

# International history since 1989

Plan:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Global trends in the post-cold war era.
- 3) Conclusion.

## Main terms:

- rival – соперник, противник;
- benign – good;
- pacific character – мирный характер;
- integrative role – интегрирующую роль;
- multilateral - многосторонний;
- chaos – хаос;
- succor - assistance; приходить на помощь;
- assumption – предположение;
- outbreak – внезапное начало;
- to adhere – придерживаться;
- pampered – избалованный;
- casualties – жертвы, потери, пострадавшие.

We'll tell about the main historical trends in the period following **the end of the cold war in 1989** and the collapse of the USSR two years later in 1991. The writers from **3 schools of thought (liberal, realist and radical)** have sought to understand the dynamics and the contradictions of the international system after communism. **What happened after the cold war?**

They tries to relate these very different ‘grand’ theories to the real world by looking at the following developments:

- the triumph of capitalism as a world organizing principle;
- the renewal of US hegemony, the decline of post-communist Russia;
- the rise of China, the Asian-Pacific crisis;
- the limits of European power and the enormous gap that exists between the relatively rich North and the poor South.

**Adam Daniel Rotfeld** said: “Today the international security environment is more complex than it was in the cold war era of bipolarity. A serious challenge for the international system is the increasing number of weak or even failed states and their inability to control developments on their own territory... (in Yearbook 1998)

**Liberal optimists:**

If we must treat **liberalism** as an explanatory theory, one of the most influential liberal theories of the post cold war world advanced by a former US State Department official **Francis Fukuyama**. His concept of an ‘end of history’ refers not to the end of historical time, but to the final victory of liberal values over their ideological rivals.

This theory (**liberalism**) rests on 3 concrete arguments:

- one about the pacific character of democracies,
- another about the integrative role played by multilateral institutions,
- a third about the benign security consequences of global capitalism.

The modern world, according to a number of liberal theorists like **John Ikenberry**, was especially rich in multilateral institutions – **the United Nations, the NATO, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union**, being the most significant. These served the particular interests of the various nation-states.



## **Realist warnings:**

If liberals looked forward to a more peaceful and prosperous world, other scholars painted international system in formation of chaos, conflict and disintegration.

**Three influential realists** have helped shape the debate about the post-cold war period. They are:

- **John Mearsheimer** ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’. He is a professor of political science in the University of Chicago.

● **Samuel Huntington** ‘**The Clash of Civilizations**’. He was the American political scientist based at **Harvard**, part leading academic and part policy adviser to several US administrations.

● **Robert D. Kaplan**’s ‘**The coming anarchy**’ was first published in 1994 in the influential magazine ‘**Atlantic Monthly**’.

If **John Mearsheimer's** argument drew inspiration from his study of the cold war in Europe, and **Samuel Huntington's** from his analysis of the changing character of conflict through historical time, **Robert D. Kaplan's** succor (assistance) from his observations about those parts of the world experiencing collapse and disintegration. His argument formed the third central challenge to liberal optimism in the 1990s.

- **Mearsheimer's** argument about going 'back to the future' is built upon the basic realist argument that the cold war system of bipolarity led to a 'long peace' that might now be undermined by its dissolution.
- **Huntington's** thesis about the 'clash of civilizations' takes as its starting point of conflict as a historically proven fact, and goes on to argue that **the next key conflicts in the world will not be economic or ideological but cultural.**
- **Kaplan's** 'coming anarchy' builds on the experience of what he terms the 'dying regions' of the world – like parts of Africa – and asserts that the West ignores what is happening in these areas at its risk.

**Kaplan's** core working assumption: economic and human collapse in parts of Africa was as relevant to understand **the future character of World Politics**, as two Balkans wars and the outbreak of World War I in 1914. In his world, old traditional certainties were producing chaos in countries like Sierra Leone and Zaire in West Africa where life for ordinary people had become intolerable. According to Kaplan, after the cold war the world was dividing into regions whose inhabitants were 'healthy, well fed and pampered by technology' and the regions where conditions were nasty and bad.

## **Radical alternatives:**

Two of the most significant of this theory are:

**Noam Chomsky** ‘The power of criticism’ and **Robert Cox** ‘The political economy of hegemony’.

**Chomsky** has been the brilliant American linguistic theorist of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has painted a powerful picture of the modern world. He terms the powerful states still remain hegemonic.

**Robert Cox** is a radical theorist, who worked for 25 years at the International Labour Office, before moving to Columbia University in New York, and then York University in Canada. He has a more established reputation in the field of international political economy, but like Chomsky believes that the structures of power established in the post-war period remain in place.

## **Global trends in the post-cold war era:**

- The existence of communism limited the geographic range of capitalism; its rollback has led to a rapid spread of market principles around the whole world.
- The short-hand term used to define global economic policy during the 1990s was the ‘Washington consensus’, describing a strict set of economic criteria that all countries had to adhere to.
- The critics of capitalism make a powerful case, but have been unable to provide a serious economic alternative to the market.



- A combination of factors including the collapse of the USSR, the long economic boom in America itself, and what international relations writers define as ‘structural power’, still makes **the U.S. dominant**.
- The attempt to build a popular market economy in **Russia** has been unsuccessful. It is now so weak it does not represent a serious problem internationally.
- **China’s** rise in the 1990s has been on the basis of an economic system that is an almost unique blend of capitalism and communism.
- Many in the Asia-Pacific region regard China as the number one threat.

- The Asian economic crisis that began in 1997 has led to a massive shake-out and social and political consequences.
- US policy-makers no longer worry about Japan as an economic rival.
- Europe remains in the post-cold war era a major testing-ground for liberal and realist international relations theories.

- In the 1990s, poverty remains a reality for the majority of people. Many experts now question the use of the term ‘Third World’.
- The end of the cold war has produced contradictory results in the less developed countries.
- The political tensions caused by underdevelopment cannot be isolated from the advanced countries.
- The end of cold war also increased the number of wars and led to a rise in civilian casualties.

# QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think international relations has had such difficulties in anticipating major events?
- 2 Have liberal theorists been too optimistic and realists too pessimistic about the world after the cold war?
- 3 Has radical theory anything to tell us about the course of international history since 1989?
- 4 If capitalism has triumphed since the end of the cold war, why does it still have its critics?
- 5 Why did so many writers seem to get American decline wrong?

- 6 What are the main reasons for the failure of reform in Russia and should the West be worried about it?
- 7 Should US policy-makers aim to engage with China or contain it?
- 8 Whatever happened to the Pacific Century?
- 9 Outline the main issues facing Europe after the cold war.
- 10 Has capitalism failed the poor?
- 11 Is the world a safer or more dangerous place since the end of the cold war?

Michael Cox, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (eds.), *The Interregnum: Controversies in World Politics, 1989–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) provides a wide-ranging survey of most of the key issues and problems facing the international system after the cold war.

Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry, and Takashi Inoguchi (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) looks at a critically important and neglected facet of US foreign policy.

Ken Booth (ed.), *Statecraft and Security: The Cold War and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) brings together a number of well-known experts who reflect widely on the 'real world'.

Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New* (London: Pluto Press, 1994) is a refreshing and iconoclastic look at the international system by the 'old man' of American radicalism.

William Greider, *One World Ready or Not: the Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1997) is a racy but highly readable account which argues there is a fundamental instability at the heart of the new global economy.

Ethan Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) is an empirically rooted attempt to show that the struggle for power between states did not stop when the cold war ended.