CHAPTER **3** # Theories of Global Politics

'Mad men in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.'

J. M. KEYNES, *The General Theory* (1936)

PREVIEW

No one sees the world just 'as it is'. All of us look at the world through a veil of theories, presuppositions and assumptions. In this sense, observation and interpretation are inextricably bound together: when we look at the world we are also engaged in imposing meaning on it. This is why theory is important: it gives shape and structure to an otherwise shapeless and confusing reality. The most important theories as far as global politics is concerned have come out of the discipline of International Relations, which has spawned a rich and increasingly diverse range of theoretical traditions. The dominant mainstream perspectives within the field have been realism and liberalism, each offering a different account of the balance between conflict and cooperation in world affairs. Why do realists believe that global politics is characterized by unending conflict, while liberals have believed in the possibility of cooperation and enduring peace? And why have realist and liberal ideas become more similar over time? However, from the 1980s onwards, especially gaining impetus from the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War, a series of new theoretical voices have emerged. These 'new voices' have substantially expanded the range of critical perspectives on world affairs, once dominated by the Marxist tradition. How have theories such as neo-Marxism, social constructivism, poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonialism and green politics cast a critical lens on global politics, and how do they differ from one another? Finally, the emergence of globalization has posed a series of new theoretical challenges, most significantly about the moral and theoretical implications of global interconnectedness. How is it possible to 'think globally'? Does global interconnectedness require that we re-think existing theories, or even abandon theoretical paradigms altogether?

KEY ISSUES

- Why have realists argued that world affairs should be understood in terms of power and self-interest?
- Why do liberals believe that world affairs are biased in favour of interdependence and peace?
- How have critical theorists challenged mainstream approaches to global politics?
- In what ways have critical theorists questioned the nature and purpose of theory?
- What are the empirical and moral implications of global interconnectedness?
- Do theoretical paradigms help or hinder understanding?

MAINSTREAM PERSPECTIVES

The key mainstream perspectives on global politics are realism and liberalism. As the discipline of international relations took shape following World War I, it drew particularly heavily on liberal ideas and theories, especially about the desirability of conducting international politics within a framework of moral and legal norms. From the late 1930s onwards, such liberal ideas were subject to increasing criticism by realist theorists, who highlighted what they saw as the inescapable realities of power politics. This established international relations as a 'divided discipline', a battleground between liberalism and realism, with the latter increasingly dominating the academic study of the subject from 1945 onwards. However, this so-called first 'great debate' within IR (see p. 4) has refused to stand still. By the 1970s, new versions of realism and liberalism had appeared, and, over time, the differences between these mainstream traditions have been blurred.

Realism

Realism (sometimes called 'political realism') claims to offer an account of world affairs that is 'realistic', in the sense that it is hard-headed and (as realists sees it) devoid of wishful thinking and deluded moralizing. For realists, global politics is, first and last, about power and self-interest. This is why it is often portrayed as a 'power politics' model of international politics. As Hans Morgenthau (see p. 58) put it, 'Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action'. The theory of power politics is based on two core assumptions (Donnelly 2000):

● People are essentially selfish and competitive, meaning that **egoism** is the defining characteristic of human nature.
● The state-system operates in a context of international anarchy, in that there is no authority higher than the sovereign state.

The core theme of realist theory can therefore be summed up in the equation: egoism plus anarchy equals power politics. Some have suggested that this formulation betrays a basic theoretical fault line within realism, dividing it into two distinct schools of thought. One of these – **classical realism** – explains power politics in terms of egoism, while the other – **neorealism**, or structural realism – explains it in terms of anarchy. However, these alternative approaches reflect more a difference of emphasis within realism rather than a division into rival 'schools', as the central assumptions of realism are common to most realist theorists, even though they may disagree about which factors are ultimately the most important.

The key themes within realism are as follows:

● State egoism and conflict
● Statecraft and the national interest
● International anarchy and its implications
● Polarity, stability and the balance of power

● **Egoism**: Concern for one's own interest or wellbeing, or selfishness; the belief that one's own interests are morally superior to those of others.

● **Classical realism**: A form of realism that explains power politics largely in terms of human selfishness or egoism.

● **Neorealism**: A perspective on international politics that modifies the power politics model by highlighting the structural constraints of the international system; sometimes called 'new' or structural realism.

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527)

Italian politician and author. The son of a civil lawyer, Machiavelli's knowledge of public life was gained from a sometimes precarious existence in politically unstable Florence. As a servant of the republic of Florence, he was despatched on diplomatic missions to France, Germany and throughout Italy. After a brief period of imprisonment and the restoration of Medici rule, Machiavelli retired into private life and embarked on a literary career. His major work *The Prince*, written in 1513 but not published until 1531 and seen as the classic realist analysis of power politics, drew heavily on his first-hand observations of the statecraft of Cesare Borgia. *The Disourses*, written over a twenty-year period, nevertheless portray him as a republican. The adjective 'Machiavellian' (fairly or unfairly) subsequently came to mean 'cunning and duplicitous'.

State egoism and conflict

In basing their theories of politics on a pessimistic, but allegedly 'realistic' model of human nature (see p. 56), classical realists have worked within a long and established tradition of thought, which can be traced back to Thucydides' (see p. 242) account of the Peloponnesian War, and to Sun Tzu's classic work on strategy, *The Art of War*, written at roughly the same time in China. Other significant figures included Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes (see p. 14). Machiavelli's theory of politics was based on a darkly negative model of a changeless human nature. In his view, humans are 'insatiable, arrogant, crafty and shifting, and above all malignant, iniquitous, violent and savage'. On this basis, Machiavelli argued that political life is always characterized by inevitable strife, encouraging political leaders to rule through the use of cunning, cruelty and manipulation. Hobbes's thinking was also based on a pessimistic view of human nature. He argued that humans are driven by non-rational appetites: aversions, fears, hopes and desires, the strongest of which is the desire for 'power after power'. As no single person or group is strong enough to establish dominance, and therefore a system of orderly rule, over society – a condition that Hobbes referred to as a '**state of nature**' – an ongoing civil war developed between all members of society. Life in this 'state of nature' would thus be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. According to Hobbes, the only way of escaping from the barbarity of such a society would be through the establishment of a sovereign and unchallengeable power, that is, by the creation of a state.

How did such thinking shape the understanding of international politics? In the first place, as realists accept that no form of world government (see p. 457) can ever be established, it meant that politics is conducted within what is, in effect, an international 'state of nature'. The international arena is therefore dangerous and uncertain, with order and stability always being the exception rather than the rule. Second, whereas Machiavelli and Hobbes were primarily concerned to explain the conduct of individuals or social groups, realist international theorists have been concerned, above all, with the behaviour of states. Realists view states as coherent and cohesive 'units', and regard them as the most important actors on the world stage. Realists' theories of international politics

● **State of nature**: A society devoid of political authority and of formal (legal) checks on the individual.

APPROACHES TO . . .

HUMAN NATURE

Realist view

Human nature is the starting point for much realist analysis, so much so that classical realism has sometimes been portrayed as 'biological realism'. Influenced by thinkers such as Hobbes and Machiavelli, realists have embraced a theory of human nature that has three main features. First, the essential core of human nature is fixed and given, fashioned by 'nature' (biological or genetic factors) rather than by 'nurture' (the influence of education or social factors generally). Second, instinct ultimately prevails over intellect. Human beings are driven by non-rational appetites: aversions, fears, hopes and desires, the strongest of which is the desire to exercise power over others. Intellect and reason may guide us in pursuing these appetites, but they do not define them in the first place. Third, as human beings are essentially self-seeking and egoistical, conflict between and amongst them is an unavoidable fact of life. For classical realists, this human egoism determines state egoism, and creates an international system that is inevitably characterized by rivalry and the pursuit of the national interest. Hopes for international cooperation and even 'perpetual peace' are therefore a utopian delusion. However, assumptions about human nature are peripheral within neorealism, in which rivalry and conflict is explained in terms of the structure of the international system rather than the make-up of individuals and therefore of states.

Liberal view

Liberals have a broadly optimistic view of human nature. Humans are self-seeking and largely self-reliant creatures; but they are also governed by reason and are capable of personal self-development. This implies, on the one hand, that there is an underlying and unavoidable tendency towards rivalry and competition among individuals, groups and, in the international arena, states. However, on the other hand, this tendency towards rivalry is contained by an underlying faith in a harmony of interests (conflicts can and should be resolved) and by a preference for resolving conflict through discussion, debate and negotiation. Liberals therefore typically deplore the use of force and aggression; war, for example, is invariably seen as an option of the very last resort. In this view, the use of force may

be justified, either on the grounds of self-defence or as a means of countering oppression, but always and only after reason and argument have failed. By contrast with the realist image of humans as ruthless power-maximizers, liberals emphasize that there is a moral dimension to human nature, most commonly reflected in the doctrine of human rights. This moral dimension is grounded in a strong faith in reason and progress. Reason dictates that human beings treat each other with respect, guided by rationally-based rules and principles. It also emphasizes the scope within human beings for personal development – as individuals expand their understanding and refine their sensibilities – and thus for social progress.

Critical views

While both realists and liberals tend to believe that core aspects of human nature are unchanging and fixed at birth, critical theorists generally view human nature as 'plastic', moulded by the experiences and circumstances of social life. In the nurture–nature debate, they therefore tend to favour nurture. This has two key implications. First, it suggests a unifying vision of humans as social creatures, animated by a common humanity and, therefore, cosmopolitan moral sensibilities. Critical theorists, for example, are often willing to go further than liberal internationalists in endorsing a 'one world' vision, grounded in the ideas of global justice. The second implication of 'plasticity' is that it highlights the extent to which economic, political or cultural structures shape human identities, wants and perceptions. As Marxists have put it, social being determines consciousness. For social constructivists and poststructuralists, this may suggest that there is no such thing as 'human nature', in the sense of a set of abiding tendencies or dispositions that apply in all circumstances and all societies. Feminists usually embrace an androgynous model of human nature, implying that women and men share a common human nature and that gender differences are socially and culturally imposed. Difference feminists nevertheless hold that there are deep-rooted, and perhaps even essential, differences between women and men, such that men are disposed to competition and domination while women are naturally sympathetic and peaceful.

are thus firmly state-centric. Third, and crucially, the fact that states are composed of, and led by, people who are inherently selfish, greedy and power-seeking means that state behaviour cannot but exhibit the same characteristics. Human egoism therefore determines state egoism; or, as Morgenthau (1962) put it, 'the social world [is] but a projection of human nature onto the collective plane'. Just as human egoism leads to unending conflict amongst individuals and groups, state egoism means that international politics is marked by inevitable competition and rivalry. As essentially self-interested actors, the ultimate concern of each state is for survival, which thereby becomes the first priority of its leaders. As all states pursue security through the use of military or strategic means, and where possible seek to gain advantage at the expense of other states, international politics is characterized by an irresistible tendency towards conflict.

