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Realism, in its various forms, has been the dominant theoretical approach to International Relations for most of the Cold War period, but in recent years other approaches that emphasize international cooperation, the importance of international norms and institutions and cooperation have gained greater acceptance. This is not confined to the community of scholars, but as became evident during the Iraq crisis has permeated much of public opinion.

The hope in the aftermath of the Cold War was that the enormous political and military confrontation would give way to a new system of states based on shared values, co-operation and collective security. Indeed, this hope was expressed not only for Europe but for the global international system. The phrase 'New World Order' was used by President Bush (Sr.) in the context of the Gulf War in 1990. It referred to a new international system of states to replace the bi-polar Cold War order based on a consensus among the major powers on international norms, principles of international law and human rights that should govern relations among states¹. The notion 'New International Order' has been widely derided. There are those who saw Bush's 'New International Order' merely as a framework in which the United States as the sole remaining superpower after the Cold War can pursue its national interests and preserve its dominant role in the international system.² This is, for example, a common interpretation of the Gulf War of 1991. Neo-realist analysis, such as it has been

expounded by, for example, John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz³, takes a fundamentally sceptical view of collective security. It explains the Cold War on the basis of the basic principles of how states interact in the international system and the role of the balance of power. According to realism, anarchy prevails in the international system and therefore relations between states are inherently prone to conflict. This manifests itself in the behaviour of states to maximize power and security. Since no international organisation is ultimately capable of enforcing order, every state has to provide for its own security. In order to achieve this, a state constantly seeks to improve its relative power position. This requires building up military capabilities and at times the use of military force.⁴

In the neorealist understanding of international relations, the East-West conflict which emerged in the aftermath of World War II was a natural consequence of the post-war balance of power and is best understood as the rivalry between two Great Power systems.

This interpretation of the Cold War leads to a very specific analysis of the post-Cold War security environment. The collapse of the bipolar system could lead to instability and large-scale conflict if no balance of power emerges that can hold the emerging inter-state rivalries in check. The policy prescription advanced by Mearsheimer is that to re-establish the stability of the international system in Europe, the United States and the Western European states (in particular Britain and Germany) should balance the multipolar system emerging in Europe with military (including nuclear) forces against states that threaten to start a war. This implies a new balance of power arrangement to compensate for an apparent Russian inability to continue to function as a Great Power. John Mearsheimer suggested for example the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Germany. Together with a continued American commitment to Europe and a continuation of NATO these are the conditions deemed

necessary for coping with ethnic conflicts, potential inter-state rivalries in Europe and for maintaining stability in the region as a whole.⁵

However, the interpretation of the nature of the Cold War by neorealists is open to question.⁶ In particular the timing and manner in which the Cold War ended is a problem for the neorealist approach. A different interpretation of the nature of the Cold War and the reasons for its end leads to a completely different characterisation of the system of states in Europe after the Cold War. The potential for inter-state conflict predicted by John Mearsheimer is nowhere apparent in Europe except on the territory of states which have now fallen apart, such as certain parts of the former Soviet Union and the former Republic of Yugoslavia.⁷ These conflicts can be interpreted either as civil conflicts or post-colonial conflicts. What we are witnessing in Europe are the consequences the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav state, which created stability on their territories by the constant threat of force has resulted in instability and conflict.⁸ More importantly, the post-Cold War conflicts that involved significant outbreaks of violence were not inter-state conflicts (such as predicted by Mearsheimer), but rather intra-state conflicts. Generally speaking post-Cold-War European states do not seem to be naturally prone to military conflict. Quite the opposite appears to be the case: the principal objective of virtually all Central and Eastern European states is to join various Western multilateral organisations such as NATO and the European Union and thereby accept international norms with regard to the use and the threat of the use of force and other consequent constraints on their foreign and domestic policies.

Whereas for neo-realists the principal consequence for the international system of the end of the Cold War is the collapse of the bipolar structure of power and the reemergence of a regional multipolarity (accompanied by the emergence of the United States as the only state

with global power projection capabilities), other perspectives provide a sense of a deeper change. These range from Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations*, which sees the bipolar global power struggle replaced by new patterns of conflict and cooperation emerging along cultural lines,⁹ to Francis Fukuyama's belief in the final triumph of Western liberalism and the *end of history*.¹⁰ It is not necessary to accept the whole of Fukuyama's framework or the triumphalism of some of his adherents to conclude that a major paradigm shift has occurred with regard to the role of military force in the international system and that we are indeed in a new era in which war between the major powers has become unlikely, or, as some would say, obsolete.¹¹

There are several developments through the 20th century that point in this direction.¹² The first is that the cost of war has dramatically increased to the point of rendering war unprofitable. The last major systemic conflict between major powers was a *cold war* precisely for that reason. The destructive power of nuclear weapons was such that their large-scale use would threaten the very existence of the societies that would engage in such a conflict. But the destructive power of conventional forces is now such that an all-out conflict between major powers would result in unacceptable losses on both sides. This is illustrated by the fact that during the 1980s the Soviet leadership concluded that any war in Europe would be literally impossible because attacks on nuclear power stations would render Europe uninhabitable.¹³ The vulnerability of high-technology societies and their high standard of living has resulted in an unwillingness to support the costs of war, both in terms of casualties and damage to the society itself.

