Putin, led to the resumption of Cold-War-like rivalry with the USA.

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Paris Peace Conference 1919–20

Events: In the aftermath of World War I, representatives of the Allies (the leading figures were President Wilson (see p. 438) of the USA, Clemenceau, the Prime Minister of France, and Lloyd George, the UK Prime Minister) met in Paris in January 1919 to arrange a peace treaty with Germany. The result of this was the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919, with a further series of treaties later being signed with the other defeated powers. Two main motivations lay behind these treaties. The first, articulated by Wilson and set out in his Fourteen Points (a peace programme announced in a speech to Congress in January 1918) was the desire to institute a new international order, achieved through a 'just peace' that would banish power politics for ever. This resulted in the redrawing of the map of central and eastern Europe in line with the principle of national self-determination, leading to the creation of new states such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Wilson's major contribution to the Versailles conference, however, was the creation of the League of Nations. However, the other major motivation, expressed in particular by Clemenceau, was to punish Germany and strengthen French security. This led to the large-scale disarmament of Germany, the loss of German territory and the distribution of its colonies as 'mandates' to various Allied powers, and the imposition of the 'war guilt' clause.



of Versailles, the League of Nations stood by powerless to stop it. Liberal statesmen and theorists had ignored the most basic fact of international relations: as all states are ultimately driven by self-interest, only power can be a constraint on power; a reliance on law, morality and international institutions will be of no avail. The wider acceptance of such an analysis in the aftermath of WWII helped to assure the growing ascendancy of realist theories over liberal theories within the discipline of international relations.

On the other hand, liberal internationalists have pointed to the inconsistent application of liberal principles at the Paris Peace Conference. The Treaty of Versailles was never properly a 'liberal peace'. This was both because it left many nationalistic conflicts unresolved, and sometimes worsened (especially though the loss of German land to France and Czechoslovakia), and because, in important respects, the desire to punish and permanently weaken Germany took precedence over the quest for a just peace. Arguably, the seeds of WWII were thus sowed not by a reliance on 'utopian' principles, but by the fact that Versailles was in many ways a 'victors' peace'. The 'mistreatment' of the defeated stored up massive grievances that could only, over time, help to fuel hostile and aggressive foreign policies. What is more, the much vaunted League of Nations never lived up to its name, not least because of the refusal of the world's most powerful state, the USA, to enter. In that sense, the Paris Peace Conference produced the worst of all worlds: it strengthened the currents of power politics in Europe while persuading the victorious powers that power politics had been abolished.

Significance: Just twenty years after the Paris Peace Conference, the world was plunged once again into total warfare, World War II bringing even greater carnage and suffering than World War I. What had gone wrong? Why had the 'just peace' failed? These questions have deeply divided generations of international relations theorists. Taking their lead from E. H. Carr, realist theorists have often linked the outbreak of war in 1919 to the 'idealistic' or 'utopian' ideas of the Paris peacemakers. By believing that WWI had been caused by an 'old order' of rampant militarism and multinational empires, they placed their faith in democracy, self-determination and international organizations. In particular, they had failed to recognize that power politics is not the cause of war but the major way in which war can be prevented. When Germany, blamed (with dubious fairness) for the outbreak of WWI, re-emerged as a major and ambitious military power, breaking, in the process, many of the terms of the Treaty

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Global financial crisis 2007–09

Events: The global financial crisis started to show its effects in the middle of 2007 with the onset of the so-called 'credit crunch', particularly in the USA and the UK. However, this merely provided a background to the remarkable events of September 2008, when global capitalism appeared to teeter on the brink of the abyss, threatening to tip over into systemic failure. The decisive events took place in the USA. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two government-sponsored mortgage corporations, were bailed out by Federal authorities; Lehman Brothers, the 158-year-old investment bank, succumbed to bankruptcy; the insurance giant AIG was only saved by a \$85 billion government rescue package; while Wachovia, the fourth largest US bank, was bought by Citigroup, absorbing \$42 billion of bad debt. Banking crises erupted elsewhere, and stock markets went into freefall worldwide, massively reducing share values and betokening the onset of a global recession. Some of the panic went out of the banking crisis of September 2008 when the US government promised to take all the dangerous debt out of the US banking system, making this the biggest bailout in the history of modern finance.



Significance: Debate about the significance of the global financial crisis of 2007–09 is closely linked to disagreement about its underlying causes. Was the crisis rooted in the US banking system, in Anglo-American enterprise capitalism, or in the nature of the capitalist system itself? At one level, the crisis was linked to inappropriate lending strategies adopted by US banks and mortgage institutions, the so-called 'sub-prime' mortgage market. These high-risk loans to applicants with poor or non-existent credit histories were unlikely to be repaid, and when the scale of 'toxic debt' became apparent shockwaves ran through the US financial system and beyond. At a deeper level, however, the 'sub-prime' problem in the USA was merely a symptom of the defects and vulnerabilities of the neoliberal capitalism that has taken root in the USA and the UK in particular, based on free markets and an under-regulated financial system. At a deeper level still, the crisis has been interpreted as exposing serious imperfections not in a particular form of capitalism but in the capitalist system itself, reflected in a tendency towards boom-and-bust cycles and, perhaps, deepening crises.

There is, nevertheless, little doubt about the global impact of the financial crisis. Although the origins of the crisis may have been localized, its effects certainly were

not. The fact that stock markets around the world declined dramatically and almost simultaneously, wiping enormous sums off share values, bears testimony to the interlocking nature of modern financial markets and their susceptibility to contagion. This was the first genuinely global crisis in the world economy since the 'stagflation' crisis of the 1970s, and it gave rise to the most severe falls in global production levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In this context, the international community mounted a response that was genuinely global, reflecting high levels of international cooperation and a keen awareness of mutual vulnerability. Coordinated and substantial cuts in interest rates were speedily introduced (monetary stimulus); pressure to increase tariffs and for a return to economic nationalism was resisted; economically advanced states agreed to boost domestic demand (fiscal stimulus); and vulnerable countries – such as Greece, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Latvia and Ireland – were saved by unprecedented international bailouts, financed by the European Central Bank and the IMF. On the other hand, key vulnerabilities in the global economy remain unchecked and unreformed. These include the fact that many countries (and, for that matter, many enterprises) continue to suffer from substantial levels of indebtedness, storing up inflationary pressures and creating a pressing need for fiscal retrenchment (higher taxes or reduced public spending). Moreover, as countries emerge from the recession at different times and at different speeds, divisions within the international community have started to become more visible, particularly over the wisdom of fiscal stimulus. Finally, progress on the much vaunted 'new Bretton Woods', which would avoid similar global financial meltdowns in the future, has been slow.