Statecraft and the national interest

Although realism is often associated with the attempt to understand international politics from an objective or 'scientific' standpoint, it also acknowledges the important role played by **statecraft**. For example, in his analysis of the 'twenty-years crisis' that came between WWI and WWII, E. H. Carr (see p. 34) criticised the leading figures at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–20 (see p. 59) for allowing 'wishing' to prevail over 'thinking'. By neglecting the importance of power in international politics, they had set the world on an inevitable course to further conflict. Morgenthau (1948) similarly placed an emphasis on the 'art of statecraft', arguing that the practical conduct of politics should nevertheless be informed by the 'six principles of political realism', spelled out as follows:

- Politics is governed by *objective laws* which have their root in human nature.
- The key to understanding international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of *power*.
- The forms and nature of state power will vary in time, place and context but the concept of interest remains *consistent*.
- Universal *moral principles* do not guide state behaviour, although this does not rule out an awareness of the moral significance of political action.
- Moral aspirations are specific to a *particular* nation; there is no universally agreed set of moral principles.
- The political sphere is *autonomous*, meaning that the key question in international politics is 'How does this policy affect the power of the nation?'

The key guide to statecraft in the realist tradition is a concern about the **national interest**. This concern highlights the realist stance on political morality. Realism is commonly portrayed as essentially amoral, both because of its image of humans as lustful and power-seeking creatures and because of its insistence that ethical considerations should be strictly excluded from foreign policy decision-making. However, a normative emphasis also operates within realist analysis, in that the requirement that state policy should be guided by a hard-headed pursuit of the national interest suggests, ultimately, that the state should

● **Statecraft**: The art of conducting public affairs, or the skills associated with it; statesmanship.

● **National interest**: Foreign policy goals, objectives or policy preferences that supposedly benefit a society as a whole (the foreign policy equivalent of the 'public interest') (see p. 130).

Hans Morgenthau (1904–80)

German-born, US international relations theorist. A Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, Morgenthau arrived in the USA in 1937 and started an academic career which led to him being dubbed the 'Pope' of international relations. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948) was highly influential in the development of international relations theory. He set out to develop a science of 'power politics', based on the belief, clearly echoing Machiavellian Hobbes, that what he called 'political man' is an innately selfish creature with an insatiable urge to dominate others. Rejecting 'moralistic' approaches to international politics, Morgenthau advocated an emphasis on 'realistic' diplomacy, based on an analysis of balance of power and the need to promote the national interest. His other major writings include *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics* (1946), *In Defence of the National Interest* (1951) and *The Purpose of American Politics* (1960).

be guided by the wellbeing of its citizens. What realists reject, therefore, is not nationally-based conceptions of political morality, but universal moral principles that supposedly apply to all states in all circumstances. Indeed, from a realist perspective, one of the problems with the latter is that they commonly get in the way of the pursuit of the former. Calculations about the national interest, moreover, offer the surest basis for deciding when, where and why wars should be fought. Although realism is commonly associated with the idea of endless war, realists have often opposed war and aggressive foreign policy. In their view, wars should only ever be fought if vital national interests are at stake, the decision to wage war being based on something like a cost–benefit analysis of its outcomes in terms of strategic interests. Such thinking, for example, led Morgenthau and most US realists (except for Henry Kissinger, who was the National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State under Presidents Nixon and Ford, 1969–77) to oppose the Vietnam War. Realists have also been amongst the most trenchant critics of the 'war on terror' (see p. 223), thirty-four leading US realist scholars having co-signed an advert in the *New York Times* opposing war against Iraq as the US military build-up was happening in the autumn of 2002.

Anarchy and its implications

From the 1970s onwards, new thinking within the realist tradition started to emerge, which was critical of 'early' or 'traditional' realism. The key text in this process was Kenneth Waltz's *The Theory of International Politics* (1979). For Waltz (see p. 60), theories about international politics could be developed on 'three levels of analysis – the human individual, the state and the international system'. In this light, the defect of classical realism was that it could not explain behaviour at a level above the state, which is a limitation of any endogenous, or 'inside-out', theory (one which explains behaviour in terms of 'the inside', the intentions or inclinations of key actors) (see Structure or agency? p. 72). Using **systems theory**, neorealism, or, more specifically, 'structural realism' explains the behaviour of states in terms of the structure of the international system. As

● **Systems theory**: An approach to study that focuses on works of 'systems', explaining their operation and development in terms of reciprocal interactions amongst component parts.
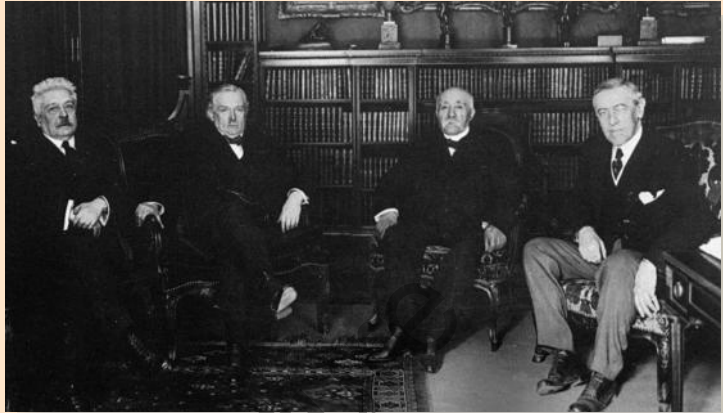
GLOBAL POLITICS IN ACTION . . .

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.

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 'idealist' 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 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.

Kenneth Waltz (born 1924)

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

such, neorealism is an exogenous, or 'outside-in', theory (one in which the
behaviour of actors is explained in terms of 'the outside', the context or structure
in which they operate) of global politics. In shifting attention from the state to
the international system, it places an emphasis on the implications of anarchy.
The characteristics of international life stem from the fact that states (and other
international actors) operate within a domain which has no formal central
authority. But how does this shape behaviour? And why, according to neorealists,
does international anarchy tend towards conflict rather than cooperation?

Neorealists argue that international anarchy necessarily tends towards
tension, conflict and the unavoidable possibility of war for three main reasons.
In the first place, as states are separate, autonomous and formally equal political
units, they must ultimately rely on their own resources to realise their interests.
International anarchy therefore results in a system of '**self-help**', because states
cannot count on anyone else to 'take care of them'. Second, relationships between
and amongst states are always characterized by uncertainty and suspicion. This
is best explained through the **security dilemma** (Booth and Wheeler 2008).
Although self-help forces states to ensure security and survival by building up
sufficient military capacity to deter other states from attacking them, such
actions are always liable to be interpreted as hostile or aggressive. Uncertainty
about motives therefore forces states to treat all other states as enemies, meaning
that permanent insecurity is the inescapable consequence of living in conditions
of anarchy. Third, conflict is also encouraged by the fact that states are primarily
concerned about maintaining or improving their position relative to other
states; that is, with making **relative gains**. Apart from anything else, this
discourages cooperation and reduces the effectiveness of international organiza-
tions (see p. 433), because, although all states may benefit from a particular
action or policy, each state is actually more worried about whether other states
benefit more that it does. Although such neorealist thinking had a profound
impact both within and beyond the realist tradition, since the 1990s realist theo-
ries have often attempted to fuse systems analysis with a unit-level approach,
giving rise to what has been called 'neoclassical realism' or 'post-neorealism'
(Wohlforth 1993; Zakaria 1998).

● **Self-help**: A state's reliance
on its own capacities and
resources, rather than external
support, to ensure security and
survival.

● **Security dilemma**: The
dilemma that arises from the
fact that a build-up of military
capacity for defensive reasons
by one state is always liable to
be interpreted as aggressive by
other states (see p. 19).

● **Relative gains**: The position
of states in relation to one
another, reflected in the
distribution of benefits and
capabilities between and
amongst them (see p. 436).

Polarity, stability and the balance of power

However, the fact that states are inclined to treat other states as enemies does not inevitably lead to bloodshed and open violence. Rather, neorealists, in common with classical realists, believe that conflict can be contained by the balance of power (see p. 256), a key concept for all realist theorists. However, while classical realists treat the balance of power as a product of prudent statecraft, neorealists see it as a consequence of the structural dynamics of the international system, and specifically, of the distribution of power (or capacities) between and among states. In short, the principal factor affecting the likelihood of a balance of power, and therefore the prospect of war or peace, are the number of great powers (see p. 7) operating within the international system. Although neorealists believe that there is a general bias in the international system in favour of balance rather than imbalance (see To balance or to bandwagon? p. 236), world order is determined by the changing fate of great powers. This is reflected in an emphasis on **polarity**.

Neorealists have generally associated bipolar systems with stability and a reduced likelihood of war, while multipolar systems have been associated with instability and a greater likelihood of war (see p. 63). This inclined neorealists to view Cold War bipolarity (see p. 216) in broadly positive terms, as a 'long peace', but to warn about the implications of rising multipolarity (see p. 230) in the post-Cold War era (discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). Realists, nevertheless, disagree about the relationship between structural instability and the likelihood of war. For so-called **offensive realists**, as the primary motivation of states is the acquisition of power, if the balance of power breaks down (as it tends to in conditions of multipolarity), there is a very real likelihood that war will break out (Mearsheimer 2001). **Defensive realists**, on the other hand, argue that states tend to prioritize security over power, in which case states will generally be reluctant to go to war, regardless of the dynamics of the international system (Mastanduno 1991) (see Offensive or defensive realism? p. 234).

Liberalism

Liberalism has been the dominant ideological force shaping western political thought. Indeed, some portray liberalism as the ideology of the industrialized West and identify it with western civilization itself. Liberal ideas and theories had a considerable impact on the discipline of international relations as it took shape following WWI, although they drew on a much older tradition of so-called 'idealist' (see p. 62) theorizing which dates back, via Kant's (see p. 16) belief in the possibility of 'universal and perpetual peace', to the Middle Ages and the ideas of early 'just war' thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas (see p. 255). Marginalized during the early post-1945 period due to the failure of the liberal-inspired Versailles Settlement and the ascendancy of realist thought, liberal ideas nevertheless attracted growing attention from the 1970s onwards, often in the form of so-called **neoliberalism**. This largely stripped liberalism of its idealist trappings. The end of the Cold War (sometimes seen as the 'liberal moment' in world affairs), the growing impact of globalization (see p. 9) and a new wave of **democratization** in the 1990s each gave liberal theory additional impetus.