The second factor is that the currency of power in the security space occupied by the Western powers and to some extent also Russia and China has changed.¹⁴ The collapse of an

empire controlled by a nuclear superpower with the military capacity to destroy every country on earth is a powerful symbol of this trend. During the 1970s and 1980s it was already observable that economic capacity and commercial competitiveness were becoming more important. These trends accelerated as the Cold War ended, both in the West, and also now in the East where the survival of the post-Communist states was not endangered by external military threat but internal societal and economic collapse.¹⁵

Another aspect of this is what is a phenomenon referred to as globalisation.¹⁶ There is now a high degree of global economic interdependence. Financial collapse in one country can affect the wealth of people, companies and societies on the other side of the globe. The abandonment of the centrally planned command economy by the former Communist countries is of major significance for international security. Russia and China are no longer attempting to develop autonomous, socialist economies. Instead both countries have committed themselves to develop market economies, as a consequence of which their well-being depends on the well-being of other major powers, especially the United States and the European Union.. Wealth is no longer dependent on the possession of land or natural resources, but on the intellectual capital and social organisation to produce high quality, high technology products. Such wealth cannot be efficiently acquired by war or conquest.

The third factor is based on the observation that even in an anarchic international environment, not all states are the same and that the nature of the domestic political regime has an important influence on foreign policy behaviour. This is important in explaining the dynamics of the Cold War, but is also significant to understand the emerging environment after the Cold War when some of the main protagonists have radically changed the nature of their domestic political system. A number of scholars have argued that a neo-realist approach

to international relations based on the Hobbesian analogy is not readily applicable to relations between liberal democracies.¹⁷ Not only have there been no wars between liberal democracies, but neither are they perceived to threaten one another and the balance of power between liberal democracies has been relevant only in the context of responses to other external threats.¹⁸ Although a common external threat and the conscious endeavour to overcome the national enmities in Europe which resulted in two world wars were undoubtedly important factors, a deeper structural principle seems to be necessary to account for this difference in the role of military force. Among the factors that may be part of the explanation are:

- a shared value system which includes the acceptance of international norms
- the existence of institutional mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts
- the more diffuse nature of political power in liberal democracies makes it difficult to sustain military conflicts, unless they are relatively limited in time and their objectives are widely accepted by the population. This generally rules out the acquisition of territory by force owing to the difficulties of absorbing hostile populations in the political system and the violation of political norms involved.¹⁹ It also means that domestic consent to a war depends highly on the nature of the regime against which war is to be conducted - i.e. it has to be credibly described as an aggressive and authoritarian (non-democratic) regime.

This analysis can be more plausibly related to alternative approaches to IR theory, such as a constructivist approach, in that democratization becomes a way to socialise states to adopt new norms of international conduct and become part of international regimes that enable the security dilemma to be overcome. There are such regimes in place in Europe which regulate the military arsenals of all European states and create transparency about

military potentials and strategic planning that allow for building a high degree of confidence. The Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, initially designed to reduce fears about large-scale conventional conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, places strict ceilings on the tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery and aircraft each state is allowed to deploy. The CFE 1A agreement, albeit non-binding in international law and non-verifiable, limits the military manpower of all European states.²⁰ This means that most European states have signed up to a treaty regime which provides full information on the strength and capability of all armed forces and prevents the competitive increase in military potentials. The limits are designed to provide for defensive capability without enabling states to acquire the quantitative and qualitative superiority required for aggression. The scope and frequency of military exercises is also regulated in order to prevent exercises to be used as a cover for actual military operations. The strict verification regimes involving satellite observation and on-site inspections provide the regime with a high degree of credibility. The importance of this regime is indicated that despite the pressure the Russian government received from its military to find various reasons to break out of the CFE regime, it firmly held to its obligations and sought to redress grievances within the treaty regime rather than to abandon it.²¹ The CFE treaty regime therefore stands out as a shining example of the success of a constructivist approach, whereby states which based themselves on the principle of total security (i.e. the ability to totally defeat all conceivable enemies) changed their approach and adopted the principle of 'reasonable sufficiency' in the framework of a substantive regime of confidence-building measures, thereby ending both a military confrontation and a persistent arms race.

The notion that major war has become unlikely and is becoming obsolete as an instrument of policy does not amount to saying that wars will no longer occur. The 1990/91 Gulf War, although on the surface a contradiction of the notion that the world may be moving towards an inherently less conflictual state, is a good illustration of these principles. Iraq was in the grip of a tightly controlled dictatorship which imposed its own agenda on the Iraqi population by means of terror. It did so without any regard to the possibility of casualties or damage to the civilian economy. The United States and its allies were only able to muster a determined response because the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait constituted a clear enough violation of international norms for sufficient acceptance of military action by the populations of the allied states. The war plans were designed to ensure the absolute minimum of casualties on the Allied side and contain military operations to the territory of Iraq, to the extent of introducing sophisticated tactical anti-ballistic missile systems in the (not wholly successful) endeavour to defeat Iraq's sole means of striking at surrounding states.²² Opinion remains divided on whether the Gulf War demonstrated a 'New World Order' and whether it was justified. The point here is that the case of the Gulf War confirms, rather than refutes, the existence of the kinds of constraints on the use of force imposed on liberal democratic political systems outlined above.

