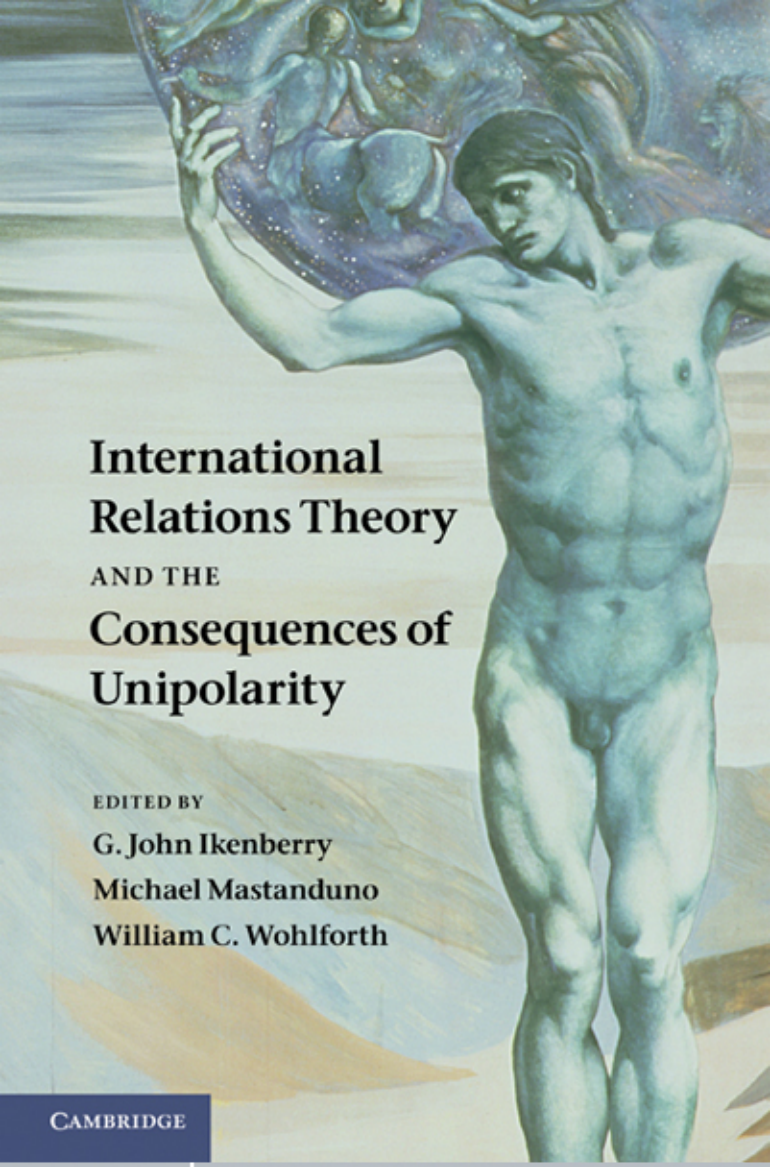

International Relations Theory AND THE Consequences of Unipolarity

EDITED BY

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CAMBRIDGE

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The end of the Cold War and subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in a new unipolar international system that presented fresh challenges to international relations theory. Since the Enlightenment, scholars have speculated that patterns of cooperation and conflict might be systematically related to the manner in which power is distributed among states. Most of what we know about this relationship, however, is based on European experiences between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, when five or more powerful states dominated international relations, and in the latter twentieth century, when two superpowers did so. Building on a highly successful special issue of the leading journal *World Politics*, this book seeks to determine whether what we think we know about power and patterns of state behavior applies to the current "unipolar" setting and, if not, how core theoretical propositions about interstate interactions need to be revised.

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1 *Introduction: unipolarity, state behavior, and systemic consequences*

G. JOHN IKENBERRY, MICHAEL MASTANDUNO, AND WILLIAM C. WOHLFORTH

American primacy in the global distribution of capabilities is one of the most salient features of the contemporary international system. The end of the Cold War did not return the world to multipolarity. Instead the United States – already materially preeminent – became more so. We currently live in a one superpower world, a circumstance unprecedented in the modern era. No other great power has enjoyed such advantages in material capabilities – military, economic, technological, and geographical. Other states rival the United States in one area or another, but the multifaceted character of American power places it in a category of its own. The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, slower economic growth in Japan and Western Europe during the 1990s, and America's outsized military spending have all enhanced these disparities. While in most historical eras the distribution of capabilities among major states has tended to be multipolar or bipolar – with several major states of roughly equal size and capability – the United States emerged from the 1990s as an unrivaled global power. It became a "unipolar" state.

