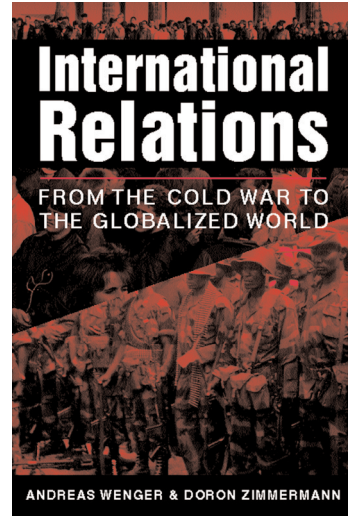


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International Relations:
From the Cold War
to the Globalized World

Andreas Wenger
and Doron Zimmermann



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PREFACE



THE COMMENTS OF MANY PUNDITS NOTWITHSTANDING, THE WORLD DID NOT undergo a fundamental change on 11 September 2001. Rather, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon demonstrated just how complex international relations have become in the past decade. We have come a long way since World War II culminated in the de facto division of Europe in 1945. Since that time, we have, indeed, moved through the Cold War and forward, into the globalized world of the early twenty-first century.

Our book explores the political history of international relations from the end of World War II to the present. Distinctive to our approach is the application of an expanded conception of security policy; as we understand it, security studies embraces aspects of international relations well beyond the purely military perspective, ranging from economic and political issues to social and cultural concerns.

We have sought to provide a balanced account that reflects the shift away from the classical bipolar perspective of the Cold War. We incorporate the view from the “other”—the Soviet—side of the Cold War, as well as events in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, and our research has drawn on a broad, representative archival base. Issues concerning the third world are not confined to a single chapter, but pervade the entire text.

An assumption underlying our interpretation of more than fifty years of international relations is that events, ideas, and developments can be understood only within the context of their particular times. Thus, we have organized the text around several distinct epochs, identifying the specific characteristics and internal dynamics of each. In addition, we have integrated the history of political ideas within the narrative of each chapter and included brief, concise summaries of the key theories, concepts, and terms

relevant to the discussion. (Key terms are also included in the comprehensive glossary, which begins on page 343.)

For students interested in further research, the selected bibliography offers an extensive listing of both print and electronic resources.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the book and that it will help, in at least some measure, to explain the complexities both of the recent past and the present.

* * *

In the course of writing this book, we have drawn on the time, knowledge, and critical faculties of our friends and colleagues at the Center for Security Studies—and beyond. Accordingly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to several individuals. Luzius Mayer-Kurmann and Ulrich Gysel were there at the beginning and proved instrumental in the conceptual phase of the project. We would like to thank Christian Nünlist and Anna Locher of the Parallel History Project (www.isn.ethz.ch/php) for their critical feedback on issues concerning Soviet foreign policy, the Warsaw Pact, and more generally, Eastern Europe under Soviet rule. We were indeed fortunate to have an expert on the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation close at hand: Jeronim Perovic time and again agreed to scrutinize our drafts and share his insights with us. Christof Münger and Christian Nünlist read our entire manuscript and provided much appreciated criticism and recommendations for improvement; Christof Münger also helped choose many of the titles recommended in our bibliography. Two highly competent historians, Thomas Holderegger and Reto Wollenmann, provided us with invaluable advice on the NATO reform process in the late 1960s, for which we owe them our gratitude. Cornelius Friesendorf showed considerable patience in reviewing the “history of ideas” sections of the book and provided us with requisite critical feedback. Finally, Simon Ingold contributed the Internet links list.

INTRODUCTION



ARGUABLY, THE ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2001 brought an unexpected close to the transitional phase that followed the end of the **Cold War**.^{*} But if the destruction of the Twin Towers in lower Manhattan and the near simultaneous attack on the Pentagon acted as a defining moment in our understanding of recent history, then what period came to a close on that particular day? Were the events of September 11 indeed the ultimate expression of fundamental change in the **international system**? In light of the cultural origins and religio-political motives of the suspected culprits, did the tragedies consequently act as a harbinger of a return to the “clash of civilizations,” enunciated by the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in 1993, with its concomitant religious and ethnic determinants? Or were the attacks not so much connected to the resurgence of old civilizational fault lines and their underlying antagonisms in the absence of **bipolar** ideological conflict but rather the consequence of a palpable U.S. **unilateralism** and, by extension, Western military and political preponderance in the decade after the Cold War?