All this suggests that the neorealist approach underestimates the potential for international cooperation to resolve the new security dilemmas and that cooperative collective security regimes can be established to incorporate newly emerging international norms, a commonality of values among new and old democracies as well as increasing functional interdependence.

The paradox of the international system in the early post-Cold War era is that while on the one hand virtually all the states in the region have abandoned older forms of international conduct in which military force played a dominant role, at the same time the transition of the European system of states requires a system of collective security with effective military instruments to enforce and keep the peace. This is what we might term *the central dilemma of European security*. This is not the same security dilemma predicted by neo-realist analysts. The problem results from the fact that while a value-free commitment to balance of power politics is deemed unacceptable in liberal democratic states, there is neither the intellectual analysis nor the political commitment to build effective structures of collective security in Europe. This the real challenge for security policy after the Cold War.

It is no surprise that Mearsheimer's predictions for the post-Cold War international system (numerous inter-state armed conflicts, Germany's acquisition of nuclear weapons, the dissolution of NATO) have so far failed to materialise. Indeed, inter-state conflict involving the use of force has become exceedingly rare and almost all violent conflicts are intra-state disputes or involve non-state actors.²³ The neo-realist failure to make accurate predictions is a result of an anachronistic view of the international system that seriously misunderstands the nature of contemporary international relations and the forces that determine the interaction between states. In particular, the fundamental assumption that the international system is anarchic flies in the face of reality. Practically all aspects of international relations are highly regulated and constrained by norms of conduct and international regimes. Trade is regulated by the World Trade Organisation. We have already noted the various arms control regimes that are in operation, such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the Strategic Offensive Arms Treaty between the United States and Russia, and the Conventional Forces in Europe

Treaty that constrains the armed forces of all countries in the Atlantic-to-the-Urals region. More importantly still, the use of force has been outlawed except in the case of self-defence or interventions sanctioned by the UN Security Council.

Michael Desch claims that ‘critics of realism can point to very few cases where, when push comes to shove, power and interest have not trumped norms in shaping state behaviour.’²⁴ This statement seems patently absurd when we consider the reality of international relations today. Desch seems to ignore the fact that the main impact of norms on state conduct is to act as a restraint in the exercise of power and especially the use of armed force. In an anarchical system, the only restraint acting on states is the correlation of forces. It is clear, however, that most states are restrained by more than just the balance of power and that international norms and practices play a significant role.. As a result, most states in the world are no longer subject to the classic security dilemma. Indeed, as falling defence budgets indicate, they do not fear any kind of military threat emanating from other states against their territory. Consequently advanced industrialised countries, with the exception of the United States and Israel, have abandoned any meaningful national defence policy.²⁵ It is one of the fundamental assumptions of the neo-realist approach expounded by Waltz and Mearsheimer that states are subject to fears for their survival, and that states have good reasons to be fearful, in other words that they face realistic threats. The behaviour of most states today contradicts this assumption.

The impact of norms on international relations can be illustrated by the conflict with Iraq. The reason why the Iraqi regime was considered to be so dangerous was precisely because it demonstrated time and again that it was not subject to the norms that are generally accepted by other states. It had no compunction to invade other countries, it had no respect

for the norms governing the use of armed force (eg. avoiding attacks on non-combatants, eschewing the use of chemical or biological weapons), it did not respect the United Nations or any treaties that it had signed – in other words, it was only restrained by the limits of its power and the external forces arrayed against it. *Iraq was the archetypical anarchical state*. It is evident just how different Iraq was from practically every other state in the world. The fact that other states behave so differently from Iraq demonstrates that the international system is not anarchic in the sense assumed by neo-realists.

The first Gulf War (1990/91) was generally accepted as a necessary action to enforce international law and prevent the anarchy that would descend on the international system if a state was allowed to get away with simply invading and annexing another country. Even if realists can make a good case that the national interests of the United States were at stake in preventing Iraqi domination of the Middle East, nevertheless the defence of international norms was an important factor. Arguably, without such a brazen violation of the most fundamental of international norms by the Iraqi regime, the Gulf War would not have occurred.²⁶ The same can be said of the Falklands War 1982; British behaviour in the run-up to the Argentine seizure of the islands in 1982 indicated the absence of serious national interests in the region. The British government would have leased the islands to Argentina, if it had not been stopped by Parliament. The action to recover the islands is hard to explain on grounds of the national interest; it was certainly described by the British government as motivated by the defence of international law (i.e. that disputes must be resolved without resorting to the use of force).²⁷

International norms also played a decisive role in the second Gulf War in 2003. The entire diplomatic process was designed to obtain authority from the UN Security Council for

military action against Iraq. The reasons given for going to war were that Iraq's possession of WMD and the aggressive nature of the regime posed a threat to international security, and that the Iraqi regime was in material breach of Chapter VII UN Security Council resolutions.