The central theme of liberalism in all its forms is the notion of harmony or balance amongst competing interests. Individual, groups and, for that matter,

● **Polarity**: The existence within a system of one or more significant actors, or 'poles', which affect the behaviour of other actors and shape the contour of the system itself, determining its structural dynamics.

● **Offensive realism**: A form of structural realism that portrays states as 'power maximizers', as there is no limit to their desire to control the international environment.

● **Defensive realism**: A form of structural realism that views states as 'security maximizers', placing the desire to avoid attack above a bid for world power.

● **Neoliberalism**: A perspective on international politics that remodelled liberalism in the light of the challenge of realism, particularly neorealism; it emphasizes the scope for cooperative behaviour within the international system while not denying its anarchic character.

● **Democratization**: The transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy, reflected in the granting of basic freedoms and political rights, the establishment of competitive elections and the introduction of market reforms.

Idealism

Idealism (sometimes called 'utopianism') is an approach to international politics that stresses the importance of moral values and ideals, rather than power and the pursuit of the national interest, as a guide to foreign policy-making. Idealism is essentially a variant of liberal internationalism: it reflects a strong optimism about the prospects for international peace, usually associated with a desire to reform the international system by strengthening international law (see p. 332) and embracing cosmopolitan ethics. However, idealism is not co-extensive with liberalism: idealism is broader and more nebulous than liberalism, and modern liberal theorizing has often disconnected from the idealist impulse. Realists have used the term pejoratively to imply deluded moralizing and a lack of empirical rigour.

● **Paradigm**: A related set of principles, doctrines and theories that help to structure the process of intellectual enquiry.

● **Commercial liberalism**: A form of liberalism that emphasizes the economic and international benefits of free trade, leading to mutual benefit and general prosperity as well as peace amongst states.

● **Free trade**: a system of trade between states not restricted by tariffs or other forms of protectionism.

states may pursue self-interest but a natural equilibrium will tend to assert itself. At a deeper level, competing interests complement one another; conflict is never irreconcilable. Just as, from a liberal perspective, natural or unregulated equilibrium tends to emerge in economic life (see Approaches to global political economy, p. 87), a balance of interests tends to develop amongst the states of the world, disposing liberals to believe in the possibility of peace and cooperation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the liberal **paradigm** is not clearly distinct from realism, as both of them share certain mainstream assumptions about how international politics works. Most significantly, both liberals and realists accept that world affairs are shaped, in significant ways, by competition amongst states, implying that the international system is, and perhaps must always remain, decentralized. The difference, nevertheless, is that liberals assume that competition within this system is conducted within a larger framework of harmony. This inclines liberals to believe in internationalism (see p. 64) and to hold that realists substantially underestimate the scope for cooperation and integration within the decentralized state-system.

The key themes within liberal theory are as follows:

- Interdependence liberalism
- Republican liberalism
- Liberal institutionalism

Interdependence liberalism

Liberal theories about interdependence (see p. 8) are grounded in ideas about trade and economic relations. Such thinking can be traced back to the birth of **commercial liberalism** in the nineteenth century, based on the classical economics of David Ricardo (1770–1823) and the ideas of the so-called 'Manchester liberals', Richard Cobden (1804–65) and John Bright (1811–89). The key theme within commercial liberalism was a belief in the virtues of **free trade**. Free trade has economic benefits, as it allows each country to specialize in the production of the goods and services that it is best suited to produce, the ones in which they have a 'comparative advantage'. However, free trade is no less important in drawing states into a web of economic interdependence that means that the material costs of international conflict are so great that warfare becomes virtually unthinkable. Cobden and Bright argued that free trade would draw people of different races, creeds and languages together in what Cobden described as 'the bonds of eternal peace'. Not only would free trade maintain peace for negative reasons (the fear of being deprived of vital goods), but it would also have positive benefits in ensuring that different peoples are united by shared values and a common commercial culture, and so would have a better understanding of one another. In short, aggression and expansionism are best deterred by the 'spirit of commerce'.

The stress on interdependence that is basic to commercial liberalism has been further developed by neoliberals into what Keohane and Nye (1977) called 'complex interdependence', viewed, initially at least, as an alternative theoretical model to realism. Complex interdependence reflects the extent to which peoples and governments in the modern world are affected by what happens elsewhere, and particularly by the actions of their counterparts in other coun-

Focus on . . .
Neorealist stability theory: the logic of numbers?

From a neorealist perspective, bipolar systems tend towards stability and strengthen the likelihood of peace. This happens for the following reasons:

- The existence of only two great powers encourages each to maintain the bipolar system as, in the process, they are maintaining themselves.
- Fewer great powers means the possibilities of great-power war are reduced.
- The existence of only two great powers reduces the chances of miscalculation and makes it easier to operate an effective system of deterrence .
- Power relationships are more stable as each bloc is forced to rely on inner (economic and military) resources, external (alliances with other states or blocs) means of expanding power not being available.

On the other hand, multipolar systems tend to be inherently unstable, for the following reasons:

- A larger number of great powers increases the number of possible great-power conflicts.
- Multipolarity creates a bias in favour of fluidity and, perhaps, instability, as it leads to shifting alliances as great powers have external means of extending their influence.
- As power is more decentralized, existing great powers may be more restless and ambitious while weak states may be able to form alliances in order to challenge and displace existing great powers.

Such thinking was most prevalent during the Cold War, when it was used to explain the dynamics of the superpower era. Since then, it has become less fashionable to explain stability and conflict simply in terms of the structural dynamics of the international system.

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tries. This applies not only in the economic realm, through the advance of globalization, but is also evident in relation to a range of other issues, including climate change, development and poverty reduction, and human rights (see p. 304). Such a view suggests that realism's narrow preoccupation with the military and diplomatic dimensions of international politics, the so-called '**high politics**' of security and survival, is misplaced. Instead, the international agenda is becoming broader with greater attention being given to the '**low politics**' of welfare, environmental protection and political justice. Relations between and amongst states have also changed, not least through a tendency for modern states to prioritize trade over war and through a trend towards closer cooperation or even integration, as, for instance, in the case of the European Union. Nevertheless, there has been disagreement amongst interdependence liberals about the significance of such trends. So-called 'strong' liberals believe that qualitative changes have taken place in the international system which substantially modify the impact of anarchy, self-help and the security dilemma, creating an irresistible tendency towards peace, cooperation and integration (Burton 1972; Rosenau 1990). 'Weak' liberals, on the other hand, have come to accept neorealist assumptions, particularly about the implications of international anarchy, as the starting point for analysis, thereby highlighting the extent to which modern realist and liberal theory sometime overlap (Axelrod 1984; Stein 1990).

● **High politics**: Issue areas that are of primary importance, usually taken to refer to defence and foreign policy generally, and particularly to matters of state self-preservation.

● **Low politics**: Issue areas that are seen not to involve a state's vital national interests, whether in the foreign or the domestic sphere.

● **Republican liberalism**: A form of liberalism that highlights the benefits of republican (rather than monarchical) government and, in particular, emphasizes the link between democracy and peace.

● **Democratic peace thesis**: The notion that there is an intrinsic link between peace and democracy, in particular that democratic states do not go to war with one another.

Republican liberalism

Like classical realism, the liberal perspective on international politics adopts an 'inside-out' approach to theorizing. Larger conclusions about international and global affairs are thus derived from assumptions about their basic elements. Although liberalism's stress on peace and international harmony contrasts sharply with the realist belief in power politics, the two perspectives are united in viewing states as essentially self-seeking actors. Each state therefore poses at least a potential threat to other states. However, unlike realists, liberals believe that the external behaviour of a state is crucially influenced by its political and constitutional make-up. This is reflected in a tradition of **republican liberalism** that can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson (see p. 438), if not to Kant. While autocratic or authoritarian states are seen to be inherently militaristic and aggressive, democratic states are viewed as naturally peaceful, especially in their dealings with other democratic states (Doyle 1986, 1995). The aggressive character of authoritarian regimes stems from the fact that they are immunized from popular pressure and typically have strong and politically powerful armies. As they are accustomed to the use of force to maintain themselves in power, force becomes the natural mechanism through which they deal with the wider world and resolve disputes with other states. Liberals, moreover, hold that authoritarian states are inherently unstable because they lack the institutional mechanisms for responding to popular pressure and balancing rival interests, and are so impelled towards foreign policy adventurism as a means of regime consolidation. If the support of the people cannot be ensured through participation and popular consent, 'patriotic' war may provide the only solution.

In this light, liberals have seen democracy as a guarantee of peace (see p. 66). The **democratic peace thesis** resurfaced with particular force in the aftermath of the collapse of communism, notably in the writings of Francis Fukuyama (see p. 513). In Fukuyama's view, the wider acceptance of liberal-democratic principles and structures, and the extension of market capitalism, amounted to the 'end of history' and also promised to create a more stable and peaceful global order. Liberals have claimed empirical as well as theoretical support for such beliefs, especially in the fact that there has never been a war between two democratic nation-states (even though wars have continued to take place between democracies and other states). They have also associated the general advance of democratization with the creation of 'zones of peace', composed of collections of mature democracies in places such as Europe, North America and Australasia, as opposed to the 'zones of turmoil' that are found elsewhere in the world (Singer and Wildavsky 1993). Nevertheless, republican liberalism has also been drawn into deep controversy, not least through the growth of so-called liberal interventionism and the idea that democracy can and should be promoted through militarily imposed 'regime change'. This issue is examined in more detail in Chapter 9, in association with the 'war on terror'.

Liberal institutionalism

The chief 'external' mechanism that liberals believe is needed to constrain the ambitions of sovereign states is international organizations. This reflects the

Focus on . . .
Closing the realist–liberal divide?

Although realism and liberalism are commonly portrayed as antithetical theories of international politics – the one emphasizing egoism, power and conflict; the other, morality, peace and cooperation – the difference between them has tended to fade over time. One of the characteristic features of neoliberals is an acceptance of certain neorealist assumptions, making them, for instance, happier than 'traditional' liberals to explain state behaviour in terms of self-interest and to accept that the international system is essentially anarchical. Similarly, most modern realists are 'weak' or 'hedged' realists, in that they accept that international politics cannot be explained exclusively in terms of power, self-interest and conflict. The so-called 'neo–neo' debate has therefore become an increasingly technical, rather than foundational, debate.