Aside from the simple truth that watersheds in history constitute conceptual devices informed by individual preferences, the above questions cannot be conclusively answered at this stage, if only because historical analysis is predicated on an ex post facto assessment of events. Moreover, there is invariably no silver bullet, no single explanatory model that might provide a definitive answer to the occurrence of violent conflict of any kind at any stage in history. What is clear, however, is that after September 11 the time-honored myth of an invulnerable U.S. **hegemon**, secure between two oceans, has been debunked. Furthermore, the hopes of the early 1990s that growing international economic interdependence would provide the

^{*}Boldfaced terms are defined in the Glossary, which begins on page 343.

basis for a peaceful world order have not come to fruition. Instead, international politics has become highly complex and is marked by continuous change and a pervading sense of insecurity.

As the dissolution of the Soviet Union sent shockwave after shockwave through the regional as well as international environments, the forces of contending **ideologies** that had taken center stage for half a century gave way to a new, nascent international system. The United States had seemingly arrived at the apex of its global power: U.S. values, such as liberalism and democracy, spread around the globe; U.S. corporations were in the vanguard of building a new global economy; and U.S. military forces were in the forefront of international efforts to provide global stability. The irony was the fact that power had become more diffuse, and thus the U.S. ability to shape the global agenda had actually decreased. In the absence of a compelling nuclear logic of **mutually assured destruction (MAD)** inherent in the dualistic world of the Cold War, U.S. and, by implication, Western **hegemony** in international politics and economics would come under increasing pressure. Various events taking place during the decade after the end of the Cold War are suggestive of widespread skepticism, even hostility, toward the only **superpower** in the world.

In 1991, the U.S.-led Coalition of Western powers was gearing up for military operations in the Persian Gulf region. Aside from the moral rationale for the Gulf War—wanting to protect tiny Kuwait from Iraqi military aggression—a vital interest of the West was at stake: A significant amount of the crude oil that lubricated the world's economic engine was produced in the fields of Kuwait. Western intervention and the stationing of multinational and, in particular, U.S. troops under the auspices of the Western powers in Saudi Arabia elicited widespread indignation among devout Muslims around the world. Simultaneously, and against the backdrop of an unprecedented economic boom, Asian states proved increasingly assertive and resilient vis-à-vis Western influence. Beyond their rising self-confidence, Asian states' policies in relation to China appear highly suggestive of a realignment of power in the region. As China is readying resources to substantiate its aspirations toward regional hegemony, most states of Southeast Asia are directing their attention toward Beijing. Will China—hailed as the greatest potential single market by economists—also supplant the Western powers in the global pecking order in the near future?

Also during the 1990s, Europe achieved unprecedented successes in its economic and political integration, going along with intensified Euroatlantic cooperation. The **European Union (EU)** introduced the single market and a single currency and became the largest trading bloc in the world. Yet at the same time, Europe witnessed ethnic conflicts at its doorstep, resulting from the fragmentation of the Balkans and the circumstance that Africa had long existed on the sidelines of global political con-

cerns. The fact that a series of wars was, for all intents and purposes, fought in Europe's backyard is remarkable in and of itself—or so it appeared to many Europeans, who had not witnessed armed conflict in generations. The Balkans—the historic powder keg of Europe—once again erupted into political violence. In the wider context of the decline of the Yugoslav Federation, war was visited upon Bosnia (1992–1995), Croatia (1991–1995), and later Kosovo (1999). In Africa, tribal rivalries witnessed a bloody comeback, for example, in the genocidal war fought between the Hutu and Tutsi factions in Rwanda and Burundi in the early and mid-1990s. Two attributes stand out in these wars: First, they were fought along ethnic lines within a state; second, multinational peacekeeping forces were deployed. In retrospect, two trends typical of the 1990s—the sharp increase of **intrastate conflicts** (as opposed to **interstate conflicts**) and the challenge to the sanctity of national **sovereignty** by the international community—constitute developments that have had, and continue to exert, significant influence on the conduct, nature, and understanding of international relations in the post-Cold War world.