Whether the use of force against Iraq is to be explained as an attempt to enforce mandatory UN Security Council resolutions, remove a malicious and regime that committed large-scale human rights violations and thereby restore international order, or as a unilateral exercise of American power to defend US interests will no doubt be debated for some time to come. The realist case is weakened by the fact that Iraq posed no discernible imminent threat to the security of the United States (or any other state). This is the reason why prior to the war many prominent realists, including John Mearsheimer, favoured containment rather than intervention. Indeed, the large vision of the American 'neocons' to reconstruct the regional system of states by regime change and the introduction of democracy is perceived by realist scholars as an idealistic project that has little chance of success.²⁸

'Norms' certainly did not prevent the action against Iraq, indeed it could be argued that they motivated it to some extent at least. Even if this were not the case, Iraq would still constitute the exception rather than the rule. The presumption against the use of force (except in self-defence) in the international system remains very strong.

Moreover, norms are also very powerful in constraining actions taken *in bello*. During the action against the Taliban, as well as in Iraq, very considerable resources were expended to ensure that the Allies acted in conformity with international conventions, especially relating to the immunity of non-combatants. It is true that the Bush administration, by its rejection of the International Criminal Court and its treatment of Al-Quaeda prisoners in Guantanamo Bay has raised concerns about its commitment to the Geneva conventions. But

whatever the merit of such concerns, they are of marginal significance and the United States remains committed to the observation of international law governing the use of force.

The kind of strategic bombing of civilian areas that occurred in World War II would now be considered unthinkable. The normative constraints on the use of forces that prohibit indiscriminate attacks against civilians and thereby severely constrain the military utility of nuclear weapons. This is the essence of the 'nuclear taboo'.

Although the Bush administration conducts foreign policy on the premise of realism, it also has acknowledged the difference between 'normal states' and 'anarchic states'²⁹ by labelling the latter as 'rogue states' or the 'axis of evil'. The principal manifestations of this 'anarchy' are non-democratic authoritarian regimes, state-sponsorship of terrorism, and programmes to acquire WMD and delivery vehicles (ballistic missiles). The number of the 'anarchic states' is relatively small, and after the removal of the Taliban and the Baath regime in Iraq smaller still. Recent events have increased pressure on states like Syria, Libya, Iran and North Korea to fundamentally change their behaviour. In other words, neo-realist theory presents an anachronistic picture of the international system.

Neo-realism and nuclear proliferation

One particular obvious example that shows how neo-realist prescriptions are completely irrelevant to the contemporary world is the support for the proliferation of nuclear weapons, according to the phrase coined by Waltz, 'more would be better'.³⁰ As Michael C. Desch explains:

‘The logic of this provocative argument is that nuclear proliferation can be stabilising since nuclear weapons are the absolute deterrent. Once states have a reliable second strike capability, they are more secure than they were before. As more states get nuclear weapons, the less war-prone the international system becomes, according to this line of reasoning.’³¹

There is of course some merit in the argument that nuclear deterrence can prevent war. It can be argued that during the Cold War nuclear deterrence altered the perception of the Soviet Union and the United States towards war in general and therefore had a war-preventing effect.³² However, Waltz’s argument has been criticised by various scholars, leading among them Scott Sagan, that nuclear deterrence is an inherently risky proposition. Sagan points to the fact there were a number of serious crises during which disaster was only narrowly avoided.³³ Desch replies that ‘it is possible to interpret the fact that all of these were still ‘misses; as evidence of how robust nuclear deterrence remained’.³⁴ Indeed, nuclear deterrence was very robust, but that does not mean that nuclear war is impossible, or that in any of these incidents the probability of nuclear war was zero.³⁵ This argument becomes stronger in the case of new nuclear states with less developed early warning and command and control systems where a pre-emptive strike is the only plausible modus operandi. Neo-realists cannot dismiss Sagan’s critique so easily.³⁶

But the more fundamental argument against the view of Waltz, Mearsheimer, Desch et al. is that nuclear proliferation has not happened on a significant scale.³⁷ Quite the reverse, many states that harboured nuclear ambitions have eschewed them or in the case of South Africa, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan dismantled an existing nuclear capability.³⁸ How can this be the case if power always trumps norms and nuclear weapons solve the security dilemma for individual states? It is true that the Cold War system where European states were

under the nuclear protection of the United States or the Soviet Union had some effect on preventing proliferation.³⁹ But since the end of the Cold War the global trend towards non-proliferation has strengthened, rather than diminished. The answer is that the international system is not anarchic, that most states (excluding those in a few specific crisis regions) do not face an external military threat and that the dominant mode of transnational conflict in the modern era involves non-state actors, for whom nuclear deterrence is irrelevant.