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The invasion of Iraq 2003

Events: On 20 March 2003, the USA and its allies (a 'coalition of the willing') began an invasion of Iraq. The initial invasion forces consisted of 250,000 US forces, 45,000 UK troops and small contingents from Poland, Australia and Denmark. The USA launched a combination of air and ground assaults that were designed to instil 'shock and awe', as well as to 'decapitate' Iraq's military and government by killing Saddam Hussein and leading figures within his Ba'athist regime. What was dubbed 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' emphasized a new way of thinking about warfare, as advocated by the US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. This envisaged the use of more mobile and flexible conventional forces with a larger role being played by special operations troops. By 9 April, US Marines had arrived in Baghdad and the Ba'athist regime had fallen (even though Saddam himself remained in hiding until December). Amid great fanfare, President George W. Bush declared an end to combat operations on 1 May, unveiling a banner on an aircraft carrier stationed off San Diego, California, that read: 'Mission Accomplished'. Nevertheless, by the end of the summer 2003 there was evidence of a growing insurgency in Iraq which drew the USA and its allies into a bloody and profoundly complex counter-insurgency war.

Significance: The reasons for the 2003 invasion of Iraq have been the subject of much debate and speculation, in part, because the Iraq War was a 'war of choice' not a 'war of necessity'. Moreover, the two key justifications for war provided by President Bush – that the Saddam regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and had to be disarmed, and that Saddam's Iraq had links with al-Qaeda and was therefore implicated in the 9/11 attacks – fail to stand up to close examination. In the case of the former, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had found no evidence or plausible indication of the revival of Iraq's nuclear weapons programme in three months of inspections, and no such evidence came to light after the invasion took place. In the case of the latter, no serious attempt was made to substantiate alleged links between Saddam's Iraq and al-Qaeda before or after the invasion. This, nevertheless, does not mean that the invasion of Iraq cannot be explained in rational actor terms, but only that the real objectives behind the invasion were either unstated (oil and US energy security) or were only alluded to as part of the wider case for war (the role of Iraq



within the 'neocon' project for remodelling the Middle East, as discussed below).

Individual, small-group and ideological factors may each have played a significant role in explaining the decision to invade Iraq. On a personal level, George W. Bush had repeatedly said in the late 1990s that among his aspirations in life was to 'take out' Saddam Hussein. The motivations behind this may have included the fact that he regarded the survival of Saddam as 'unfinished business' left over from the 1991 Gulf War, when his father, President Bush Snr, refused to pursue fleeing Iraqi troops over the border once they had been expelled from Kuwait. There was, furthermore, evidence of 'groupthink' amongst Bush's most senior advisers. Key figures such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle had served in the Bush Snr administration and were drawn from the neoconservative wing of the Republican Party, which urged the USA to assume military and diplomatic leadership in the new unipolar world. For neocons, 'regime change' in Iraq would be the first step in democratizing the Middle East, promoting peace and stability in a notoriously unstable part of the world. Such beliefs were the 'glue' that bound together George W. Bush's senior team, meaning that a number of important misperceptions went relatively unchallenged. These included a tendency to exaggerate the threat that Saddam's Iraq posed to regional stability and, indeed, world peace; to over-estimate the efficacy of US military power and particularly its new approach to warfare; to under-estimate the dangers of getting 'bogged down' in Iraq, especially given its complex religious and ethnic make-up; and to fail to recognize the need to plan carefully for the post-Saddam Iraq.

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The Rio 'Earth Summit', 1992

Events: The UN Conference on Environment and Development, more widely known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during 3–14 June 1992. The Rio Earth Summit was unprecedented for a UN conference, in terms of both its size and the scope of its concerns. Some 172 countries were represented at Rio, 108 by their head of state or government. This made the Earth Summit the largest gathering of state leaders in history. In addition, some 2,400 representatives of NGOs were present, and about 17,000 people attended a parallel NGO 'Global Forum'. Almost 10,000 on-site journalists helped to convey the Summit's message around the world. With the involvement of about 30,000 people in total, the Earth Summit was the largest environmental conference ever held. The Earth Summit resulted in two international agreements, two statements of principles, and an action agenda on worldwide sustainable development:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity
- The Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC)
- The Principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests
- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- Agenda 21 (the UN's programme of action from Rio).

Significance: The Rio Earth Summit was important in at least three respects. First, it was a watershed in terms of the burgeoning influence of global civil society. The Earth Summit was the first global conference to take place in a context of mass activism and heightened NGO involvement. As such, Rio contributed to two separate developments. One was the greater assertiveness of NGOs, reflected in attempts in later conferences not merely to provide advice and make proposals, but to attempt to drive policy agendas, even at times substituting for state officials and political leaders in the process of policy formulation. The Earth Summit thus prepared the way for other, larger conferences, such as the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which involved 189 governments and some 2,100 NGOs. The second development was that Rio provided a template for future activist struggles, ensuring that from then onwards major conferences and international summits would be accompanied by demonstrations and popular protests. In this respect, the Rio Earth Summit was something akin to a rehearsal for later anti-globaliza-



tion or anti-capitalist protests, forging a link between Rio and the 1999 'Battle of Seattle', for example.

Second, the Earth Summit influenced the scope and focus of all subsequent UN conferences. It did this by squarely acknowledging the interrelationship between global issues. Human rights, population control, social development, gender justice and environmental protection could no longer be viewed as discrete challenges, but had to be addressed holistically. Third, the Earth Summit marked an important step in the development of global environmental policy, particularly in relation to climate change. The FCCC may not have committed states explicitly to freezing or reducing their CO₂ emissions, but it obliged them to stabilize these at 1990 levels from 2000 onwards. Rio thus paved the way for the introduction of legally binding targets in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Moreover, Rio's emphasis on sustainable development ensured that thereafter the environment and economic development would no longer be treated separately.

However, the outcomes of Rio have also been criticized, exposing differences between 'insiders' in the processes of global governance and civil society 'outsiders', particularly radicals in the green movement. Not only were the targets set at Rio modest and not legally binding, but many of the agreements made in Rio regarding fighting poverty and cleaning up the environment have not been realized. Progress was hampered both by the multiplicity of views and interests represented (an ironic drawback of the scope and size of the conference) and by tensions between the developed and the developing worlds over responsibility for tackling climate change.

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The rise and fall of Yugoslavia

Events: Yugoslavia ('Land of Southern Slavs') was formed in the aftermath of WWI. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a heterogeneous country consisting of Slovenia, Croatia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro but dominated by Serbia, was formed in 1918. It was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. However, it fragmented under Nazi occupation during WWII. The 'second' Yugoslavia (the Federal People's Republic on Yugoslavia) was formed in 1946 under Josip Tito, the head of the Partisan Army of National Liberation. In this incarnation, Yugoslavia included six constituent republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). The formal break-up of Yugoslavia occurred in the context of the fall of communism and collapse of the Soviet Union. It began with the secession of Slovenia in 1991, which was quickly followed by declarations of independence by Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. By 1992, all that remained within Yugoslavia was Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro nevertheless declared independence from Serbia in 2006, and Kosovo declared its (contested) independence from Serbia in 2008.

Significance: The history of Yugoslavia provides insight into the nature of nationalism and national identity. In the first place, Yugoslavia was always a bogus nation-state, created artificially by external powers at the Paris Peace Conference (see p. 59). Its creation reflected not so much common cultural bonds amongst southern Slavs but rather the dominance of Serbia as a regional power and the relative weakness of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which were all part of the decaying and defeated Austro-Hungarian empire and feared absorption into either Austria or Italy. Second, the relative success of the 'second' Yugoslavia (1946–91), during which religious and ethnic diversity rarely gave rise to nationalist or secessionist tensions, bears out the extent to which nationhood is dependent on political factors. Aside from the use of repression, Tito skilfully exploited the myth of a federal alliance of Slav peoples. 'National' unity was also maintained by the external success of the Yugoslav state in situating Yugoslavia geopolitically between the Cold War powers of the Soviet Union and the USA, making



Yugoslavia relatively prosperous and independent in relation to the Soviet Union.