The idea that international politics is best explained in the light of both realist and liberal insights, recognizing the counter-balancing forces of conflict and cooperation, has been championed, since the 1960s, by theorists who subscribe to the notion of 'international society' (see p. 10), sometimes seen as the 'English School' of international relations. This view modifies the realist emphasis on power politics and international anarchy by suggesting the existence of a '*society* of states' rather than simply a '*system* of states', implying that international relations are rule-governed and that these rules help to maintain international order. The chief institutions that generate cultural cohesion and social integration are international law, diplomacy and the activities of international organizations. Hedley Bull (2002) thus advanced the notion of an 'anarchical society', in place of the conventional realist idea of international anarchy. International society theory can be seen as a form of liberal realism.

● **Liberal institutionalism**: An approach to study that emphasizes the role of institutions (both formal and informal) in the realization of liberal principles and goals.

● **Rule of law**: The principle that law should 'rule' in the sense that it establishes a framework within which all conduct and behaviour takes place.

ideas of what is called **liberal institutionalism**. The basis for such a view lies in the 'domestic analogy', the idea that insight into international politics can be gained by reflecting on the structures of domestic politics. Taking particular account of social contract theory, as developed by thinkers such as Hobbes and John Locke (1632–1704), this highlights the fact that only the construction of a sovereign power can safeguard citizens from the chaos and barbarity of the 'state of nature'. If order can only be imposed 'from above' in domestic politics, the same must be true of international politics. This provided the basis for the establishment of the **rule of law**, which, as Woodrow Wilson put it, would turn the 'jungle' of international politics into a 'zoo'. The League of Nations was the first, if flawed, attempt to translate such thinking into practice. The United Nations (see p. 449) has attracted far wider support and established itself as a seemingly permanent feature of global politics. Liberals have looked to such bodies to establish a rule-governed international system that would be based on collective security (see p. 440) and respect for international law.

Modern neoliberals have built on this positive approach to international organizations, practising what has been called 'neoliberal institutionalism'. Distancing themselves from the cosmopolitan dreams of some early liberals, they have instead explained growing cooperation and integration in functional terms, linked to self-interest. Institutions thus come into existence as mediators, to facilitate cooperation among states on matters of common interest. Whereas neorealists argue that such cooperation is always difficult and prone to break

Debating . . .
Is democracy a guarantee of peace?

The 'democratic peace' thesis, supported by most liberals, suggests that democracy and peace are linked, particularly in the sense that wars do not occur between democratic states. Realists and others nevertheless argue that there is nothing necessarily peaceful about democracy.

FOR

Zones of peace. Much interest in the idea of a 'democratic peace' derives from empirical analysis. As democracy has spread, 'zones of peace' have emerged, in which military conflict has become virtually unthinkable. This certainly applies to Europe (previously riven by war and conflict), North America and Australasia. History seems to suggest that wars do not break out between democratic states, although, as proponents of the democratic peace thesis accept, war continues to occur between democratic and authoritarian states.

Public opinion. Liberals argue that wars are caused by governments, not by the people. This is because it is citizens themselves who are likely to be war's victims: they are the ones who will do the killing and dying, and who will suffer disruption and hardship. In short, they have no 'stomach for war'. In the event of international conflict, democracies will thus seek accommodation rather than confrontation, and use force only as a last resort, and then only for purposes of self-defence.

Non-violent conflict resolution. The essence of democratic governance is a process of compromise, conciliation and negotiation, through which rival interests or groups find a way of living together rather than resorting to force and the use of naked power. This, after all, is the purpose of elections, parliaments, pressure groups and so on. Not only is it likely that regimes based on compromise and conciliation will apply such an approach to foreign policy as well as domestic policy, but governments unused to using force to resolve civil conflict will be less inclined to use force to resolve international conflicts.

Cultural bonds. Cultural ties develop amongst democracies because democratic rule tends to foster particular norms and values. These include a belief in constitutional government, respect for freedom of speech and guarantees for property ownership. The common moral foundations that underpin democratic government tend to mean that democracies view each other as friends rather than as foes. Peaceful coexistence amongst democracies therefore appears to be a 'natural' condition.

AGAINST

Democracies at war. The idea that democracies are inherently peaceful is undermined by continued evidence of wars between democratic and authoritarian states, something that most democratic peace theorists acknowledge. Moreover, empirical evidence to support the thesis is bedevilled by confusion over which regimes qualify as 'democracies'. If universal suffrage and multi-party elections are the core features of democratic governance, NATO's bombardment of Serb troops in Kosovo in 1999 and Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 (see p. 232) are both exceptions to the democratic peace thesis. Moreover, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq both demonstrate that democracies do not go to war only for purposes of self-defence.

States are states. Realist theorists argue the factors that make for war apply to democratic and authoritarian states alike. In particular, the constitutional structure of a state does not, and never can, alter the selfishness, greed and potential for violence that is simply part of human nature. Far from always opposing war, public opinion therefore sometimes impels democratic governments towards foreign policy adventurism and expansionism (European imperialism, WWI and perhaps the 'war on terror' each illustrate this). Realists, moreover, argue that the tendency towards war derives less from the constitutional make-up of the state and more from the fear and suspicion that are an unavoidable consequence of international anarchy.

Peace by other means. Although the division of the world into 'zones of peace' and 'zones of turmoil' may be an undeniable feature of modern world politics, it is far from clear that the difference is due only, or even chiefly, to democracy. For example, patterns of economic interdependence that result from free trade may be more effective in maintaining peace amongst democracies than popular pressures. Similarly, it may be more significant that mature liberal democracies are wealthy than that they are either liberal or democratic. In this view, war is an unattractive prospect for rich states because they have little impulse to gain through conquest and much to fear from the possibility of defeat.

CONCEPT

International regime

A regime is a set of principles, procedures, norms or rules that govern the interactions of states and non-state actors in particular issue areas within international politics. As such, they are social institutions with either a formal or informal character. Examples of regimes include treaties, conventions, international agreements and international organizations. These now operate in a wide variety of issue areas, including economics, human rights, the environment, transport, security, policing, communications and so on. The greater significance of regimes reflects the growth of interdependence and the recognition that cooperation and coordination can bring absolute gains to all parties. Regimes may even provide a network of regulatory frameworks which, taken collectively, resemble a form of global governance (see p. 455).

● **Absolute gains**: Benefits that accrue to states from a policy or action regardless of their impact on other states (see p. 436).

● **Post-positivism**: An approach to knowledge that questions the idea of an 'objective' reality, emphasizing instead the extent to which people conceive, or 'construct'; the world in which they live.

down because of the emphasis by states on 'relative' gains, neoliberals assert that states are more concerned with **absolute gains**. Instead of constantly engaging in one-upmanship, states are always willing to cooperate if they calculate that they will be better off in real terms as a result. Although neoliberals use such arguments to explain the origins and development of formal institutions, ranging from the World Trade Organization (WTO) (see p. 511) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see p. 469) to regional economic blocs such as the European Union (see p. 505), they also draw attention to more informal institutions. In this, they embrace what has been called 'new' institutionalism, which defines institutions not so much as established and formal bodies, but, more broadly, as sets of norms, rules and 'standard operating procedures' that are internalized by those who work within them. This explains the stress within neoliberal theory on the role of international regimes.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Mainstream perspectives on international politics and world affairs have been challenged by a growing array of critical perspectives, many of which have only gained prominence since the late 1980s. Although these perspectives are often very different from one another, they tend to have two broad things in common. The first is that, with the exception of orthodox Marxism and most forms of green politics, they have, in their different ways, embraced a **post-positivist** approach that takes subject and object, and therefore theory and practice, to be intimately linked (see All in the mind?, p. 75). As Robert Cox (1981) put it, 'theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose'. The second similarity is related to the first, and this is that critical perspectives seek to challenge the global status quo and the norms, values and assumptions on which it is based. In exposing inequalities and asymmetries that mainstream theories ignore, critical theorists therefore tend to view realism and liberalism as ways of concealing, or of legitimizing, the power imbalances of the established global system. Critical theories are thus emancipatory theories: they are dedicated to overthrowing oppression and thus consciously align themselves with the interests of exploited groups. Being politically engaged, it is sometimes difficult to reconcile critical theories with the tradition of dispassionate scholarship, although critical theorists would argue that this highlights the limitations of the latter rather than of the former. The key critical perspectives on global politics are as follows:

● Marxism, neo-Marxism and critical theory
● Social constructivism
● Poststructuralism
● Feminism
● Green politics
● Postcolonialism

Marxism, neo-Marxism and critical theory

Marxism has traditionally been viewed as the principal critical or radical alternative to mainstream realist and liberal thinking, although its impact on academic theorizing was always limited. However, Marxism is a very broad field,

which encompasses, as far as international theory is concerned, two contrasting tendencies. The first of these gives primary attention to economic analysis, and is mainly concerned with exposing capitalism as a system of class oppression that operates on national and international levels. This applies to classical Marxism and to most forms of **neo-Marxism**. The second tendency places greater emphasis on the ideological and cultural dimension of oppression, and has come to embrace a post-positivist, and therefore post-Marxist, mode of theorizing. This applies to what has been called 'critical theory', as influenced by the ideas of Gramsci (see p. 71) and the so-called Frankfurt School.

From classical Marxism to neo-Marxism

The core of Marxism is a philosophy of history that outlines why capitalism is doomed and why socialism and eventually communism are destined to replace it. This philosophy is based on the 'materialist conception of history', the belief that economic factors are the ultimately determining force in human history. In Marx's view, history is driven forward through a dialectical process in which internal contradictions within each 'mode of production', reflected in class conflict, lead to social revolution and the construction of a new and higher mode of production. This process was characterized by a series of historical stages (slavery, feudalism, capitalism and so on) and would only end with the establishment of a classless communist society. For Marx, capitalist development nevertheless always had a marked transnational character, leading some to regard him as an early 'hyperglobalist' theorist. The desire for profit would drive capitalism to 'strive to tear down every barrier to intercourse' and to 'conquer the whole earth for its market' (Marx 1973). However, the implications of viewing capitalism as an international system were not fully explored until V. I. Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* ([1916] 1970). Lenin portrayed imperialism as an essentially economic phenomenon, reflecting domestic capitalism's quest to maintain profit levels through the export of surplus capital. This, in turn, would bring major capitalist powers into conflict with one another, the resulting war (WWI) being essentially an imperialist war in the sense that it was fought for the control of colonies in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Such thinking was further developed by later Marxists, who focused on the '**uneven development**' of global capitalism.