Instead of advocating nuclear proliferation, some scholars now favour co-operative nuclear threat reduction or even co-operative denuclearisation. Those crisis regions in which nuclear weapons still play an important role constitute a serious challenge to the concept of cooperative denuclearisation. It is evident that the factors that account for nuclear renunciation in other cases have proved inadequate. There is no doubt that Israel considers nuclear weapons as an existential deterrent against aggression from its neighbours. This was exemplified in the 1973 Yom Kippur war when Israel's armed forces experienced severe difficulties during the early phase of the war.⁴⁰ For Pakistan nuclear weapons have an equalising effect, as it faces its more powerful neighbour with which it has had fought several wars and with who it is involved in a bitter territorial dispute. Nuclear weapons deter large-scale conventional attacks against Pakistan. This India-Pakistan case is the perhaps the one that is closest to the kind of scenario envisaged by neo-realists. Paradoxically, Mearsheimer has emphasized the need for India to have nuclear weapons, even though Pakistan seems to be the main beneficiary of the added security provided by a nuclear arsenal.⁴¹ Others, such as Kenneth Pollack, have pointed out that because nuclear weapons serve as an equalizer between states, they can promote as well as prevent armed conflicts. For example, it could be argued that Pakistan's support for insurgents in Kashmir is only possible because India is

restrained from retaliation by Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.⁴² There are obvious dangers of a nuclear solution to the security dilemma in South Asia; Pakistan is an unstable country which raises serious concerns about control over nuclear weapons, and Pakistan has also been revealed to constitute a serious source of nuclear proliferation. The presence of nuclear weapons in this crisis region therefore is associated with risks.⁴³ A good case can be made that if the sources of insecurity are dealt with this would help to stabilize the region without the need for nuclear deterrence. It must be said that this is an exceptional case. Although on the face of it the incentives to retain nuclear weapons are powerful, they may not be insurmountable in the future. For Israel, nuclear weapons have become less important as a large-scale conventional war against Israel is no longer a likely contingency. The threat to Israeli security stems from the guerrilla warfare and the suicide bombers of the Palestinian intifada against which nuclear weapons are not relevant either as weapons or deterrent. On the other hand, given the pressure on other states (Iraq, Iran, North Korea) with respect to their nuclear programmes, the Israeli nuclear weapons extract a political price from Israel and also from the United States which is Israel's most important supporter and at the same time plays the key role in global counterproliferation. In the case of North Korea, the nuclear weapons programme appears not to be designed to provide a weapons capability for deterrence (contrary to Waltz's assertions), but rather a bargaining chip for security guarantees and economic support.

It is true that major nuclear powers still consider nuclear weapons to be important for their security. In the case of Russia, nuclear weapons have been given increasing importance, starting with the 1993 military doctrine, and the same is true for the new military doctrine which was developed in 1998, although its approval was postponed.⁴⁴ The war in Kosovo had

also considerable impact as Russia took the threat of NATO intervention in the former Soviet Union more seriously and once again strengthened the emphasis on nuclear deterrence, including tactical nuclear weapons. A special meeting of the Security Council in April 1999 decided to put in a place a programme on the development and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, including new low-yield nuclear warheads. It was also reported that a redeployment of tactical nuclear warheads to land-based short range missiles and artillery was proposed, thereby ending the unilateral arms control measures put in place by Presidents Bush and Gorbachev in 1991. Large-scale exercises called *Zapad* conducted in June and July 1999 during the Kosovo crisis were based on the scenario of a NATO attack from Poland against Kaliningrad, involving the simulated use of nuclear weapons when Russian forces were in difficulty.⁴⁵

Despite the safety and security concerns, and despite far-reaching arms control agreements, Russia has placed renewed emphasis on the nuclear arsenal because of the virtual collapse of its conventional military capabilities and the instability and conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union. However, the military doctrine, while renouncing the pledge not to use nuclear weapons first, does not specify targets or circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used. The possibility that Russia might redeploy tactical nuclear weapons to compensate for the lack of conventional military power is occasionally mooted. This is troublesome because the kind of conflicts Russia is or might become involved in, such as in Chechnya or Tajikistan, are not susceptible to nuclear deterrence. In other words, a nuclear threat might result in nuclear use. President Yeltsin and his successor, Vladimir Putin, have resisted notions of nuclear peacekeeping, but it cannot be taken for granted that in extreme situations the nuclear option will not be reconsidered if the condition

of the Russian armed forces continues to deteriorate. On the other hand, if such fears are unwarranted, it means that nuclear weapons have no role in the kinds of conflicts Russia is most likely to be involved in, either in terms of deterrence or military action. In other words, where nuclear weapons are effective, there is no threat in any event, and where there is a threat, they are not effective. One can understand Russia's need for some sort of 'existential deterrence' or a means of defence of last resort. The security nuclear weapons provide for Russia in the present is psychological and not military. This leaves Russia still with the need to find military means to address its actual security risks. Moreover the nuclear weapons complex itself poses a substantial risk to Russia's national security. While a nuclear emphasis in the face of conventional weakness is understandable, it is unclear that the military doctrine as it is evolving represents the most appropriate response to the national security dilemmas that Russia faces.