Finally, it would be misleading to interpret the final break-up of Yugoslavia simply in terms of deeply ingrained historical, religious or ethnic identities that were always, sooner or later, going to express themselves in rivalry, hatred and the quest for self-determination. The forms of ethnic and political nationalism that emerged in Yugoslavia in the 1990s did so in very particular circumstances. Most importantly, the collapse of the Soviet Union destabilized the Yugoslav balance of power, bringing the dominance of Serbia into question. In Serbia itself, Slobodan Milošević had risen to power in the late 1980s by exploiting Serbian nationalism, particularly by declaring support for Serbs in Kosovo. The collapse of Yugoslavia gave Serbian nationalism an increasingly aggressive and ethnically-based character, leading to war against Croatia, the Bosnian Civil War (which witnessed the worst massacres in Europe since WWII) and the military occupation of Kosovo, only ended by the 1999 US-led bombing campaign. The secessionist nationalism that erupted particularly in western Yugoslavia from 1991 onwards reflected both a perception of Serbia's weakened position and an awareness that western European states no longer had territorial pretensions. Further, the success of European integration meant that for the Slovenes, Croats and others the prospect of leaving Yugoslavia and aligning themselves with Europe was increasingly attractive. Indeed, in the light of the fate of the Soviet Union, it became irresistible.

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Iran's 'Islamic Revolution'

Events: On 1 February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Tehran from exile in Paris to be welcomed by a crowd of several million Iranians. This occurred after an escalating series of popular protests had forced the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to flee the country (16 January 1979). Khomeini's huge popularity, as a 'semi-divine' figure and a symbol of resistance against the Shah, enabled him speedily to establish a system of personal rule and out-manoeuvre other opposition groups. On 1 April 1979, following a rigged national referendum (98.2 per cent voted in favour), Iran was declared an 'Islamic Republic'. A new theocratic constitution was adopted in December 1979, under which Khomeini was designated the Supreme Leader, presiding over a constitutional system consisting of an elected parliament and president while substantive power remained in the hands of the Shi'a religious elite.

Significance: Iran's 'Islamic Revolution' has had profound implications, domestically, across the Middle East and for wider Islamic-western relations. Khomeini's Shi'a Islamic regime initially focused on a *jihadhi* approach to reorganizing and reshaping Iran's domestic and foreign policy priorities. Iran exhibited a fierce religious consciousness, reflected in antipathy to the 'Great Satan' (the USA) and the application of strict Islamic principles to social and political life. The wearing of headscarves and *chador* (loose fitting clothes) became obligatory for all women in Iran. Restrictions on polygamy were removed, contraception was banned, adultery punished by public flogging or execution, and the death penalty was introduced for homosexuality. However, Iran is a highly complex society, in which radical and reformist, and traditionalist and modernizing, tendencies are often closely linked. The end of the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-88, and the death of Khomeini in 1989 appeared to pave the way for more moderate forces to surface within Iran, associated with figures such as Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammed Khatami. However, the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president in 2005, strongly supported by Khomeini's successor as Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, signalled the return to conservative politics and the emergence of a form of explicit 'Khomeinism'. The brutal suppression of protests against Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election in 2009 nevertheless appeared to strip the figure of its democratic credentials, highlighting the extent to which it



relies on the support of the Revolutionary Guards and the Basiji (paramilitary religious volunteers).

The Iranian Revolution has also served to reconfigure the politics of the Middle East and marked a crucial moment in the emergence of militant Islam. Although the spiritual and political tenor of the Iranian Shi'a regime is out of step with much of the mainly Sunni-dominated Muslim world, and despite cultural and other tensions between Arab countries and Iran, the 1979 'Islamic Revolution' nevertheless reflected the aspirations of Muslims across the Middle East and beyond who had felt humiliated and frustrated by their bitter experiences with the West. As such, it inspired and emboldened the forces of political Islam, particularly as Iran appeared to offer a specifically Islamic model of political and social development free from western hegemonic influences. Iran's wider influence was demonstrated in November 1979 when supporters of the revolution seized the US embassy in Tehran, and by the formation in 1982 of the Iranian-sponsored Lebanese revolutionary group, Hezbollah. Together with Iranian influence over Hamas, this latter development created, some argue, a network of Shi'a terrorism that poses a major threat to Israel. Iran's regional position has also been significantly strengthened by the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the establishment of a majority Shi'a government in Iraq, events that also gave greater impetus to Iran's quest for nuclear weapons. In view of Iran's seemingly implacable hostility towards Israel, and what some see as the instability and risk-prone nature of its regime, Iran has come to be at the heart of modern attempts to ensure nuclear non-proliferation.

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The 2008 Russian war with Georgia

Events: On the night of 7–8 August 2008, as the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics was taking place, the Georgian military launched a large-scale assault against South Ossetia (population 50,000), an ethnic autonomous territory that had broken away from Georgia in 1990. Russian forces began to move into South Ossetia during 8 August, opening up a second front the following day in Abkhazia (population 200,000), another breakaway ethnic autonomous territory of Georgia. In the five-day war, massively outnumbered Georgian troops were expelled from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Russian forces entered Georgia unopposed, occupying the cities of Poti and Gori. A preliminary ceasefire, negotiated through the offices of the EU, was agreed on 12 August, which allowed a withdrawal of Russian troops to begin, although buffer zones were established around South Ossetia and Abkhazia. On 26 August, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with Russian troops being left in each by agreement with the respective governments.

Significance: The background to the war had been steadily intensifying tension between Russia and Georgia, dating back to the fragmentation and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This had nevertheless been intensified by growing links between Georgia and the USA, reflected particularly in Georgia's desire for membership of NATO. In this context, South Ossetia and Abkhazia became pawns in a larger conflict. What started as a war in South Ossetia was really a war between Russia and Georgia and, by extension, between Russia and the USA. Debates about 'who started the war', and about whether Russia engineered the circumstances that provided a pretext for action against Georgia, are, in a sense, immaterial. The real significance of Russia's war with Georgia was that it was a laboratory in which the great powers were able to test the limits of their strength. US policy since the end of the Cold War had aimed at preventing a resurgence of Russian power. To this end, the USA had supported action that would deprive Russia of control over its 'near abroad' (neighbouring regions in eastern Europe, the Caucasus and central Asia, which have traditionally been subject to Russian influence). This meant backing the eastward expansion of the EU and, more crucially, NATO, and a plan to site US anti-ballistic



missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic. For Russia, the Georgian war marked the resurgence of its great power status, through Moscow's first military assault on foreign soil since the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan, which ended in 1989. Moreover, it did this confident in the knowledge that diplomatic condemnation from the USA and the West in general would not translate into military action in support of Georgia, thereby reflecting the limits of US power. Through the Georgian war, Russia therefore sent a powerful message to the USA as well as to other east European states contemplating closer relations with the West.