Interest in Marxism was revived during the 1970s through the use of neo-Marxist theories to explain patterns of global poverty and inequality. **Dependency theory**, for example, highlighted the extent to which, in the post-1945 period, traditional imperialism had given way to neo-colonialism, sometimes viewed as 'economic imperialism' or, more specifically, 'dollar imperialism'. World-systems theory (see p. 367) suggested that the world economy is best understood as an interlocking capitalist system which exemplifies, at international level, many of the features that characterize national capitalism; that is, structural inequalities based on exploitation and a tendency towards instability and crisis that is rooted in economic contradictions. The world-system consists of interrelationships between the 'core', the 'periphery' and the 'semi-periphery'. Core areas such as the developed North are distinguished by the concentration of capital, high wages and high-skilled manufacturing production They therefore benefit from technological innovation and high and sustained levels of

● **Neo-Marxism**: An updated and revived form of Marxism that rejects determinism, the primacy of economics and the privileged status of the proletariat.

● **Uneven development**: The tendency within a capitalist economy for industries, economic sectors and countries to develop at very different rates due to the pressures generated by the quest for profit, competition and economic exploitation.

● **Dependency theory**: A neo-Marxist theory that highlights structural imbalances within international capitalism that impose dependency and underdevelopment on poorer states and regions.
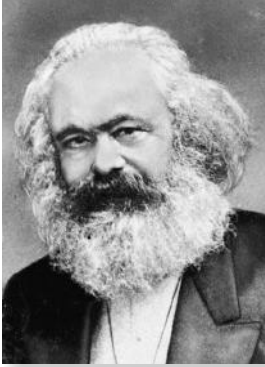
Karl Marx (1818–83)

German philosopher, economist and political thinker, usually portrayed as the father of twentieth-century communism. After a brief career as a university teacher, Marx became increasingly involved in the socialist movement. Finally settling in London, he worked for the rest of his life as an active revolutionary and writer, supported by his friend and lifelong collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–95). At the centre of Marx's work was a critique of capitalism that highlights its transitionary nature by drawing attention to systemic inequality and instability. Marx subscribed to a teleological theory of history that holds that social development would inevitably culminate in the establishment of communism. His classic work was the three-volume *Capital* ([1885, 1887, 1894] 1969); his best-known and most accessible work, with Engels, is the *Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 1967).

investment. Peripheral areas such as the less developed South are exploited by the core through their dependency on the export of raw materials, subsistence wages and weak frameworks of state protection. Semi-peripheral areas are economically subordinate to the core but in turn take advantage of the periphery, thereby constituting a buffer between the core and the periphery. Such thinking about the inherent inequalities and injustices of global capitalism was one of the influences on the anti-globalization, or 'anti-capitalist', movement that emerged from the late 1990s onwards (see p. 70).

Critical theory

'Critical theory' (often called 'Frankfurt School critical theory', to distinguish it from the wider category of critical theories or perspectives) has developed into one of the most influential currents of Marxist-inspired international theory A major influence on critical theory has been the ideas of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci (1970) argued that the capitalist class system is upheld not simply by unequal economic and political power, but by what he termed the '**hegemony**' of bourgeois ideas and theories. Hegemony means leadership or domination and, in the sense of ideological hegemony, it refers to the capacity of bourgeois ideas to displace rival views and become, in effect, the 'common sense' of the age. Gramsci's ideas have influenced modern thinking about the nature of world or global hegemony. Instead of viewing hegemony in conventional terms, as the domination of one military power over another, modern neo-Gramscians have emphasized the extent to which hegemony operates through a mixture of coercion and consent, highlighting the interplay between economic, political, military and ideological forces, as well as interaction between states and international organizations. Robert Cox (see p. 120) thus analyzed the hegemonic power of the USA not only in terms of its military ascendancy, but also in terms of its ability to generate broad consent for the 'world order' that it represents.

The other key influence on critical theory has been the thinking of the Frankfurt School, a group of Marxist-influenced theorists who worked at the Institute of Social Research, which was established in Frankfurt in 1923, relo-

● **Hegemony**: The ascendancy or domination of one element of a system over others; for Marxists, hegemony implies ideological domination (see p. 221).

GLOBAL ACTORS . . .

THE ANTI-CAPITALIST MOVEMENT

Type: Social movement

There is general agreement that the birth of the anti-capitalist movement (also known as the 'anti-glob-alization', 'anti-corporate', 'anti-neoliberal', 'global justice', 'alter-globalization' movement) can be traced back to the so-called 'Battle of Seattle' in November 1999, when some 50,000 activists forced the cancellation of the opening cere-mony of a World Trade Organization meeting. This 'coming-out party' for the anti-capi-talist movement provided a model for the 'new politics' of activist-based theatrical politics that has accompanied most subsequent international summits and global conferences. In some respects, the anti-capitalist movement exists on two levels. One level is strongly activist-orientated, and consists of a loosely-knit, non-hierarchically organized international coalition of (usually young) people and social movements, articulating the concerns of environmental groups, trade unions, religious groups, student groups, anarchists, revolu-tionary socialists, campaigners for the rights of indigenous people, and so on. On the other level, the anti-capitalist movement is expert-orien-tated, focused on a number of leading authors and key works, and involving, through their influence, a much wider range of people, many of whom are not directly involved in activism but sympathize generally with the movement's goals. Leading figures (but by no means 'leaders') include Noam Chomsky (see p. 228), Naomi Klein (see p. 146) and Noreena Hertz (2002).

Significance: It is very difficult to make judgements about the impact of social movements because of their typically broad, and some-times nebulous, cultural goals. It would be absurd, for example, to write off the anti-capitalist move-ment as a failure, simply because of the survival, worldwide, of the capitalist system. Proponents of the anti-capitalist movement argue that it is the nearest thing to a counter-hegemonic force in modern global politics, its role being to expose and contest the discourses and practices of neoliberal globalization. It is rightfully described as a 'movement of movements', in that the inequali-ties and asymmetries generated by 'corporate' globalization are multi-ple. The anti-capitalist movement therefore provides a vehicle through which the disparate range of peoples or groups who have been marginalized or disenfran-chised as a result of globalization can gain a political voice. In that sense, the movement is a demo-cratic force, an uprising of the oppressed and seemingly powerless. The anti-globalization movement can be credited with having altered thinking on a wide range of transnational issues, even with having reshaped global political agendas. This can be seen in a heightened awareness of, for example, environmental issues, and especially global warming, the fail-ings of market-based development and poverty-reduction strategies, and so forth. UN conferences and bodies such as the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF now operate within a political and intellectual climate that is different from the 1980s and 1990s, and the anti-capi-talist movement has contributed significantly to this.

Criticisms of the anti-capitalist movement have sometimes been damning, however. Most seriously, it has been condemned for its failure to develop a systematic and coherent critique of neoliberal glob-alization or failure to outline a viable alternative. This reflects both the highly diverse nature of the anti-capitalist movement and the fact that its goals are not commonly incompatible. While a minority of its supporters are genuinely 'anti-capitalist', adopting a Marxist-style analysis of capitalism that high-lights its inherent flaws, most groups and supporters wish merely to remove the 'worst excesses' of capitalism. Similarly, the anti-capi-talist movement is divided over globalization itself. While some, such as nationalists, cultural activists and campaigners for the rights of indigenous people, object to globalization in principle, a large proportion of the movement's supporters wish only to break the link between globalization and neoliberalism (see p. 90), attempt-ing to establish a form of alternative globalization, or 'alter-globalization'. Another serious division within the anti-capitalist movement is between those who link global justice to strengthened regulation at a national and global level, and anar-chist elements who distrust govern-ment and governance (see p. 125) in all its forms.

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937)

Italian Marxist and social theorist. The son of a minor public official, Gramsci joined the Socialist Party in 1913, but switched to the newly-formed Italian Communist Party in 1921, being recognized as its leader by 1924. He was imprisoned by Mussolini in 1926, and remained incarcerated until his death. In *Prison Notebooks* (1970), written between 1929 and 1935, Gramsci sought to redress the emphasis within orthodox Marxism on economic or material factors. Rejecting any form of 'scientific' determinism, he stressed, through the theory of hegemony, the importance of political and intellectual struggle. Gramsci insisted that bourgeois hegemony could only be challenged at the political and intellectual level, through a 'counter-hegemonic' struggle, carried out in the interests of the proletariat and on the basis of socialist principles, values and theories.

cated to the USA in the 1930s, and was re-established in Frankfurt in the early 1950s (the Institute was dissolved in 1969). The defining theme of critical theory is the attempt to extend the notion of critique to all social practices by linking substantive social research to philosophy. Leading 'first generation' Frankfurt thinkers included Theodor Adorno (1903–69), Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1989–1979); the leading exponent of the 'second generation' of the Frankfurt School was Jürgen Habermas (born 1929). While early Frankfurt thinkers were primarily concerned with the analysis of discrete societies, later theorists, such as Cox (1981, 1987) and Andrew Linklater (1990, 1998), have applied critical theory to the study of international politics, in at least three ways. In the first place, critical theory underlines the linkage between knowledge and politics, emphasizing the extent to which theories and understandings are embedded in a framework of values and interests. This implies that as all theorizing is normative, those who seek to understand the world should adopt greater **theoretical reflexivity**. Second, critical theorists have adopted an explicit commitment to emancipatory politics: they are concerned to uncover structures of oppression and injustice in global politics in order to advance the cause of individual or collective freedom. Third, critical theorists have questioned the conventional association within international theory between political community and the state, in so doing opening up the possibility of a more inclusive, and maybe even cosmopolitan, notion of political identity.

Social constructivism

Social constructivism has been the most influential post-positivist approach to international theory, gaining significantly greater attention since the end of the Cold War. The constructivist approach to analysis is based on the belief that there is no objective social or political reality independent of our understanding of it. Constructivists do not therefore regard the social world as something 'out there', in the sense of an external world of concrete objects; instead, it exists only 'inside', as a kind of inter-subjective awareness. In the final analysis, people,

● **Theoretical reflexivity**: An awareness of the impact of the values and presuppositions that a theorist brings to analysis, as well as an understanding of the historical dynamics that have helped to fashion them.