Similar strictures apply to the US national security doctrine of the Bush administration. The advent of the Bush administration marked a significant change in US strategic policy. The fundamental commitment to non-proliferation regimes, building down nuclear arsenals through strategic arms control, the strategic relationship with the Russian Federation, the preservation of the ABM Treaty, the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the strengthening of the nuclear taboo that characterised the strategic policy of the Clinton administration was largely abandoned. The Bush administration rejected the basic premise of the NPT that the objective of nuclear non-proliferation should be the creation of an equitable global regime that would reduce the significance of nuclear weapons and create conditions for their eventual elimination.⁴⁶

The Nuclear Weapons Posture Review conducted by the Bush administration embodied a commitment to preserve a large strategic nuclear arsenal. Although the total number of so-called operationally deployed warheads would actually be reduced to a level of between 1750-2200, the United States would retain a large stockpile of active warheads. Moreover, the NPR emphasized the need to develop more responsive and better integrated nuclear and conventional capabilities. This implied a greater emphasis on options for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. In this context particular attention was paid to earth penetrating warheads capable of destroying underground storage facilities that might hold chemical or biological weapons or other military targets. While calling for the deployment of strategic conventional weapons, the greater integration of nuclear weapons in US warfighting capabilities also assigned them greater utility beyond deterrence, reversing the trend in US nuclear weapons policy since the end of the Cold War that had relegated nuclear weapons increasingly to a role of 'existential deterrence'.⁴⁷

The intention to move away from strategic arms control was part of a more general tendency to eschew international regimes and rely on unilateral or bilateral arrangements. The START process was replaced by SORT. Although an international treaty, it did not have the elaborate framework of verification and associated measures of the START process. Moreover, it abandoned many of the key features of START, including the renunciation of land-based missiles with multiple warheads and the dismantlement of warheads from systems subject to reduction. Indeed, it does not require the elimination of a single American nuclear missile, submarine, warhead or strategic bomber. SORT is not part of an on-going process, it is a stand-alone agreement that seems to have marked the end rather than another milestone

on the road to nuclear disarmament. Even more significant was the abrogation of the ABM Treaty, a cornerstone of strategic arms control for over a quarter of a century.

The national security strategy of the United States involves an approach to dealing with the threats of proliferation based on selective treaty enforcement, accompanied by force, coercion and (in the future) national missile defence.

Serious questions are raised about the effectiveness of this approach. The credibility of seeking to hold countries responsible for complying is reduced if the United States is not complying with its own commitments under the NPT, such as moving towards eliminating its own nuclear weapons. . US officials have argued that international norms are not taken seriously by ‘rogue states’ and terrorists and therefore the United States must retain overwhelming force to pursue the prevention of proliferation and counter-proliferation.

However, there are important considerations :

1. The existence of operational nuclear forces in a number of states enhances the risk of proliferation because of the existence of nuclear weapons and stockpiles of fissile materials. The smaller existing arsenals and stockpiles are the easier it is to secure assets that could pose a proliferation risk.
2. The efforts to persuade countries outside the P5 to restrict or dismantle their arsenals or to desist from acquiring is weakened considerably by the large arsenals that the P5 still retain. Nuclear disarmament would therefore reduce the incentive for proliferation, at least as far as states are concerned.
3. Although in the case Iraq war there has been a war of non-proliferation, it is unlikely that military pressure alone will be effective in other cases, such as Iran, North Korea etc. The

backing of the United Nations, the legitimacy that derives from the non-proliferation regimes and the enforcement mechanisms are essential if counterproliferation is to succeed.

4. International norms, as they are reflected in the NPT and other non-proliferation regimes, have been very effective.

Finally, there is virtually no military contingency facing the United States in which nuclear weapons are significant either for deterrence or as military weapons⁴⁸ Indeed, the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapon is likely to have a negative impact on US military objectives.

On the face of it, the national security policies adopted by the large nuclear powers seem to fit in with the neo-realist paradigm. But closer analysis reveals these policies to be inappropriate for the real security requirements of the states concerned. They are based on anachronistic perceptions of the international system, and result in policies that diminish rather than enhance national security.⁴⁹

Nuclear proliferation is an area in which the neo-realist prescriptions can be tested and are found wanting. It is precisely because the use of nuclear weapons is completely incompatible with the norms that restrain the use of force between states that nuclear arsenals are losing their purpose and significance. This is the case even though major nuclear powers have adopted anachronistic national security doctrines.

Norms as a motivating factor in IR

While it is straightforward to demonstrate that norms exercise a powerful restraining influence in international relations, it is less obvious that norms can be a motivating factor, i.e. that states act in altruistic ways. An obvious example are the Balkan conflicts in the

1990s, or the failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda. Neo-realist analysis can draw comfort from the failure to develop adequate institutional mechanisms for collective security and the reluctance of Western powers to commit to peace enforcement in the former Yugoslavia. This accords with Mearsheimer and Waltz's belief that state will always prefer the maximization of autonomy and therefore pursue autonomy-seeking policies. Moreover, European states and even more so the United States had difficulty identifying any national interest in the Balkans.

But this leaves them with the paradox that European states ultimately behaved in a manner that is best explained by institutionalism, without the development of the necessary institutions. The United States eventually did commit its resources, including armed forces, despite the domestic political cost and the lack of perceived geo-political benefits.

Hegemonic stability theory is also weak in its explanatory power because the major power saw the Balkan area outside its province. Neo-realist and institutionalist explanations fail because they ignore the importance of norms and values, especially in the post-Cold War order. Try as they might, Western states could not in the end ignore Serb aggression, the persistence of conflict and massive human rights violations. While the institutionalist explanation is weak (given the weakness of the institutions), the constructivist explanation is attractive because it can explain both the behaviour of the West European states and the United States in the absence of either pressing risks to their national security or institutional commitments.