Does the Georgian war mean that a new Cold War has developed, or is developing, between Russia and the USA? How far may Russia go in flexing its new muscles? Talk of the revival of the Cold War is at best simplistic. Not only did the collapse of the Soviet Union bring to an end the ideological and economic dimensions of rivalry between Russia and the USA, but twenty-first century world order is also very different from the power vacuum in 1945 which allowed the USA and the Soviet Union to become superpowers, dividing the world between them. There is evidence, furthermore, that the Georgian war has led to a new accommodation between the USA and Russia, in which greater attention has been paid to Russian concerns and perceptions. This led, for instance, to the abandonment in 2009 of plans to site US missiles in Poland and Czechoslovakia and to a more cautious approach to the issue of NATO expansion. Finally, there are many issues on which the USA and Russia require each other's support, not least nuclear disarmament and countering terrorism.

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The war in Afghanistan as a 'just war'

Events: In October 2001, the USA and its NATO allies attacked Afghanistan with the specific intention of overthrowing the Taliban regime on the grounds that it provided a base and support for al-Qaeda terrorists. With the support of Afghan warlords and tribal leaders, notably the Northern Alliance, the Taliban regime was toppled by December 2001 with the bulk of al-Qaeda terrorists being killed or forced to flee to the border regions of Pakistan. However, a protracted counter-insurgency war then ensued against remnants of the Taliban regime, other religious militants and forces opposed to the newly-established pro-western government in Kabul, whose strongholds were in Helmand province and neighbouring provinces in the south of Afghanistan.

Significance: In a number of respects, the Afghan War can be viewed as 'just war'. In the first place, the war can be justified on the basis of self-defence, as a way of protecting the USA in particular and the West in general from the threat of terrorism, as demonstrated by the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. Commentators such as Elshstain (2003) argued that the 'war on terror', of which the Afghan War was a crucial part, was just in that it was fought against the genocidal threat of 'apocalyptic terrorism', a form of warfare that posed a potential threat to all Americans and Jews and made no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. The 2001 attack on Afghanistan also had a clear, and clearly stated, goal: the removal of a Taliban regime whose links to al-Qaeda were clearly established and undisputed. Furthermore, the USA and its allies acted as a legitimate authority, in that they were backed by NATO and enjoyed wide international support, including from Russia and China. Finally, the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks could not have been reliably neutralized by diplomacy or non-violent pressure. The UN, for example, lacked the capability, authority and will to respond to the threat posed to global security by Islamist terrorism.

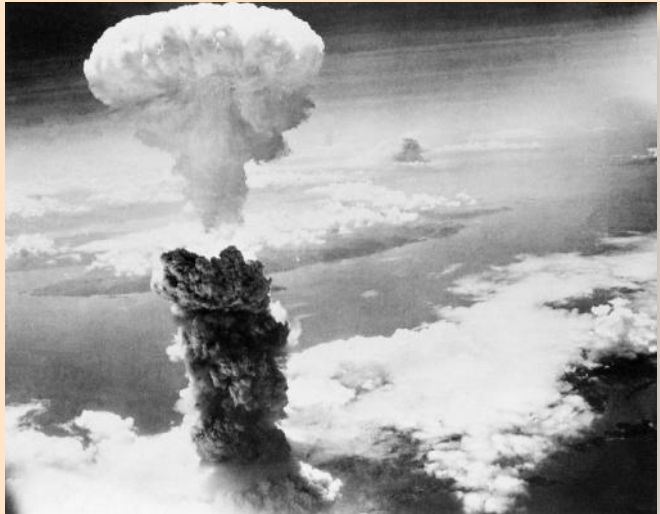


However, critics have portrayed the war as unjust and unjustifiable. Their arguments have included the following. First, the purpose of the war and the intentions with which it has been fought, may be unjust to the extent that the USA was motivated by a desire to consolidate its global hegemony or by a wish to strengthen control of oil resources in the Middle East. In this respect, the attack on Afghanistan amounted to unwarranted aggression. Second, the USA and its allies could not be considered as legitimate authorities in that, unlike the 1991 Gulf War, the Afghan War had not been authorized by a specific UN resolution. Third, although the chances of success in toppling the Taliban regime were high, the likelihood of defeating Islamist terrorists through the Afghan War was much more questionable. This was because of the probability that an invasion would inflame and radicalize Muslim opinion and also because of the dubious benefits of technological superiority in fighting a counter-insurgency war against an enemy using guerrilla tactics. Fourth, the USA violated accepted conventions of warfare through its treatment of prisoners of war (who were despatched to Guantanamo Bay and subjected to forms of torture) and in launching strikes against al-Qaeda and Taliban bases that often resulted in civilian deaths. Fifth, Islamists would argue that justice was on the side of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, not the invading forces, as they were engaged in a *jihad* – in this case, literally a 'holy war' – to purify Islam and expel foreign influence from the Muslim world.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The birth of the nuclear era

Events: The 'nuclear era' was born on 6 August 1945, when the USA dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A second bomb was dropped three days later on Nagasaki. The Hiroshima bomb, known as 'Little Boy', contained 60 kilograms of uranium-235, equivalent to 12–15 kilotons of TNT. It devastated an area of 13 square kilometres and destroyed more than 60 per cent of the buildings in the city. The initial death toll was approximately 100,000, rising, by some estimates, to 200,000 by 1950 due to radiation poisoning, cancer and other long-term effects. The larger Nagasaki bomb, code-named 'Fat Man', contained a core of 6.4 kilograms of plutonium-239, equivalent to the power of 22 kilotons of TNT. It destroyed about 30 per cent of Nagasaki and left between 40,000 and 75,000 people dead. On 12 August 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced the surrender of Japan.



Significance: The atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were significant in at least three ways. In the first place, they have widely been seen as crucial in bringing about the speedy surrender of Japan and thus the final end of WWII. Indeed, the use of atomic weapons against Japan has commonly been justified in terms of avoiding the huge casualties that would have occurred through an invasion of Japan. However, accusations have been levelled at the Truman administration that the bombs were dropped for political rather than military reasons. After the surrender of Germany, Japan had put out peace feelers through the Russians and the Swiss, and considerable pressure to surrender was already being exerted though the very heavy aerial bombing of Tokyo and other major Japanese cities. A key motive for the use of atomic bombs may therefore have been to limit Soviet gains in the Far East, and particularly to prevent a Soviet invasion of Japan that would have left the Soviet Union, not the USA, as the chief power in the Pacific and East Asia.

Second, the use of atomic weapons played a crucial role in shaping the emergence and future direction of the Cold War. By establishing itself as a nuclear power, the USA was demonstrating its new military strength, possibly in the hope that the Soviet Union would consequently accept US hegemony and be less difficult to deal with over issues such as Germany and eastern Europe. However, if this was the thinking behind the nuclear attacks, it backfired badly. Instead of cowing the Soviet Union, the atomic bombs merely intensified Soviet

attempts to acquire similar weapons, helping to fuel a nuclear arms race. The Cold War was therefore intrinsically linked to the nuclear age, the military stand-off between the USA and the Soviet Union developing into a 'balance of terror'. The implications of this 'balance of terror' have nevertheless been hotly disputed. While realists have argued that nuclear weapons underpinned the 'long peace' of the post-1945 period, liberals have tended to link them to increased risk and insecurity.