Focus on . . .
Structure or agency?

Is global politics best explained in terms of 'structures' (the context within which action takes place) or in terms of 'agency' (the ability of human actors to influence events)? A variety of approaches to global politics have a structuralist character; that is, they adopt what can be called an 'outside-in' approach to understanding. The nature of these contexts varies, however. Neorealists (sometimes called structural realists) explain the behaviour of states in terms of the structure of the international system, while Marxists emphasize the crucial impact of international capitalism, sometimes seen as a 'world-system' by neo-Marxist theorists. Even liberals recognize the limitations imposed on individual states by the complex web of economic interdependence into which they have been drawn, particularly by the forces of globalization. One of the attractions of structuralism is that, by explaining human behaviour in terms of external, or exogenous, factors, it dispenses with the vagaries of human volition and decision-making, allowing theories to claim scientific precision. Its disadvantage, though, is that it leads to determinism, which rules out free will altogether.

Alternative theories that stress agency over structure subscribe to intentionalism or voluntarism, which assigns decisive explanatory importance to the self-willed behaviour of human actors. These theories have an 'inside-out' character: they explain behaviour in terms of the intentions or inclinations of key actors. These theories are therefore endogenous. Examples include 'classical' realism, which holds that the key to understanding international relations is to recognize that states are the primary actors on the world stage and that each state is bent on the pursuit of self-interest. Liberals are also inclined towards 'inside-out' theorizing, in that they stress the extent to which states' foreign policy orientation is affected by their constitutional make-up (and particularly whether they are democratic or authoritarian). Although intentionalism has the advantage that it reintroduces choice and the role of the human actor, its disadvantage is that it is 'reductionist': it reduces social explanation to certain core fact about major actors, and so understates the structural factors that shape human action. In the light of the drawbacks of both structuralism and intentionalism, critical theorists in particular have tried to go beyond the 'structure versus agency' debate, in acknowledging that, as no neat or clear distinction can be drawn between conduct and the context within which it takes place, structure and agency both influence each other (Hay 2002).

whether acting as individuals or as social groups, 'construct' the world in which they live and act according to those constructions. People's beliefs and assumptions become particularly significant when they are widely shared, especially when they serve to give a community or people a sense of identity and distinctive interests. As such, constructivist analysis highlights the missing dimension to the 'structure–agent' debate in global politics. Constructivism stands, in a sense, between 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' approaches, in that it holds that interactions between agents and structures are always *mediated* by 'ideational factors' (beliefs, values, theories and assumptions). These ideational factors affect both how agents see themselves and how they understand, and respond to, the structures within which they operate. However, this implies that social constructivism is not so much a substantive theory, or set of substantive theories, as an analytical tool, an approach to understanding.

One of the most influential formulations of social constructivism was Alexander Wendt's (see p. 74) assertion that 'anarchy is what states make of it'.

This implies that state behaviour is not determined, as neorealists assert, by the structure of the international system, but by how particular states view anarchy. While some states may view anarchy as dangerous and threatening, others may see it as the basis for freedom and opportunity. An 'anarchy of friends' is thus very different from an 'anarchy of enemies'. What is at stake here is not the objective circumstances that confront a state so much as a state's self-identity and how it views its fellow states. This can also be seen in relation to nations and nationalism. Nations are not objective entities, groups of people who happen to share a common cultural heritage; rather, they are subjective entities, defined by their members, through a particular set of traditions, values and sentiments. Constructivist analysis highlights the fluidity of world politics: as nation-states (see p. 164) and other key global actors change their perception of who or what they are, their behaviour will change. This stance may have optimistic or pessimistic implications. On the one hand, it leaves open the possibility that states may transcend a narrow perception of self-interest and embrace the cause of global justice, even cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, it highlights the possibility that states and other international actors may fall prey to expansionist and aggressive political creeds. However, critics of constructivism have argued that it fails to recognize the extent to which beliefs are shaped by social, economic and political realities. At the end of the day, ideas do not 'fall from the sky' like rain. They are a product of complex social realities, and reflect an ongoing relationship between ideas and the material world.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism emerged along side **postmodernism**, the two terms sometimes being used interchangeably. Poststructuralism emphasizes that all ideas and concepts are expressed in language which itself is enmeshed in complex relations of power. Influenced particularly by the writings of Michel Foucault (see p. 17), poststructuralists have drawn attention to the link between power and systems of thought using the idea of **discourse**, or 'discourses of power'. In crude terms, this implies that knowledge is power. However, in the absence of a universal frame of reference or overarching perspective, there exist only a series of competing perspectives, each of which represents a particular discourse of power. Such a view has sometimes been associated with Jacques Derrida's ([1967] 1976) famous formulation: 'There is nothing outside the text'. Poststructural or postmodern thinking has exerted growing influence on international relations theory, especially since the publication of Der Derian and Shapiro's *International/Intertextual* (1989). Poststructuralism draws attention to the fact that any political event will always be susceptible to competing interpretations. 9/11 is an example of this. Not only is there, for poststructuralists, irreducible debate about whether 9/11 is best conceived as an act of terrorism, a criminal act, an act of evil, or an act of (possibly justified) revenge, but there is also uncertainty about the nature of the 'act' itself – was it the attacks themselves, the process of planning, the formation of al-Qaeda, the onset of US neo-colonialism, or whatever? In such circumstances, the classic poststructuralist approach to exposing hidden meanings in particular concepts, theories and interpretations is **deconstruction**. Critics, however, accuse postmodernism/ poststructuralism of relativism, in that they hold that different modes of

● **Postmodernism**: An intellectual tradition that is based on the belief that truth is always contested and plural; sometimes summed up as 'an incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984).

● **Discourse**: Human interaction, especially communication; discourse may disclose or illustrate power relations.

● **Deconstruction**: A close reading of philosophical or other texts with an eye to their various blindspots and/or contradictions.

Alexander Wendt (born 1958)

German-born international relations theorist who has worked mainly in the USA. Wendt is a meta-theorist who has used constructivist analysis to provide a critique of both neorealism and neoliberalism. He accepts that states are the primary units of analysis for international political theory, but urges that states and their interests should not be taken for granted. The key structures of the state-system are 'inter-subjective' rather than material, in that states act on the basis of identities and inter-ests that are socially constructed. Wendt therefore argues that neorealism and neoliberalism are defective because both fail to take account of the self-understand-ings of state actors. Wendt's key writings include 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory' (1987), 'Anarchy is What States Make of It' (1992) and *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999).

knowing are equally valid and thus reject the idea that even science can distin-guish between truth and falsehood.

However, since the 1980s, positivist approaches to international politics have been subject to criticism from a range of so-called 'post-positivist' approaches. These include critical theory, constructivism, poststructuralism and, in certain respects, feminism. What these approaches have in common is that they ques-tion the belief that there is an objective reality 'out there', separate from the beliefs, ideas and assumptions of the observer. As we observe the world, we are also in the process of imposing meaning upon it; we only ever see the world as we *think* it exists. Such an approach leads to a more critical and reflective view of theory, which is seen to have a *constitutive* purpose and not merely an explana-tory one. Greater attention is therefore paid to the biases and hidden assump-tions that are embodied in theory, implying that dispassionate scholarship may always be an unachievable ideal. Postmodern thinkers take such ideas furthest in suggesting that the quest for objective truth should be abandoned altogether, as all knowledge is partial and relative.

Feminism

Feminist theories have influenced the study of global politics in a number of ways (True 2009). So-called 'empirical' feminist have challenged the 'sexist' exclusion of women and women's issues from conventional analysis. From this point of view, conventional approaches to international politics focus almost exclusively on male-dominated bodies and institutions - governments and states, transnational corporations (TNCs) (see p. 99) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (see p. 6), international organizations and so on. The role of women, as, for instance, diplomats' wives, domestic workers, sex workers and suchlike, is therefore ignored, as are the often international and even global processes through which women are subordinated and exploited. 'Analytical' feminists, such as J. Ann Tickner (see p. 76), have exposed the extent to which the theoretical framework of global politics is based on **gender** biases that pervade its key theories and concepts, drawing at times on the ideas of

● **Gender**: A social and cultural distinction between males and females, usually based on stereotypes of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' (see p. 416).

Focus on . . .
All in the mind?

What is the relationship between theory and reality? Do theories merely explain the world, or do they, in a sense, 'construct' the world? Conventional approaches to global politics, as reflected in realism, liberalism and orthodox Marxism, have been based on positivism (sometimes called naturalism or rationalism). Positivism is grounded in the assumption that there is such a thing as reality – a world 'out there' – and that our knowledge of it can be built up through repeatable experiments, observations and deductions (that is, by the use of scientific method). The world therefore has a solid or concrete character, and knowledge can be 'objective', untainted by feelings, values or bias of any kind. Enthusiasm for constructing such a 'science of international politics' peaked in the 1960s and 1970s with the emergence, most strongly in the USA, of behaviouralism. From a positivist perspective, theories have a strictly *explanatory* purpose: they are devices for explaining the world, and can be shown to be either 'true' or 'false', depending on how far they correspond to reality.

However, since the 1980s, positivist approaches to international politics have been subject to criticism from a range of so-called 'post-positivist' approaches. These include critical theory, constructivism, poststructualism and, in certain respects, feminism and post-structualism. What these approaches have in common is that they question the belief that there is an objective reality 'out there', separate from the beliefs, ideas and assumptions of the observer. As we observe the world, we are also in the process of imposing meaning upon it; we only ever see the world as we *think* it exists. Such an approach leads to a more critical and reflective view of theory, which is seen to have a *constitutive* purpose and not merely an explanatory one. Greater attention is therefore paid to the biases and hidden assumptions that are embodied in theory, implying that dispassionate scholarship may always be an unachievable ideal. Postmodern thinkers take such ideas furthest in suggesting that the quest for objective truth should be abandoned altogether, as all knowledge is partial and relative.

constructivism and poststructuralism. The dominant realist paradigm of 'power politics' has been a particular object of criticism. Feminists have argued that the theory of power politics is premised on 'masculinist' assumptions about rivalry, competition and inevitable conflict, arising from a tendency to see the world in terms of interactions amongst series of power-seeking autonomous actors. Analytical feminism is concerned not only to expose such biases, but also to champion alternative concepts and theories, for example ones linking power not to conflict but to collaboration. Feminist theories and the implications of gender-based analysis are examined in greater detail in Chapter 17.