Not surprisingly, this extraordinary imbalance has triggered global debate. Governments, including that of the United States, are struggling to respond to this peculiar international environment. What is the character of domination in a unipolar distribution? If world politics is always a mixture of force and consent, does unipolarity remove restraints and alter the mix in favor of force? Is a unipolar world likely to be built around rules and institutions or based more on the unilateral exercise of unipolar power? These questions have been asked in the context of a global debate over the projection of power by the former George W. Bush administration. To what extent was America's foreign policy after 2001 a reflection simply of the idiosyncratic and provocative strategies of the Bush administration itself, rather than a

manifestation of the deeper structural features of the global system of power? These concerns over how a unipolar world operates – and how the unipolar state itself behaves – are the not-so-hidden subtext of world politics at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Classic questions of international relations (IR) theory are at stake in the debate over unipolarity. The most obvious question concerns balance of power theory, which predicts that states will respond to concentrated power by counterbalancing.[1] The absence of a balancing response to American unipolar power is a puzzle to some, while others argue that incipient or specific types of balancing behavior are in fact occurring.[2] A related debate is over power transition theory, which focuses on the specific forms of conflict that are generated between rising and declining hegemonic states.[3] The abrupt shift in the distribution of capabilities that followed the end of the Cold War and the rise of China after the Cold War raise questions about the character of conflict between dominant and challenger states as they move along trajectories of rise and decline. A unipolar distribution also raises issues that scholars grappled with during the Cold War, namely the structure and dynamics of different types of polar systems. Here the questions concern the ways in which the features of polarity affect the durability and war-proneness of the state system.[4] Likewise, scholarly debates

[1] See Jack S. Levy, "Balances and Balancing: Concepts, Propositions and Research Design," in John A. Vasquez and Colin Elman, eds., *Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate* (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 128–153.

[2] G. John Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); and T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortman, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). On incipient balancing, see Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 24, 1 (Summer 2000): 5–41; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Arise," *International Security* 17, 4 (Spring 1993): 5–51; Robert Pape, "Soft Balancing Against the United States," *International Security* 30, 1 (Summer 2005): 7–45; and Keir Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30, 1 (Summer 2005): 109–139.

[3] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); and A F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[4] See Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, "Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability," *World Politics* 16, 3 (April 1964): 390–406; Richard N. Rosecrance, "Bipolarity, Multipolarity and the Future," *Journal of Conflict*

about threat perception, the impact of regime characteristics on foreign policy, the propensity of dominant states to provide collective goods, and the ability of a state to translate preponderant capabilities into effective influence are also at stake in the debate over unipolarity.[5]

This book is a systematic inquiry into the logic and dynamics of unipolarity. Its starting point is the distinctive distribution of capabilities among states in the contemporary global system. The central question driving our inquiry is straightforward: To what extent – and, if so, how – does this distribution of capabilities matter for patterns of international politics?

In their initial efforts to make sense of an American-dominated international system, scholars and observers have invoked a wide array of grand terms such as empire, hegemony, unipolarity, imperium, and "uni-multipolarity."[6] Scholars are searching for a conceptual language to depict and place in historical and comparative perspective the distinctive political formation that has emerged after the Cold War. But this multiplicity of terms obscures more than it reveals. In this project, unipolarity refers narrowly to the underlying material distribution of capabilities, and not to the political patterns or relationships depicted by terms such as empire, imperium, and hegemony. What makes the global system unipolar is the distinctive distribution of material resources. An important research question is whether and in what ways this particular distribution of capabilities affects patterns of

Resolution 10 (September 1966): 314–327; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus* 93 (Summer 1964): 881–909; Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957).

[5] For example, Stephen Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Responses to American Primacy* (New York: Norton, 2006); Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, 3 (2006): 7–19.