Third, the birth of the nuclear age fundamentally altered the nature of war and transformed attitudes towards warfare. As the archetypal weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons pose such a threat to civilian populations that they, arguably, rendered the notion of a just war redundant. In this sense, nuclear weapons have had a powerful symbolic, philosophical and even existential impact, highlighting the ultimate horror of war through linking war to the possible extermination of humankind. On the other hand, there are those who argue that the impact of nuclear weapons on war and warfare has been greatly exaggerated. From this perspective, the main significance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was that they are the only historical examples of the military use of nuclear weapons. So devastating is their potential impact, and so strong the moral, diplomatic and practical constraints on their use, that nuclear weapons may be sought more because of the prestige they bring than because of their political efficacy.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The 2002 Bali bombings

Events: In the late evening of 12 October 2002, three bombs were detonated on the Indonesian island of Bali. The first two exploded in or near popular nightclubs in the seaside resort of Kuta. A third, smaller device was set off in nearby Denpasar, the Balinese capital. 202 people died in these bombings, including 88 Australians, 38 Indonesians and 24 UK citizens. The militant Islamist group, Jemaah Islamiah (JI) ('Islamic community') was widely linked to the attacks, although some have doubted whether it had the organizational capacity to carry it out. In 2005, JI's spiritual leader, Abu Bakar Ba'ashyir, was convicted of conspiracy over the 2002 Bali attacks, but he was freed after his conviction was overturned by Indonesia's Supreme Court. In November 2008, three people convicted of carrying out the Bali attacks were executed by a firing squad.



Significance: The 2002 Bali bombings were the worst act of terrorism in Indonesia's history. But the attack was not an isolated incident, other attacks having included the 2000 Jakarta Stock Exchange bombing, the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing in South Jakarta, the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta, and the 2005 Bali bombings in Jimbara Beach Resort and, again, Kuta. Such incidents have raised questions about both the nature of the terrorist threat in Indonesia, and perhaps in Southeast Asia more widely, and about the effectiveness of Indonesia's response. US sources were especially keen that the Bali bombing be seen in a wider context, highlighting links between Indonesia's militant Muslim groups in general, and Jemaah Islamiah in particular, and al-Qaeda. However, there is very little evidence that JI is the Southeast Asian wing of al-Qaeda, and much less that al-Qaeda had any involvement in planning or carrying out the Bali bombings. Indeed, JI and other militant Indonesian Muslim groups are perhaps better thought of as religious nationalist groups rather than as part of a global Islamist conspiracy. What is more, the terrorist campaign appears to have been a failure, especially in the light of the goal of building a pan-Islamic state across much of Southeast Asia. Although the 2002 Bali bombings injected a new urgency into Indonesia's approach to counter-terrorism (some 300 alleged militants were arrested or killed in the following 5 years), this occurred without a resort to draconian anti-terror measures (as used in Sri Lanka and Iraq) for fear

that the Indonesian government might be accused of being 'anti-Islamic'. The net result of this is that, by common consent, groups such as JI are much weaker than they were before 2002.

The Bali bombings also had significant international repercussions, for Indonesia and Australia in particular. In the case of Indonesia, they caused heightened friction in US-Indonesian relations. The USA put considerable pressure on Indonesia to crack down on militant Islamist groups in the country, partly in the hope of drawing Indonesia more clearly into its 'war on terror'. However, as the largest Muslim country in the world (220 million of its 240 million population describe themselves as Muslims), Indonesia was reluctant to be seen to be acting under pressure from the USA or other western states. The Australian reaction to the Bali bombings was nevertheless less equivocal. What was seen as 'Australia's September 11' encouraged John Howard's Liberal-Conservative government to re-dedicate itself to the 'war on terror', citing the bombings as evidence that Australia was not immune to the effects of terrorism. Most controversially, and in line with US policy under George Bush, Howard asserted that, if he had evidence that terrorists were about to attack Australia, he would be prepared to launch a pre-emptive strike (see p. 225). This stance provoked strong criticism at the time from Southeast Asian regional powers, including Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. The Bali bombings also helped to create the conditions that allowed 2,000 Australian troops and naval units to participate in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

Humanitarian intervention in East Timor

Events: East Timor (also known as Timor-Leste) was a Portuguese colony for over 300 years. It was invaded in 1975 by Indonesian troops, following the precipitous departure of Portugal. This led to the development of one of the longest and bloodiest guerrilla wars in history, in which about a third of East Timor's 650,000 inhabitants were killed through mass executions, bombings and, above all, starvation. Following the fall of the Indonesian dictator Suharto, the government agreed to hold a referendum in 1999, in which 75 per cent of East Timorese voted for independence. The Indonesian army and pro-Indonesian militias responded to this by stepping up their campaign of intimidation and suppression. However, this time, a combination of heightened attention from the world's media, the plight of more than 200,000 refugees, and a changed international climate following NATO's intervention in Kosovo and the UN's catastrophic inaction in Rwanda and Bosnia, brought about decisive action. With the reluctant consent of Indonesia, a multinational UN force (the International Force for East Timor, or INTERFET), under the aegis of Australia, was sent to East Timor in September 1999 to bring peace and support East Timorese efforts to achieve self-determination. In October, authority was handed over to a UN administration, which oversaw democratic elections for a Constituent Assembly in 2001. On 20 May 2002, East Timor formally gained its independence.

Significance: East Timor is sometimes used as a classic example of how forcible intervention, carried out by the international community, can bring positive results. INTERFET forces speedily brought an end to atrocities and civil unrest. The Indonesian armed forces and police withdrew from the territory and militia attacks were controlled. The United Nations' transitional administration in East Timor (UNTAET) provided interim civil administration in the period leading up to independence, providing a peacekeeping force to maintain security and order (with the largest contingents being provided by Australia and New Zealand), overseeing and coordinating the provision of humanitarian relief, helping to restore the physical infrastructure and creating structures for sustainable governance and the rule of law. By gaining independence and joining the United Nations in September 2002, East



Timor demonstrated that intervention by the international community is capable of establishing a new state of democratic credentials.

On the other hand, the history of post-independence East Timor suggests that the outcomes of humanitarian intervention can be highly problematical. In April 2006, violence broke out between rival military factions, the police and militias in the East Timorese capital, Dili. At the invitation of Prime Minister Alkatiri, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal sent troops to quell the unrest and restore civil order. For some, this was evidence that nation-building 'from above' is fraught with difficulties. East Timor may be yet another example of a failed post-colonial state, its newly-created institutions being fragile and incapable of upholding an effective rule of law. In such circumstances, East Timor would need years, possibly decades, more 'babysitting' from the UN. However, East Timor's faction-ridden military and police may also provide evidence of the difficulty of transforming the military wing of a national liberation movement into a non-political defence force, capable of respecting the distinction between military and political affairs. A further complication is that for much of the period following independence the government of East Timor was engaged in difficult and protracted negotiations with Australia over maritime and resource rights in the Timor Sea. These negotiations were only concluded in January 2006, and may have drained significant government resources and attention that could have been better devoted to strengthening state institutions and improving the capacity of governance.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The Nuremberg Trials

Events: The Nuremberg Trials were a series of military tribunals that took place 1945–49, which were used by the victorious Allied forces of WWII to prosecute prominent figures from the defeated Nazi regime. They were convened largely as a reaction to the shocking cruelties of the Nazi regime, and in a brief flurry of legal activity that took place after the end of WWII, but before the Cold War really took grip. The military tribunals themselves were composed of US, UK, French and Russian judges, and key defendants included Hermann Göring, Martin Bormann, Rudolph Hess and Joachim von Ribbentrop. Four charges were laid against these and other Nazi leaders: conspiracy against peace, crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the first, most famous trial (1945–46), 22 of the most senior captured Nazi leaders faced prosecution; twelve of them were sentenced to death, seven received long prison sentences and three were acquitted. This trial was followed by twelve further trials of 177 people altogether, of whom 24 were sentenced to death.