Green politics

Green politics, or ecologism, has had an impact on international theory since issues such as 'limits to growth' and the 'population time bomb' came on the political agenda in the 1970s. However, interest in it has increased substantially since the 1990s as a result of growing concern about climate change, often viewed as the archetypal global issue. The central theme of green politics is the notion of an intrinsic link between humankind and nature, sometimes linked to the 'Gaia hypothesis' (see p. 392) developed by James Lovelock (see p. 77). Green politics nevertheless encompasses a wide range of theoretical positions, with

J. Ann Tickner (born 1937)

A US academic and feminist international relations theorist. An exponent of stand-point feminism, Tickner has exposed ways in which the conventional study of inter-national relations marginalizes gender, whilst also being itself gendered. Her best known book, *Gender in International Relations* (1992a), highlights the biases and limitations of the masculinized, geo-political version of national security, demon-strating that it may enhance rather than reduce the insecurity of individuals and showing how peace, economic justice and ecological sustainability are vital to women's security. Although she argues that gender relations shape the search for knowledge, Tickner's ultimate goal is to transcend gender by overcoming gender inequality. Her other works include '*Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation*' (1988) and '*Feminist Perspectives on 9/11*' (2002).

quite different implications for international affairs and global politics. Mainstream or reformist green thinking attempts to develop a balance between modernization and economic growth, on the one hand, and the need to tackle environmental degradation, on the other. Its key theme is the notion of 'sustain-able development' (see p. 390), which, by linking environmental to economic goals, has exerted considerable influence on development theory, particularly in the global South. Radical green theorists nevertheless go further. Some, for instance, argue that the balance between humankind and nature will only be restored by radical social change. For 'eco-socialists', the source of the environmental crisis is the capitalist economic system, which 'commodified' nature and draws it into the system of market exchange. 'Eco-anarchists' advance an environmental critique of hierarchy and authority, arguing that domination over other people is linked to domination over nature. 'Eco-feminists' advance an environmental critique of male power, suggesting that domination over women leads to domination over nature. '**Deep ecologists**', for their part, argue that only 'paradigm change' – the adoption of a radically new philosophical and moral perspective, based on radical **holism** rather than conventional mechanis-tic and atomistic thinking – will bring an end to environmental degradation. This, in effect, treats nature as an integrated whole, within which every species has an equal right to 'live and bloom' (Naess 1989). The nature and implications of green politics are discussed more fully in Chapter 16.

Postcolonialism

The final critical perspective on global politics is postcolonialism (see p. 194). Theorists of postcolonialism have tried to expose the cultural dimension of colonial rule, usually by establishing the legitimacy of non-western and some-times anti-western ideas, cultures and traditions. In one of the most influential works of postcolonial theory, Edward Said (see p. 197) developed the notion of 'orientalism' to highlight the extent to which western cultural and political hegemony over the rest of the world, but over the Orient in particular, had been maintained through elaborate stereotypical fictions that belittled and demeaned non-western people and culture. Examples of such stereotypes

● **Deep ecology**: A green ideological perspective that rejects anthropocentrism and gives priority to the maintenance of nature; it is associated with values such as bio-equality, diversity and decentralization.

● **Holism**: The belief that the whole is more than a collection of parts; holism implies that understanding is gained by recognizing the relationships amongst the parts.

James Lovelock (born 1919)

UK atmospheric chemist, inventor and environmental thinker. Lovelock was recruited by NASA as part of its team devising strategies for identifying life on Mars, but he has subsequently worked as an independent scientist for over 40 years. He adopts a holistic approach to science which rejects disciplinary distinctions and emphasizes instead interconnectedness. Lovelock is best known for the 'Gaia hypothesis', which proposes that the earth is best understood as a complex, self-regulating, living 'being'. This implies that the prospects for humankind are closely linked to whether the species helps to sustain, or to threaten, the planetary ecosystem. Lovelock was also the first person to alert the world to the worldwide presence of CFCs in the atmosphere. His chief works include *Gaia* (1979) and *The Ages of Gaia* (1989).

include images such as the 'mysterious East', 'inscrutable Chinese' and 'lustful Turks'. The cultural biases generated by colonialism do not only affect, and subjugate, former colonized people, however. They also have a continuing impact on western states, which assume the mantle of the 'international community' in claiming the authority to 'sort out' less favoured parts of the world. In this view, humanitarian intervention (see p. 319) can be seen as an example of **Eurocentrism**. Forcible intervention on allegedly humanitarian grounds and, for that matter, other forms of interference in the developing world, such as international aid, can therefore be viewed as a continuation of colonialism by other means. The ideas and theories of postcolonialism are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8.

THINKING GLOBALLY

The acceleration of globalization from the 1980s onwards not only contributed to a reconfiguration of world politics; it also brought with it a series of new theoretical challenges. Not the least of these was the problem of conceptualizing the emerging condition of global interconnectedness, in which politics is increasingly enmeshed in a web of interdependences that operate both within, and across, worldwide, regional, national and subnational levels. How is it possible, in other words, to 'think globally'? And what are the implications of global thinking? Three challenges have emerged in particular. The first concerns the difficulties that global interconnectedness poses to empirical understanding: how can we make sense of a world in which everything affects everything else? The second concerns the normative implications of global interconnectedness: have wider social connections between people expanded the moral universe in which we live? The third concerns the value of theories or paradigms: does interconnectedness mean that instead of choosing between paradigms, we should think beyond paradigms?

Challenge of interconnectedness

To what extent can established theories, both mainstream and critical, engage in global thinking? In many ways, this is indicated by the degree to which they

● **Eurocentrism**: The application of values and theories drawn from European culture to other groups and peoples, implying a biased or distorted viewpoint.

are able to address the issue of globalization. The picture here is mixed. As far as realism is concerned, its core focus on unit-level analysis, taking the state to be the primary actor on the world stage, puts it starkly at odds with most of the claims made about globalization, especially the idea of an interlocking global economy. Thus, insofar as realists have addressed the issue of globalization, it is to deny that it is anything new or different: globalization is 'more of the same', a game played by states for states. The much vaunted 'interdependent world' is thus largely a myth, from a realist perspective. Liberals and neo-Marxists, on the other hand, have both been able, if not eager, to incorporate the phenomenon of globalization into their thinking. For liberals, the advent of globalization fitted in well to long-established ideas about economic interdependence and the virtues of free trade. Much 'hyperglobalist' theorizing, indeed, is based on liberal assumptions, especially about the tendency of the market to achieve long-term equilibrium, bringing with it both general prosperity and widening freedom. Adam Smith's (see p. 85) image of the 'invisible hand' of market competition can therefore be seen to provide the basis for a market-based, and unashamedly positive, model of global interconnectedness. Marxist and neo-Marxist theorists, similarly, found no difficulty in addressing the issue of globalization; Marx, after all, may have been the first economic thinker to have drawn attention to the transnational, and not merely international, character of capitalism. For neo-Marxists, economic globalization was really only a manifestation of the emergence of a capitalist world-system, or global capitalism. However, this image of globalization was clearly negative, characterized by growing divisions between 'core' areas and 'peripheral' areas. Thus, as debate emerged in the 1990s over the benefits and burdens of growing global interconnectedness, these debates wore an essentially familiar face. Pro-globalization arguments drew largely from the pool of liberal ideas, while anti-globalization arguments were based significantly, though by no means exclusively, on neo-Marxist or quasi-Marxist thinking.

However, some argue that the challenges of global interconnectedness defy all established theories, and, in effect, require the development of an entirely new way of thinking. This is because the rise of complex forms of interconnectedness make it difficult, and perhaps impossible, to think any longer in conventional terms of 'cause' and 'effect'. In an interdependent world, the relationships between two or more factors, processes or variables are characterized by reciprocal causation, or mutual conditioning. Thus, if A, B and C are interdependent, then any change in B will result in a change in A and C; any change in A will result in a change in B and C; and any change in C will result in a change in A and B (Hay 2010). However, complexity does not stop there. The fact that any change in A changes not just B and C but also A itself, means that it becomes difficult to think in terms of 'A-ness', 'B-ness' or, indeed, in terms of 'thing-ness' in any sense. As such, complex interconnectedness arguably challenges the very basis of reasoning in the western tradition, which dates back to Aristotle's assertion that 'everything must either be or not be'. While this dualistic, or 'either/or' approach to thinking implies that the world can be understood in terms of linear, causal relationships, complex interconnectedness perhaps calls for an alternative holistic, non-dualistic and therefore non-linear, approach to understanding. Eastern thinking in general, and Buddhism in particular (by virtue of its stress on oneness, grounded in the belief that all concepts and objects are

CONCEPT

Chaos theory

Chaos theory emerged in the 1970s as a branch of mathematics that sought an alternative to linear differential equations. Linearity implies a strong element of predictability (for example, how a billiard ball will respond to being hit by another billiard ball). In contrast, chaos theory examines the behaviour of non-linear systems (such as weather systems), in which there are such a wide range of variable factors that the effect of a change in any of them may have a disproportionate, and seemingly random, effect on others. The classic example of this is the so-called 'butterfly effect': the idea that the mere flap of a butterfly's wing could cause a hurricane to occur on the other side of the globe.

● **Cultural relativism**: The view that matters of right or wrong are entirely culturally determined, usually implying that it is impossible to say that one culture is better or worse than another.

● **Communitarianism**: The belief that the self or person is constituted through the community, in the sense that individuals are shaped by the communities to which they belong and thus owe them a debt or respect and consideration (Negal 2005).

'empty' of own-being) (Clarke 1997), are often seen as archetypal examples of a non-dualistic thinking; other attempts to think beyond 'either/or' distinctions include 'fuzzy thinking' (Kosko 1994), deep ecology (Capra 1996) and systems thinking (Capra 2003). But where does non-linearity or non-dualist thinking lead us? One of its key implications is that, as patterns of causal relationships become increasingly difficult to identify, events take on a random and seemingly arbitrary character. This is highlighted by chaos theory, which describes systems whose behaviour is difficult to predict because they consist of so many variables or unknown factors. Chaos tendencies may, for instance, be evident in the inherent instability of global financial markets (Soros 2000) and in a general tendency towards risk and uncertainty in society at large (Beck 1992).