Michael Desch has argued that neo-realist prescriptions for the former Yugoslavia would have produced a more stable outcome, given that the presence of outside forces still remains vital to the stability of the region. In particular he refers to arguments by Mearsheimer and Van Evera that instead of holding together multi-ethnic states, it would

have served the interests of human rights and long-term stability more to divide them up into ethnically homogenous areas.⁵⁰ In his effort to support the argument that realists take ethics seriously and are concerned with the outcomes of policies, Desch ignores the more fundamental point that neo-realism would have predicted (or even advocated) no involvement by the United States in the Balkan conflicts. What neo-realists need to explain is why these interventions occurred at all. In terms of his argument regarding the 'ethical policies' advocated by neo-realists, Desch would have to defend the ethical aspects of the neo-realist prescription not to intervene.

It is true that states remain reluctant to intervene in conflicts or crisis situations when their own national interest is not at stake. Paradoxically, this is in part a consequence of the institutions and norms that have been created that mitigate very strongly against the use of force except in the case of self-defence. It is becoming increasingly clear that the predilection against intervention in the internal affairs of other states which was codified during the Cold War period is weakening in the face of a changed international system where conflicts arise predominantly at a sub-state level. Despite the failures of collective security, and despite the fact that it has been difficult to create a consensus among the great powers about various crisis situations, this does not show that collective security on the basis of common norms and international institutions is doomed to fail, as the situation in the Balkans demonstrates.

Conclusion

No one can deny the national interests and power are important factors in international relations. But the world of anarchy and fear described by leading proponents of neo-realism simply does not exist. The very notion of power has been transformed as coercion based on

the use of force is no longer considered legitimate. The truth is that international relations are highly regulated and restrained by norms, and despite occasional breaches there are no indications that most states are willing to abandon those norms. The international system of the 21st century is one in which armed conflict between states is becoming the exception, and almost all organised violence occurs at the substate level, having sources and requiring responses that differ fundamentally from neo-realist prescriptions. The problem with neo-realist analysis is that its concepts are anachronistic and the policy prescriptions that are derived from them are inappropriate to the situations to which they are applied, resulting in national security policies that do not properly address the security challenges that the major powers are facing.

Notes

¹George Bush, Address to Congress, 11 September 1990, 'Iraqi Aggression Will not Stand', in *United States Policy Information and Texts*, No.2111, 12 September 1990, p.17; see also *National Security Strategy of the United States*. Washington D.C.. White House, August 1991

²Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.70, No.1, 1991, pp.23-33; Klaus-Dieter Schwarz, 'Die USA im Übergang zur postkonfrontativen Weltordnung', in W.Heydrich, J.Krause, U.Nerlich, J.Nötzold and R. Rummel (eds.), *Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands: Neue Konstellationen, Risiken, Instrumente*, Baden-Baden: Nomos 1992

³John J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future ', *International Security*, Vol.15, No.1, Summer 1990, pp.5-56; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, W.W. Norton&Co. 2003; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley 1979; Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Paper No.171, London: IISS 1981

⁴Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Knopf 1973; Kenneth N. Waltz (1979), *ibid.*

⁵Mearsheimer (1990), *op.cit.*, p.38

⁶For a more detailed discussion of systemic approaches to the interpretation of the Cold War see Mike Bowker and Robin Brown, *From Cold War to collapse: theory and world politics in the 1980s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993

⁷The potential disputes between various Central European states (eg. Hungary and Rumania) do not seem to have resulted in arms races or military confrontations and are nowhere near crisis point. For more detailed analysis, and support for the argument that such conflicts are likely to be of a political and economic rather than military nature, see Jan Zielonka, *Security in Central Europe*, Adelphi Paper No.272, London: Brassey's 1992

⁸ On the origin of the Balkan wars, see Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, Washington: Brookings 1995; on the conflicts in the former Soviet Union see Roy Allison and Christoph Bluth, *Security Dilemmas in Russia and Eurasia*, London: RIIA 1998; Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping Strategies in the CIS*, Basingstoke: Macmillan 2000

⁹Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of World Order*, New York; Simon&Schuster 1996

¹⁰Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: The Free Press 1992

¹¹It is interesting how much Fukuyama is derided but how little it his work is actually discussed in contemporary analyses of international relations and security; for a typical example see Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers 1994, p.8

¹²John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: the Obsolescence of Modern War*, New York: Basic Books 1989

¹³Based on declassified East German Military documents; see Bundesarchiv, Militärisches Zwischenarchiv, Straußberg, AZ 32651, p.65

¹⁴James Sperling and Emil Kircher, 'Economic security and the problem of co-operation in post-Cold War Europe', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.24, No.8, 1998, pp.221-237

¹⁵Penelope Hartland-Thunberg, 'From Guns and Butter to Guns v. Butter: The Relation Between Economics and Security in the United States', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No.4, Autumn 1988, pp.47-54; Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A Framework for Analysis*, Boulder, CO: Westview 1997

¹⁶There is a large literature on this subject. Useful texts are: John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: OUP 1997; Ian Clark, *Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the 20th Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997; Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State. The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*. Cambridge: CUP 1996