Significance: The Nuremberg Trials were significant for a wide range of reasons. These include that the trials brought to light many details about Nazi atrocities, that they appeared to ignore the responsibility of countries other than Germany for waging aggressive war, and that, in highlighting the personal responsibility of individual Nazi leaders, they appeared to exonerate German society at large for the WWII and other atrocities. However, from the perspective of global politics, the Nuremberg Trials had their greatest influence on the development of international criminal law, in particular by extending international law into the areas of human rights and humanitarian standard-setting. The Nuremberg Trials thus marked a watershed in international jurisprudence, emphasizing the individual responsibility of leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices for perpetrating mass atrocities. It was also at these trials that the concept of 'crimes against humanity' first found formal expression and codification, in a language that has shaped interpretations ever since. In so doing, the principles applied at Nuremberg, formulated by the UN International Law Commission in 1950 into the Nuremberg Principles, filled a void in international law, namely, the failure adequately to address atrocious policies which in many cases did not fit the technical definition of war crimes (for example,



inhumane acts against civilians who are not enemy nationals) and yet were contrary to the 'dictates of the public conscience and general principles of law recognized by the community of nations'. The Nuremberg Principles helped to shape the provisions of, and the thinking behind, documents such as the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both introduced in 1948. The Nuremberg Trials went a long way to preparing the ground for the later establishment of international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and Bosnia and the creation of the International Criminal Court, which came into operation in 2002.

However, the Nuremberg Trials have also been controversial in terms of their impact on international law. Some, for example, have argued that concepts such as 'crimes against peace' or 'crimes against humanity' were ill-defined and, perhaps, inherently vague. Others have viewed the Nuremberg Trials as an example of 'victors' justice', the punishment of a defeated country and its leaders that has little or no basis in law. The principles applied at Nuremberg have therefore been seen as an example of *ex post facto* law: the defendants were prosecuted for actions that were only defined as crimes after they had been committed. A wider criticism is that the Nuremberg Trials drew international law into questionable areas. By emphasizing issues of human rights and humanitarian considerations, the trials created, at minimum, confusion about the proper role and scope of international law and, more seriously, created circumstances in which international law might be used to challenge, rather than uphold, state sovereignty.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The 'Year of Africa'

Events: During 2005, the international community devoted unprecedented attention to the plight of Africa, and particularly to promoting development in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest part of the world. While other regions made progress, and, in the case of East Asia and parts of South Asia, rapid progress, conditions in sub-Saharan Africa remained largely unchanged and, in some respects, got worse. The percentage of people living on \$1 a day or less rose from 45 per cent in 1990 to 49 per cent in 1999. In designating 2005 the 'year of development' or the 'year of Africa', the larger issue of poverty reduction and, in particular, the plight of sub-Saharan Africa were placed at the top of a number of international agendas. Most significantly, the G-8 summit at Gleneagles, Scotland, resulted in a historic deal. The world's most developed states committed themselves to:

- increasing international aid by \$50 billion a year by 2010. Half of this was to go to Africa, doubling aid to the continent;
- providing 100 per cent cancellation of debts owed to the IMF and the World Bank. Initially, the agreement covered 19 countries, but a further 24 were also scheduled for debt relief;
- delivering an 'ambitious and balanced conclusion' to the Doha round of global trade talks, as 'the best way to make trade work for Africa'.

These themes and goals were reaffirmed by the EU and the WTO. The UN 60th Summit took the opportunity to restate the international community's commitment to achieve the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, acknowledging that Africa would be the main beneficiary of the new commitment to aid. These summits and meetings took place against a backdrop of heightened anti-poverty activism, including demonstrations and marches organized by groups such as Make Poverty History and a series of 10 concerts, most of them taking place simultaneously, organized worldwide by Live 8.

Significance: Was 2005 really the 'year of Africa'? On the face of it, the commitments made in 2005 were remarkable. Targets were set for increasing aid to developing countries, with half of it scheduled to go to Africa. The



extension of the HIPC Initiative on debt relief would undoubtedly help the world's poorest countries, and, by 2006, 14 sub-Saharan countries had had their debt cancelled (although, by 2009, \$300 million of debt was still owed by African countries). There was an agreement on universal access to anti-HIV drugs in Africa by 2010, as well as a commitment to train 20,000 peacekeeping troops for Africa in exchange for African commitments to good governance and democracy.

However, the Gleneagles deal also attracted considerable criticism. In the first place, the promise to increase aid to Africa by \$25 billion a year by 2010 could be viewed as a drop in the ocean as far as ending global poverty is concerned, particularly as before 2005 Africa, the world's poorest continent, attracted only 20 per cent of the world's international aid. Second, some of the promises made in 2005 about debt relief and increased aid were revealed, on closer inspection, to be rehashed versions of aid already pledged, and by June 2010 some \$18 billion of promised money had not been paid. Third, debt relief came at a price. The IMF and World Bank agreed to extend the HIPC Initiative, but only on condition that pro-market economic reforms were introduced (for example, Tanzania was forced to privatize its water industry). In other words, the Gleneagles deal was based on 'orthodox' assumptions about development that ultimately placed greater emphasis on trade than aid. Finally, as the Doha round of WTO negotiations stalled, the global trading system remained unreformed, allowing rich countries to maintain protectionism, often at the expense of poor ones.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen

Events: The UN Climate Change Conference, commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit was held during 7–18 December 2009. The purpose of the conference was to develop a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which runs out in 2012. Some 163 countries participated in the Copenhagen Summit, with 101 of them being represented by heads of state and government, including President Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. The key outcomes of the conference were outlined in the Copenhagen Accord, which was drafted by the USA, China, India, Brazil and South Africa in a process of sometimes frantic negotiations. The conference itself agreed merely to 'take note of' the Copenhagen Accord in its final plenary session. The Accord included the following:



- A pledge to prevent global temperature rises in the future of more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Developed countries will provide \$30 billion for developing countries between 2010 and 2012 to help them cut emissions and adapt to climate change.
- By 2020, developing countries will be receiving \$100 billion a year from developed countries, more than half of which will come from, as yet unspecified, private sources.
- Developed countries will submit plans for cutting emissions to the UN for inspection and monitoring.
- Developed countries, including emerging economies such as China and Brazil, will submit reports on their emissions which can be subjected to measurement and verification, although the mechanism for doing so was to be determined at a later date.