Cosmopolitanism

Global interconnectedness does not merely challenge us in terms of how we understand the world, but also, perhaps, in terms of our moral relationships. The advance of globalization has undoubtedly had an ethical dimension, in that it has renewed interest in forms of cosmopolitanism (see p. 21), often expressed through growing interest in ideas such as global justice or world ethics (Dower 1998; Caney 2005). As the world has 'shrunk', in the sense of people having a greater awareness of other people living in other countries, often at a great distance from themselves, it has become more difficult to confine their moral obligations simply to a single political society. The more they know, the more they care. For cosmopolitan theorists, this implies that the world has come to constitute a single moral community. People thus have obligations (potentially) towards all other people in the world, regardless of nationality, religion, ethnicity and so forth. Such thinking is usually based on the doctrine of human rights. Pogge (2008) broke this rights-based cosmopolitanism into three elements. It believes in *individualism*, in that human beings, or persons, are the ultimate unit of moral concern. Second, it accepts *universality*, in the sense that individuals are of equal moral worth. Third, it acknowledges *generality*, in that it implies that persons are objects of concern for everybody, not just their compatriots. Other forms of moral cosmopolitanism have also been advanced, however. O'Neill (1996) thus used the Kantian notion that we should act on principles that we would be willing to apply to all people in all circumstances to argue that people have a commitment not to injure others and that this commitment has a universal scope. Singer (2002), on the other hand, argued that the ethics of globalization demand that we should act so as to reduce the overall levels of global suffering, thinking in terms of 'one world' rather than a collection of discrete countries or peoples.

Moral cosmopolitanism also has its critics, however. One the one hand, radical critics of cosmopolitanism reject ideas such as global justice or world ethics on the grounds that it is impossible to establish universal values that are binding on all people and all societies. This **cultural relativism** is often used to argue that human rights in particular are essentially a western ideal and therefore have no place in non-western cultures. From a broader perspective, cosmopolitanism is often contrasted with **communitarianism**. From the communitarian perspective, moral values only make sense when they are grounded in a particular society and a particular historical period. This implies

Debating . . .
Do moral obligations extend to the whole of humanity?

At the heart of the idea of global justice is the notion of universal rights and obligations stretching across the globe, establishing 'justice beyond borders'. But what is the basis for such thinking, and how persuasive is it?

YES

Humans as moral creatures. The core feature of cosmopolitan ethics is the idea that the individual, rather than any particular political community, is the principal source of moral value. Most commonly, this is asserted through the doctrine of human rights, the notion that people are entitled to at least the minimal conditions for leading a worthwhile existence. These rights are fundamental and universal, in that they belong to people by virtue of their humanity and cannot be denied on grounds of nationality, religion, cultural identity or whatever. The doctrine of human rights therefore implies that there is but a single ethical community, and that is humankind. People everywhere are part of the same moral universe.

The globalization of moral sensibilities. The narrowing of moral sensibilities just to people within our own society is increasingly unsustainable in a world of increasing interconnectedness. Transborder information and communication flows, particularly the impact of television, mean that the 'strangeness' and unfamiliarity of people and societies on the other side of the globe has reduced substantially. News reports and especially pictures of, for instance, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami provoked massive outpourings of humanitarian concern in other parts of the world, helping to fund major programmes of emergency relief. Globalization therefore has an important, and irresistible, moral dimension.

Global citizenship. Moral obligations to people in other parts of the world stem, in important respects, from the fact that we affect their lives. We live in a world of global cause and effect. Purchasing decisions in one part of the world thus affect job opportunities, working conditions and poverty levels in other parts of the world. Whether we like it or not, we are morally culpable, in that our actions have moral implications for others. Such thinking draws on the utilitarian belief that we should act so as to achieve the greatest possible pleasure over pain in the world at large, each person's happiness or suffering counting equally. A basic moral principle for 'citizens of the world' would therefore be: do no harm.

NO

Morality begins at home. Communitarian theorists argue that morality only makes sense when it is locally-based, grounded in the communities to which we belong and which have shaped our lives and values. The simple fact is that people everywhere give moral priority to those they know best, most obviously their family and close friends and, beyond that, members of their local community and then those with whom they share a national or cultural identity. Not only is morality fashioned by the distinctive history, culture and traditions of a particular society, but it is difficult to see how our obligations can extend beyond those who share a similar ethical framework.

The agency problem. The idea of universal rights only make sense if it is possible to identify who is obliged to do what in relation to the rights-bearers. If moral obligations fall on individual human beings, there is little that they, as individuals, could do in the event of, say, a natural disaster or a civil war. If our obligations are discharged through states and national governments, there is the problem that states have different capabilities. Citizens' and states' obligations may therefore become little more than a reflection of the wealth and power of their society. If universal obligations only make sense in a context of world government (see p. 457), in which global justice is upheld by supranational bodies, this creates the prospect of global despotism.

The virtues of self-help. Doctrines of universal rights and obligations are invariably used to argue that rich and successful parts of the world should, in some way, help poor and less fortunate parts of the world. However, such interference is often counter-productive: it promotes dependency and undermines self-reliance. Perhaps the main obligation we owe other peoples and other societies is to leave them alone. This may result in short-term moral costs but longer-term ethical benefits, in the form of societies better able to protect their citizens from suffering and hardship. State sovereignty may therefore make good moral sense as well as good political sense.

that human beings are morally constituted to favour the needs and interests of those with whom they share a cultural and national identity. On the other hand, moderate critics accept that universal values such as human rights may make moral sense, but they nevertheless object to the priority that they are accorded within moral cosmopolitanism (Negal 2005). In this view, although the desire, for example, to reduce overall levels of global suffering may be laudable, this is accepted as an unreliable, indeed unrealistic, guide for day-to-day moral reasoning, which will inevitably be shaped by more personal and local concerns. Cosmopolitan ethics, therefore, may exist, but only on the basis of a 'thin' sense of moral connectedness, rather than the 'thick' sense of moral connectedness that emerges within nations and local communities (Walzer 1994).

Paradigms: enlightening or constraining?

Does an interconnected or interdependent world require that we abandon discrete academic disciplines and self-contained theories? Do we have to learn to think *across* paradigms, or perhaps *beyond* paradigms (Sil and Katzenstein 2010)? As Thomas Kuhn (1962) put it, a paradigm is 'the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community'. Kuhn's key insight was that the search for knowledge is always conducted within a particular set of assumptions about the 'real world', a position that implies the constructivist conclusion that all knowledge is, and can only be, framed within a specific paradigm. Such a view suggests that understanding is advanced through 'paradigm shifts', as an established paradigm breaks down and a new one is constructed in its place. The value of paradigms is that they help us to make sense of what might otherwise be an impenetrably complex reality. They define what is important to study and highlight important trends, patterns and processes. However, paradigms may also become prisons. Paradigms may limit our perceptual field, meaning that we 'see' only what our favoured paradigm shows us. Moreover, paradigms tend to generate conformity amongst students and scholars alike, unable, or unwilling, to think outside the currently dominant (or fashionable) paradigm. The field of global politics accentuates these drawbacks because it is, by its nature, multifaceted and multidimensional, straining the capacity of any paradigm, or, for that matter, any academic discipline, to capture it in its entirety.

But where does this leave us? Certainly, given 'globalizing' tendencies, distinctions between international relations and political science have become increasingly difficult to sustain, as have distinctions between either of these and economics, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology and so on. Similarly, it is highly unlikely that a single paradigm – be it realism, liberalism, constructivism, feminism or whatever – is going to constitute the final word on any particular theme or issue. These paradigms, anyway, will be more or less relevant, or more or less persuasive, in relation to some issues rather than others. In considering paradigms, then, it is as unhelpful to merely select a theoretical 'box' within which to think, as it is to adopt an 'everything goes' approach to theorizing that simply leads to incoherence. Paradigms, at best, are a source of insight and understanding, valuable lenses on the world, but it is important to remember that no paradigm is capable, on its own, of fully explaining the almost infinitely complex realities it purports to disclose.

SUMMARY

- The realist model of power politics is based on the combined ideas of human selfishness or egoism and the structural implications of international anarchy. While this implies a strong tendency towards conflict, blood-shed and open violence can be constrained by the balance of power. The key dynamics in the international system flow from the distribution of power (or capacities) between and among states.

- The central theme of the liberal view of international politics is a belief in harmony or balance. The tendency towards peace, cooperation and integration is by factors such as economic interdependence, brought about by free trade, the spread of democracy and the construction of international organizations. However, over time, liberalism (or neoliberalism) has become increasingly indistinct from realism.

- The key critical perspectives on global politics are Marxism in its various forms, social constructivism, post-structuralism, feminism, green politics and postcolonialism. In their different ways, these theories challenge norms, values and assumptions on which the global status quo is based. Critical theorists tend to view realism and liberalism as ways of concealing, or of legitimizing, the global power asymmetries.

- Many critical theorists embrace a post-positivist perspective that takes subject and object, and therefore theory and practice, to be intimately linked. Post-positivists question the belief that there is an objective reality 'out there', separate from the beliefs, ideas and assumptions of the observer. Reality is therefore best thought of in 'inter-subjective' terms.

- Increased levels of global interconnectedness, linked to accelerated globalization, has brought a series of new theoretical challenges. These include the difficulties that complexity poses to conventional linear thinking, the possibility that the world now constitutes a single moral community, and reduced value of theoretical paradigms. Paradigms may bring insight and understanding, but they may also limit our perceptual field.

Questions for discussion

- Does all politics boil down to power and the pursuit of self-interest?
- To what extent is realism a single, coherent theory?
- How do realists explain periods of peace and stability?
- Why do liberals believe that world affairs are characterized by balance or harmony?
- Is the 'democratic peace' thesis persuasive?
- Are states concerned more with relative gains or with absolute gains?
- Do mainstream theories merely legitimize the global status quo?
- Is all knowledge ultimately socially 'constructed', and what may this imply?
- Which of the critical perspectives on global politics is most 'critical'?
- Can any established theory cope with the challenges of complex interconnectedness?
- Does it make sense to think of the world as a single moral community?

Further reading

Bell, D. (ed.), *Ethics and World Politics* (2010). An excellent volume that discusses general perspectives of world politics and important ethical dilemmas.

Burchill, S. *et al., Theories of International Relations* (2009). A systematic and comprehensive introduction to the main theoretical approaches in the study of international relations.

Capra, F., *The Hidden Connections* (2003). A thought-provoking analysis of human societies, corporations, nation-states and global capitalism from the perspective of systems theory.

Jackson, R. and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (2007). An accessible, lucid and comprehensive introduction to the complexities of modern international thought.

www.palgrave.com
Companion Website
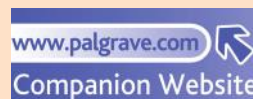
Links to relevant web resources can be found on the *Global Politics* website