Paradoxically, while patterns of conflict were reverting from ideological competition to ethnic and religious fault lines, the process of **globalization** gave a new impetus to the neoliberal economic order that placed considerable power in the hands of multinational corporations and consequently further undermined the **nation-state** as unchallenged incumbent key actor in international relations. The world also became smaller due to increased connectivity and a concomitant interdependency, which in turn was caused by a revolution in information technology (IT). Put simply, however, the problem with globalization today is its uneven distribution: Whereas the full impact of the IT revolution was by and large a pervasive phenomenon in the West, many states of the former Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe were struggling to digest the shock of transitioning from a command economy to a free-market economy; for countries in the **third world** of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the ostensible boon of globalization was anything but. Instead, globalization more often than not proved to be exacerbating the division between the haves and the have-nots of this world. Overall, the period between 1991 and today has brought much change to the international political and economic orders and can therefore appropriately be referred to as a “formative decade” during which we have witnessed the transition from the Cold War world into the globalized world of the early twenty-first century. But what did the international system of the Cold War look like in the time before 1991?

Between 1947 and 1991, the world witnessed a struggle between two fundamentally opposed value and social **systems**: socialist communism and liberal democracy. The two protagonists of this struggle, which in time would engulf the entire globe, were the Soviet Union and the United States.

By the end of World War II, each power had eclipsed the former Great Powers of Europe. The latter had dominated international politics for the greater part of the early modern period (roughly after 1500) but had been superseded by the two flanking powers of the pre-World War II era—the Soviet Union and the United States—among other reasons because their material bases were ravaged and their military power was depleted by 1945. By then, the former flanking powers were in the process of becoming superpowers, that is, political entities endowed with the capability of projecting their power globally. The end of World War II thus acted as the critical watershed between the prevailing *modus operandi ante bellum* in the international system and the new order of an incipient Cold War.


The old **balance of power** between the Great Powers of Europe had crumbled in the face of rampant nationalism and expansionism; the logic of the Cold War gave birth to the bipolar world, an international system in which the new superpowers maintained a precarious nuclear balance. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the Cold War was at first centered in Europe. In only one decade, however, the Cold War became the defining feature of the international system. The conflict's second decade (roughly 1955–1965) brought the world to the brink of total destruction, but a significant step toward the relaxation of relations between the superpowers was achieved thereafter. After 1975 the world witnessed the coming of the **Second Cold War**, as well as a fundamental change in the international system, transforming it into a **multipolar** system as economic forces increasingly interlocked with political factors in shaping history. Finally, economic forces, as much as politics, determined the outcome of the Cold War: the Soviet Union ultimately paid a high price for communism and the concomitant command economy it had installed, whereas democracy and capitalism proved more durable in the West.

Aside from the two principal parties to the Cold War, there were those who gained and even more who lost. More often than not, for those caught between the rivals there was no recourse. They became the victims of the Cold War. It was no coincidence that the hot spots of the Cold War were located in the third world, where millions yearned for national independence only to struggle with massive impoverishment and political instability once they achieved it. To the superpowers, Europe as the *terminus a quo* (point of origin) of the Cold War did not present itself as a practicable battlefield for an important reason: the risk of escalation—conventional and nuclear—was too high. Whereas most battles of the Cold War were fought in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, in Europe the Cold War evolved into a **long peace**. As of the late 1950s, the superpowers wooed developing countries with every intention of turning them into auxiliaries, thereby spreading and perpetuating the dynamic of the Cold War beyond its erstwhile limits.

The principal difference between previous wars, even global wars, and the Cold War was that the earlier wars (with the exception of the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945) had all been fought with conventional weapons, whereas the antagonists of the Cold War had nuclear arsenals at their fingertips. The destructiveness of nuclear weapons, to state the obvious, far exceeded that of any conventional weapon. If the equilibrium of the Cold War had ever been seriously disturbed—say, in the late 1970s—this subsequent attempt at composing a history of international relations would, in all probability, never have been written. More generally, the stakes and risks of the Cold War while it lasted were higher still than those for which World War II had been fought. Figuratively speaking, if the Cold War had ever turned hot, it literally would have been the war to end all wars, plunging the world into a nuclear holocaust of unprecedented levels. It is to the beginning of this story and its history that we now turn.

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