Significance: The Copenhagen conference has been seen by many within the environmental movement as a failure, perhaps of catastrophic proportions. Its key weakness is that it does not create any new legally binding obligations on any country to cut its emissions, nor does it contain any clear commitment to achieve these in the future. In this respect, Copenhagen was disappointing even by the standards of the admittedly flawed Kyoto process. The Copenhagen Accord did not even establish any non-legal targets for national or global emissions reductions. Furthermore, substantial vagueness surround the funds through which developed countries will supposedly

support developing countries in reducing emissions, both in terms of where they will come from and how they will be used, and the verification processes that will apply to emissions reporting by developing countries. How can these failures be explained? The Copenhagen Conference has widely been viewed as a victim of both the reluctance of governments generally to take bold action on climate change in a context of a global recession, as well as of great power politics, with China, and to some extent other emerging economies, taking the opportunity to demonstrate their burgeoning influence in the light of the shifting balance of global power.

On the other hand, the Copenhagen Accord was judged to be a 'meaningful agreement' by the US government, and may have marked an advance over Kyoto in at least two ways. First, Copenhagen demonstrated the extent to which US policy has shifted. While the USA remained outside the Kyoto Protocol, at Copenhagen President Obama proposed to cut US emissions by 4 per cent on 1990 levels by 2020, signalling at least a conversion to the principle of legally binding targets. Similarly, while Kyoto imposed no obligations on developing countries to curb the growth of their emissions, at Copenhagen China and other emerging economies committed themselves to the goal of cutting emissions levels, even though this did not extend to establishing targets. In that sense, the Copenhagen Accord may be a step on the road to more concerted action on the issue of climate change. It should perhaps be judged in terms of preparing the ground for subsequent action, not in terms of its own specific achievements.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

Gendered violence in anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat

Events: On 28 February 2002, communal rioting broke out in the Indian province of Gujarat. The pretext for these riots was the horrific killing, the previous day, of 58 mainly militant Hindu volunteers who had been burnt alive on a train returning from Ayodhya. The communal riots in Gujarat continued until 3 March, after which there was a hiatus followed by a new round of violence from 15 March. Estimates of the numbers killed in the riots range from below 1,000 to over 2,000, with Muslim deaths outnumbering Hindu deaths by a ratio of 15:1. Over 500 mosques and *dargahs* (shrines) were destroyed and enormous numbers of Muslims in Gujarat were displaced: by mid-April, nearly 150,000 people were living in some 104 relief camps. There was, furthermore,

evidence of the complicity of the authorities in the Gujarat violence as well as of premeditation and planning, linked to the family of organizations associated with the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), which preaches a creed of 'India for the Hindus'. One of the most notable features of the anti-Muslim riots was the use of the sexual subjugation of women as an instrument of violence. At least 250 young girls and women were brutally gang-raped and burnt alive. Other atrocities included the stripping naked of groups of women who were then made to run for miles, the insertion of objects into women's bodies and the carving of religious symbols onto their bodies. What is more, women who were raped by Hindu zealots saw no action taken against their aggressors, as the police were generally unwilling to take their complaints seriously.

Significance: Hindu-Muslim violence has been a recurring feature of politics in India for three-quarters of a century or more. Although they are often portrayed as a manifestation of spontaneous hostility between the Hindus and Muslims, the deep involvement of the organizations of militant Hindu nationalism have given rise to 'institutionalized riot systems' (Brass 2003). However, why was gendered violence so prominent in the Gujarat riots of 2002, as, indeed, it has been in much of the communal rioting that has spasmodically gripped India?



The answer appears to be that a crisis of identity, linked to the desire to reassert or purify the Hinduva identity in the face of a perceived threat from Islam, has become entangled with a crisis of masculinity. Young males, organized on paramilitary lines, have conflated Hindu nationalism with masculinity and violence. This is evident not only in the emphasis within Hindu nationalist literature on the image of 'the man as warrior', but also in the fact that the political goals of Hindu nationalism are commonly expressed in sexual terms. Stress, for instance, is often placed on the 'threat' posed to Hindu identity by the generally higher fertility rates of Muslim communities. Hostility towards Muslims therefore tends to be expressed in the desire to dehumanize Muslim women, who are then viewed, and treated, primarily as sexual objects. Hindu nationalists thus rape and otherwise attack minority women to destroy not only their bodies but also the integrity and identity of Muslim society, viewed as the 'enemy other' (Chenoy 2002). In that sense, the sexual violence against Muslim women that marked the 2002 Gujarat riots was very much a public act. Attacking Muslim women sexually served two purposes: it brutalized Muslim women and denigrated Muslim men for failing to protect their women. It was therefore an attempt to terrorize Muslims and drive them out of 'Hindu India' by violating their communal honour (Anand 2007).

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The UN and Iraq

Events: The Gulf War was precipitated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The UN Security Council subsequently condemned the invasion and demanded the withdrawal of Iraqi troops (Resolution 660), placed economic sanctions on Iraq (Resolution 661) and set a deadline for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait (Resolution 665). Saddam's failure to comply with these resolutions led to Operation Desert Storm, a US-led military operation which was launched in February 1991 with the participation of 30 countries. In only four days of fighting the Iraqi troops were defeated and Iraqi forces had been pushed back over the border. An official ceasefire was signed in April 1991, in which Saddam agreed to abide by all of the UN resolutions.



Nevertheless, US pressure on Saddam Hussein's Iraq intensified after 9/11. In the context of the 'war on terror' (see p. 223), the Bush administration viewed Iraq as a member of the 'axis of evil'. After more than a decade of UN sanctions, Iraq was reportedly continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction. In November 2002, a Security Council resolution gave Iraq a 'final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations' (Resolution 1441). However, attempts by the USA, the UK and Spain to get approval for a second Security Council resolution that more clearly authorized military action by highlighting Iraq's non-compliance with Resolution 1441 failed. In this context, the USA and a 'coalition of the willing' invaded Iraq in March 2003, although the motivations for the invasion were complex and contested (see p. 131).

Significance: The UN's involvement with Iraq illustrates both its strengths and weaknesses in maintaining international peace and security in the post-Cold War era, but also the extent to which the effectiveness of the UN is determined by the wider international climate. The 1991 Gulf War appears to be as good an example of collective security as the world has seen. This was reflected both in Security Council authorization for 'Desert Storm' and in the determination of the USA not to act beyond UN resolutions, particularly by refusing to pursue fleeing Iraqi troops over the border and trying to topple the Saddam regime. This was clearly made possible by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of greater trust and unanimity amongst the P-5. Nevertheless, as in the case of the Korean War, Security Council agreement over the Gulf War

was achieved in exceptional circumstances. The Soviet Union adopted a highly conciliatory position in a context of economic crisis and deepening internal tensions that would shortly lead to the collapse of communist rule and the break-up of the Soviet empire. The UN's reliance on US military leadership also underlined the UN's lack of an independent military capacity and its reliance on the sole surviving superpower. Some have also argued that the Gulf War reflected US national interests, and, further, helped to give the USA greater military self-confidence, preparing the ground for the adoption, over time, of a more unilateralist foreign policy stance.