[6] A huge literature has emerged – or returned – depicting America as an empire. See, for example, Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004). On hegemony, see G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). On imperium, see Peter Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). On uni-multipolarity, see Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs* 78, 2 (March/April 1999): 35–49.

international politics, creating outcomes that are different than what one might expect under conditions of bipolarity or multipolarity.

Setting up the inquiry in this manner requires a basic distinction between power as material resources and power as influence. Power resources refer to the distribution of material capabilities among states. The global system today – seen in comparative historical perspective – has concentrated power capabilities unprecedented in the modern era. But this observation should not prejudge questions about the extent and character of influence or about the logic of political relationships within the global system. Powerful states, even unipolar ones, may not always get the outcomes they prefer. Nor should this observation about the concentration of power prejudge the question of whether the global system is coercive, consensual, legitimate, or illegitimate. Describing the system as unipolar leaves unanswered the Weberian questions about the logic and character of the global political system that is organized around unipolarity.[7]

In the remainder of this chapter, we develop a framework for analyzing unipolarity and highlight the arguments of the chapters that follow. The individual contributions develop hypotheses and explore the impact of unipolarity on the behavior of the dominant state, on the reactions of other states, and on the properties of the international system. While the book takes as a starting point the causal impact of unipolarity as a concentrated distribution of capabilities, individual chapters explore more complex causal chains. Polarity may have effects, in other words, that are not captured by the typical neorealist explanatory scheme with which the concept is associated. Finnemore, for example, stresses potent social and ideational constraints the need for legitimacy places on the unipole, while Ikenberry develops the reciprocal interaction between unipolarity and the US-sponsored liberal international order. In all chapters, however, unipolarity looms as a potentially important factor affecting patterns of behavior over the long term.

Collectively, we find that unipolarity does have a profound impact on international politics. International relations under conditions of unipolarity force us to rethink conventional and received

[7] In this way, we are following a basic distinction that is made in the power theory literature. See, in particular, David A. Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

understandings about the operation of the balance of power, the meaning of alliance partnerships, the logic of international economic cooperation, the relationship between power and legitimacy, and the behavior of satisfied and revisionist states. A unipolar distribution of capabilities will eventually give way to other distributions. The argument advanced here is not that unipolarity will last indefinitely, but that as long as it does last, it will constitute a critical factor in understanding patterns of foreign policy and world politics.

Definition and measurement

Scholars use the term "unipolarity" to distinguish a system with one extremely capable state from systems with two or more great powers (bi-, tri-, and multipolarity). Unipolarity should also be distinguished from hegemony and empire, which refer to political relationships and degrees of influence rather than to distributions of material capability. The adjective "unipolar" describes something that has a single pole. International relations scholars have long defined a pole as a state that (a) commands an especially large share of the resources or capabilities states can use to achieve their ends, and (b) excels in all the component elements of state capability, conventionally defined as size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capacity, military might, and organizational-institutional "competence."[8]

A unipolar system is one whose structure is defined by the fact that only one state meets these criteria. The underpinnings of the concept are familiar to international relations scholars. They flow from the massive literature on polarity, and especially from Waltz's seminal treatment. The core contention is that polarity structures the horizon of states' probable actions and reactions, narrowing the range of choice and providing subtle incentives and disincentives for certain types of behavior. An appreciation of polarity yields a few important insights about patterns of behavior in international politics over the long term. Even for those scholars most persuaded of its analytical utility, polarity is at best a necessary part of explanation rather than a sufficient

[8] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 131.

explanation.[9] The distribution of capabilities may be a place to begin an explanation, but is rarely enough to complete one.

Polarity is a theoretical construct; real international systems only approximate various polar ideal types. The polarity concept implies a threshold value of the distribution of capabilities. The more unambiguously the poles in a real international system pass the threshold, the more confidence analysts can have that the properties attributed to a given system structure in theory will obtain in practice. The more unambiguously the capabilities of the great powers in a multipolar system clearly stand apart from all other states and are comparable to each other, the more relevant are the insights from the theoretical literature on multipolarity. Waltz often discussed the logic of a bipolar system as if it were a two-actor system. The more dominant the superpowers were in reality, the more confidence analysts could have that those logical deductions actually applied. In reality, the Cold War international system was never "perfectly" bipolar. Analysts used to speak of loose vs. tight bipolarity, and debated whether the Soviet Union had the full complement of capabilities to measure up as a pole.