¹⁷For more detailed discussion, see John R. Oneal and Bruce M. Russett, 'The Classical Liberals were Right: Democracy, Interdependence and Conflict, 1950-1985', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.42, No.2, June 1997, pp.267-294; Steve Chan, 'In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise', *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41, supp.1, May 1997, pp.59-91

¹⁸The theoretical issues arising from this statement and its empirical basis cannot be discussed here in detail. The statement that liberal democracies do not go to war against each other seems to be well-founded empirically. For a discussion of the theoretical issues, see Robert Latham, 'Democracy and War-Making : Locating the International Liberal Context', *Millenium*, Vol.22, No.2, Summer 1993, pp.139-164; Randall L. Schweller, 'Domestic

Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?', *World Politics*, Vol.44, No.2, January 1992, pp.235-269; for an opposing view see Mearsheimer, op.cit., pp. 49-51; for an analysis of the empirical evidence, see Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, ' Why Don't Democracies Fight Each Other? An Experimental Study', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.37, No.3, September 1993, pp.484-503; Z. Maoz and B. Russett, 'Alliance, contiguity, wealth and political stability: Is the lack of conflict among democracies a statistical artifact?', *International Interactions*, Vol.17, No.3, 1992, pp.245-267; Spencer Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1998; Michael Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (eds.), *Debating the Democratic Peace*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1997

¹⁹Northern Ireland is an example of the political instability generated by a territorial status that is not accepted by a substantial portion of the population

²⁰For details see Richard A. Falkenrath, *Shaping Europe's Military Order*, London: MIT Press 1995

²¹For details see Christoph Bluth, *Arms Control and Proliferation: Russia and International Security After the Cold War*, London Defence Studies No.35, London: Brassey's 1996

²²For more detail see Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, London: Faber&Faber 1993

²³ Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response (Political Violence)*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002

²⁴ Michael C. Desch, 'Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies', *International Security*, 23:1 (Summer 1998), pp.141-70

²⁵ It could be argued that even the United States does not face any serious threat from another state, and that the main threat Israel faces is from terrorism rather than war.

²⁶ Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, London: Faber&Faber 1993; Lawrence Freedman, 'The Gulf War and the New World Order', *Survival*, Vol.33, No.3, May/June 1991

²⁷ Christoph Bluth, 'The British Resort to Force in the Falklands/Malvinas Conflict 1982: International Law and Just War Theory', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.24, no.1, 1987, pp.5-20

²⁸ For an exposition of 'neocon' views, see David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*, New York: Random House 2003

²⁹ The term anarchic here refers to foreign policy behaviour and not internal stability

³⁰ Waltz; Waltz and Sagan

³¹ Desch, op.cit., p.423

³² Christoph Bluth, *Soviet Strategic Arms Policy Before SALT*, Cambridge: CUP 1991

³³ Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993

³⁴ Desch, op.cit., p.423

³⁵ Peter Vincent Pry, *War Scare*, Westport : Praeger 1999

³⁶ Bruce Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War*, Washington, DC: Brookings 1993

³⁷ For more detail and analysis, see Joachim Krause, *Strukturwandel der Nichtverbreitungspolitik*, Munich: R.Ouldenbourg 1998

³⁸ On the denuclearisation of non-Russian former Soviet republics, see Christoph Bluth, *The Nuclear Challenge*, Basingstoke: Ashgate 2000

³⁹ For a discussion on extended deterrence and US efforts to discourage nuclear proliferation among its allies, see Christoph Bluth, *Britain, Germany and Western Nuclear Strategy*, Oxford: OUP 1995

⁴⁰ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, New York: Columbia University Press 1999

⁴¹ John J. Mearsheimer, 'India Needs the Bomb', *New York Times*, 24 March 2000, p.A21

⁴² This case is made in Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm – The case for Invading Iraq*, New York: Random House 2002

⁴³ For more analysis of the risks see Hilary Synnott, *The Causes and Consequences of South Asia's Nuclear Tests*, Adelphi Paper 332, Oxford: OUP 1999

⁴⁴ Anatoli Klimenko and Alexander Koltukov, 'Osnovnoi Dokument Voennogo Stroitelstva', *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 13 February 1998, p.4 This contains much of the draft text of the new military doctrine.

⁴⁵ *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 30 June 1999, p.2; *Segodnia*, 2 July 1999, p.1.

⁴⁶ George Perkovich, 'Bush's Nuclear Follies', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.82, No.2, March/April 2003, pp.2-9

⁴⁷ For an account and analysis of the NPR, see 'The Nuclear Posture Review', *Strategic Comments*, Vol.8, Issue , 3, April 2002, pp.1-2; see also Richard Sokolosky, 'Demystifying the US Nuclear Posture Review', *Survival*, Vol.44, No.3, Autumn 2002, pp. 133-148

⁴⁸ A conceivable exception is a conflict with China over Taiwan, but even here it is arguable that US conventional power is adequate and a new nuclear force posture is not required.

Moreover, it can be argued that China's increasing integration into the international economy renders resort to force increasingly unlikely.

⁴⁹ The 'war on terror' is another example of the use concepts from strategic analysis that are anachronistic and inappropriate. See Lawrence Freedman (ed.), *Superterrorism*. Oxford:

Blackwell 2002

⁵⁰ Desch, p.423