This unilateralism was dramatically demonstrated by the USA's 2003 invasion of Iraq. Indeed, the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, declared explicitly that, as the invasion had not been sanctioned by the Security Council, and was not in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter, it was a clear breach of international law. The Iraq War demonstrated how the UN could be reduced to the role of a bystander in a world dominated by a hegemonic USA. Nevertheless, although the bypassing of the UN dealt the organization a significant blow to its standing, there is no reason to believe that this would prove to be permanent. Unilateral US action taken without UN authorization and against the opposition of key P-5 states undoubtedly weakened the USA's 'soft' power. Arguably, it also proved to be counter-productive in combating militant Islam across the Muslim world. It was noticeable that in his second term in office, George Bush was more interested in cultivating support within the UN for his Iraq policy, a position that was further advanced by President Obama from 2009 onwards.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The collapse of Bretton Woods

Events: On 15 August 1971, US President Richard Nixon launched a New Economic Policy, sometimes called the 'Nixon shock'. Among other things this suspended the convertibility of the dollar to gold at the established rate. This last measure effectively sounded the death knell of the Bretton Woods system, paving the way for major currencies to float instead of staying fixed. Nixon's decision was made in the context of emerging difficulties in the US economy. Increased government spending due to the Vietnam War and President Johnson's Great Society programme of public education and urban redevelopment had led to rampant inflation, which, in turn, worsened the USA's balance-of-trade position. In addition, the USA was facing stiffer competition from export-orientated economies such as Japan and Germany as well as newly industrializing states such as Korea and Taiwan. The relative decline of the US economy was reflected in the fact that, having been responsible for almost 50 per cent of world industrial output in 1945, this had fallen to about 20 per cent by the early 1970s. Ultimately, the decision to end the Bretton Woods system was determined by the USA's declining gold stocks and therefore its inability to maintain the value of the dollar. By 1970, US gold stocks were worth \$10 billion compared with \$25 billion in 1945.

Significance: Debate about the significance of the collapse of Bretton Woods focuses on two main issues: why it happened and what it led to. For many commentators, the end of Bretton Woods reflected a decline in US hegemony (Gilpin 1987). For hegemonic stability theorists, a hegemonic power is one that is willing and able to act in ways that allow other states to make relative gains, so long as these help to sustain the liberal economic order. However, confronted by the rise of Japan and Western Europe and facing a growing balance-of-payments deficit, the USA opted to place its national interests before those of the liberal world economy. Others, nevertheless, argue that the end of Bretton Woods was not so much an example of declining hegemony but an exercise of audacious hegemonic power in its own right. In this view, the USA had become a 'predatory hegemon', willing to dismantle a system of global governance that no longer served its interest. This process was completed in the 1980s by the establishment of the 'Washington consensus'. For economic liberals, however,



these changes had less to do with hegemonic power and more to do with the futility of trying to regulate a market capitalist system. From this perspective, Bretton Woods was doomed to collapse, sooner or later, under the weight of its economic contradictions: markets and regulation are simply not compatible.

Whatever its cause, the collapse of Bretton Woods has been widely viewed as a decisive moment in the development of the world economy. Bretton Woods had been based on a model of economic 'internationalization', which assumed the existence of a collection of separate and distinct national economies. Its purpose, then, was to provide a more stable and predictable framework within which these national economies could interact. The end of a system of fixed exchange rates contributed, over the following decade or two, to 'globalizing' tendencies in the world economy, particularly through the emergence of interlocking currency and financial markets. Once currencies were allowed to float, other controls on finance and capital movements became unsustainable. The triumph of neoliberalism in the 1980s can therefore be traced back to the 1971 'Nixon shock'. In that sense, the end of Bretton Woods was a decisive moment in the emergence of accelerated globalization. Nevertheless, the end of Bretton Woods may have been more a consequence of that process than its cause. This can be seen, for instance, in the emergence in the 1960s of Eurocurrency, mainly consisting of Eurodollars, free-floating dollars that were traded in an entirely uncontrolled global market, making the task of maintaining stable exchange rates difficult and ultimately impossible. Emerging global markets may therefore have killed off Bretton Woods.

GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION ...

The EU expands to the east

Events: On 1 May 2004, the EU carried out an enlargement on a scale totally unprecedented in its history. Whereas previous enlargements had led, at most, to three new members joining, this enlargement involved ten new members, turning an EU of 15 states into one with 25 members. What was also notable was that, with the exception of Malta and Cyprus, these new members were former communist states of central and eastern Europe. Three of them – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – had been former Soviet republics, while the other five – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – had been part of the Soviet bloc (in the Soviet era, the Czech Republic and Slovakia had formed a single country, Czechoslovakia, and Slovenia had been a republic of Yugoslavia). This process was taken further on 1 January 2007, when two other former Soviet bloc states, Bulgaria and Romania, joined, bringing the membership of the EU to 27.

Significance: The EU's expansion into eastern Europe has been significant for a variety of reasons. In the first place, it had a profound impact on the geopolitical restructuring of Europe. It completed the process initiated by the collapse of communism through the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989–91, by bringing about the reunification of Europe after decades of division by the Iron Curtain. In so doing, EU membership played an important role in supporting the politico-economic transformation of eastern Europe. By fulfilling the 'Copenhagen criteria', established in 1993 for any new members of the EU, the accession states of central and eastern Europe demonstrated their support for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities, whilst also committing themselves to market economics and accepting the established EU aims of political, economic and monetary union. After 2004–07, then, the spread of liberal democracy into eastern Europe became an unstoppable process. Second, eastward expansion also affected the balances within the EU and its general orientation. In particular, the EU has been less able to function as a 'West European club', dominated by the Franco-German axis and with large states generally able to push through their preferences. Instead, the voice of smaller states has greatly increased, meaning, in part, that the EU has placed greater emphasis on providing support for economic and social development. In some senses, the centre of gravity of the EU has shifted eastwards, as attention has been given to further eastward expansion, with Turkey, Macedonia,



Serbia and Croatia being amongst the countries interested in joining, and the relationship between the EU and Russia has become an issue of increasing importance.

Third, eastward expansion has had an effect on the economic performance of the EU. On the one hand, by increasing the population of the EU by 20 per cent, it has created a larger internal market, providing an economic boost for all member states, which will increase as new members become economically successful. On the other hand, large differences in living standards and economic performance between existing members (the EU-15) and the accession states, and the fact that the transition from central planning to market economics is still an ongoing process, have created economic challenges for the EU. For instance, eastward expansion only increased the EU's GDP by 5 per cent, and it placed considerable pressures on the EU-15, which have provided about 90 per cent of revenues for the EU as a whole since 2007. Finally, expansion has had a significant impact on the decision-making processes of the EU. Quite simply, the wider the range of national and political interests that have to be satisfied, the more difficult it is for the EU to make decisions and to pursue coherent strategies. For many, the widening of the EU has placed substantial restrictions on its deepening. This led to attempts to establish more streamlined, centralized decision-making processes through a proposed EU Constitution. Nevertheless, this proved to be impossible to introduce in a more decentralized and, in certain respects, more divided EU, the Constitutional Treaty being withdrawn after its rejection by the Netherlands and France, and replaced by the more modest Lisbon Treaty. Some therefore argue that expansion has rendered the original goal of 'an ever closer union' impossible.