How do we know whether or to what degree an international system has passed the unipolar threshold? Using the conventional definition of a pole, an international system can be said to be unipolar if it contains one state whose overall share of capabilities places it unambiguously in a class by itself compared to all other states. This reflects the fact that poles are defined not on an absolute scale but relative to each other and to other states. In addition, preponderance must characterize all the relevant categories of state capabilities.[10] To determine polarity, one has to examine the distribution of capabilities and identify the states whose shares of overall resources obviously place them into their own class.

There will doubtless be times in which polarity cannot be determined, but now does not appear to be one of them. Scholars largely agree that there were four or more states that qualified as poles before 1945; that by 1950 or so only two measured up; and that by the 1990s

[9] For a comprehensive critical review of the polarity literature, see Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

[10] William Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 21, 1: 1–36; William Wohlforth, "U.S. Strategy in a Unipolar World," in Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled*, 98–118; Stephen G. Brooks and William Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

one of these two poles was gone. They largely agree, further, that no other power – not Japan, China, India or Russia, nor any European country, nor the EU – has increased its overall portfolio of capabilities sufficiently to transform their standing.[11] This leaves a single pole.

There is widespread agreement, moreover, that any plausible index aggregating the relevant dimensions of state capabilities would place the United States in a separate class by a large margin.[12] The most widely used measures of capability are GDP and military spending. As of 2009, the United States accounted for roughly a fifth of global GDP and over 40 percent of GDP among the established great powers (see Table 1.1). The post-Cold War US economic position surpasses that of any leading state in modern history, with the sole exception of the United States' own standing in the early Cold War years (when World War Two had temporarily depressed every other major economy). The size and wealth of the United States' economy mean that the generation of its massive military capabilities represented only roughly 4 percent of its GDP in 2009 (Table 1.2), compared to the nearly 10 percent it averaged over the Cold War's peak years of 1950–1970, as well as the similarly large burdens borne by most of the major powers of the past.[13]

[11] Some scholars argue that bipolarity or multipolarity might characterize international politics in certain regional settings. See, for example, Robert Ross, "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty First Century," *International Security* 23, 4 (Spring 1999): 81–117; and Andrew Moravcsik, "The Quiet Superpower," *Newsweek* (June 17, 2002, Atlantic Edition).

[12] See, e.g., Ethan B. Kapstein, "Does Unipolarity Have A Future?" in Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies after the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 464–490; Birthe Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Wohlforth, "Stability of a Unipolar World"; Wohlforth, "U.S. Strategy in a Unipolar World"; Brooks and Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance*; William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *America's Inadvertent Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Arvind Virmani, "Global Power from the 18th to the 21st Century: Power Potential (VIP2), Strategic Assets & Actual Power (VIP)," Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, Working Paper 175, New Delhi (2005). The most comprehensive contrarian view is Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2003), whose main arguments are that the United States is weaker economically than it seems (a claim mainly about the future); and that US military capability is comparatively ineffective at achieving favorable outcomes (a claim about utility).

[13] Calculated from *Budget of the United States Government Fiscal Year 2005: Historical Tables* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2005).

Table 1.1 *Economic indicators for the major powers, 2009*

	GDP, current prices ($ billion)	% Great power GDP, current prices	% World GDP, current prices	% World GDP, PPP	GDP per capita, current prices	Public debt (% GDP)	Productivity ($ GDP per hour worked)
United States	14,256	42.2	23.3	20.3	46,381	52.9	55.3
China	4,519	13.4	7.4	12.5	3,404	18.2	n.a.
Japan	5,068	15	8.3	5.9	39,731	192.1	38.3
Germany	3,353	9.9	5.5	4	40,875	77.2	50.5
Russia	1,660	4.9	2.7	3	11,690	6.9	n.a.
France	2,676	7.9	4.4	3	42,747	79.7	53.2
Britain	2,184	6.5	3.6	3.1	43,736	68.5	44.9

Notes: % World GDP, PPP is World Bank estimate for 2005. Differences between PPP (purchasing power parity) and market exchange rate measures are discussed in Brooks and Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance*, ch. 2. Data for United States public debt are from 2005. Productivity estimates are from 2005.
Sources: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2010; World Bank, *2011 International Comparison Program, Preliminary Results*. Public debt: *CIA World Factbook 2010*. Hours worked: *OECD Employment Outlook 2010, Statistical Annex*. Productivity: *OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2008*.

Table 1.2 *Defense expenditures for the major powers, 2009*

	Defense expenditures ($ billion)	% Great power defense expenditures	% World defense expenditures	Defense expenditures % of GDP	Defense R&D expenditures ($ billion)
United States	663.3	62.9	43	4.3	74.2
China	98.8	9.4	7	2	n.a.
Japan	46.9	4.4	3	0.9	1.6
Germany	48	4.6	3	1.3	1.4
Russia	61	5.8	4	3.5	n.a
France	67.3	6.4	4	2.3	4.4
Britain	69.3	6.6	4	2.5	3

The United States now likely spends more on defense than the rest of the world combined (Table 1.2). Military research and development (R&D) may best capture the scale of the long-term investments which now give the United States a dramatic qualitative edge over other states. As Table 1.2 shows, in 2008 US military R&D expenditures were more than six times greater than those of Germany, Japan, France, and Britain combined. By some estimates over half the military R&D expenditures in the world are American. And this disparity has been sustained for decades: over the past thirty years, for example, the United States invested over three times more than the EU combined on military R&D. Hence, on any composite index featuring these two indicators the United States obviously looks like a unipole. That perception is reinforced (see Table 1.3) by a snapshot of science and technology indicators for the major powers.

These vast commitments do not make the United States omnipotent, but they do facilitate a preeminence in military capabilities vis-à-vis all the other major powers that is unique in the post-seventeenth-century experience. While other powers can contest US forces operating in or very near their homelands, especially over issues on which nuclear deterrence is credible, the United States is and will long remain the only state capable of projecting major military power globally.[14] This dominant position is enabled by what Barry Posen calls "command of the commons" – that is, unassailable military dominance over the sea, air, and space. The result is an international system that contains only one state with the capability to organize major politico-military action anywhere in the system.[15] No other state or even combination of states is capable of mounting and deploying a major expeditionary force outside its own region, except with the assistance of the United States.

[14] Sustained US investment in nuclear capabilities, against the backdrop of Russian decline and Chinese stasis, has even led some to question the existence of stable deterrence between these countries. See Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, 4 (2006): 7–44.

[15] David Wilkinson, "Unipolarity without Hegemony," *International Studies Review* 1, 2 (1999): 141–172; Hansen, *Unipolarity and the Middle East*; Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 28, 1 (2003): 5–46.

Table 1.3 *Science and technology indicators for the major powers, 2006–2009*

	Value added of high-technology industries ($ million) (2007)[1]	Share of value added of high-technology industries ($ million) (2007)	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D ($ million PPP) (2008)	No. of triadic patent families (2008)[2]	Science and engineering doctoral degrees (2006)	PCs per 1000 people (2006)	Internet access per 1000 people (2008)	Secure Internet servers[3] per million people (2009)
United States	374,233.0	30.70%	398,194.0	14,828	30,452	810	760	1,234
China	166,003.0	13.60%	141,400.0	433	22,953	60	220	1
Japan	128,897.0	10.60%	149,212.9	14,126	8,122	800	750	519
Germany	85,806	7.00%	76,796.9	6,027	10,243	660	750	641
Russia	9,640	0.80%	22,121.0	49	19,725	130	320	11
France	42,174.0	3.50%	42,893	2,430	56,770	650	680	210
Britain	51,786.0	4.30%	38,707.50	1,658	9,761	800	760	905

Notes:

[1] In 2007 dollars. High technology defined by the National Science Board as "aerospace, communications and semiconductors, computers and office machinery, pharmaceuticals, and scientific instruments and measuring equipment."

[2] Triadic patent families represent attempts to receive patents for an invention in the United States, Europe, and Japan. See www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind06/c6/c6g.htm; data for China/Russia from 2005.

[3] Secure Internet servers use encryption technology in Internet transactions. See www.netcraft.com

Sources: World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2010*; OECD, *Main Science and Technology Indicators*, May 2010; National Science Board, *Science and Engineering Indicators*, 2010 Volume 2; *R&D Magazine*, Battelle, OECD, IMF, CIA.

Conventional measures thus suggest that the concentration of military and overall economic potential in the United States distinguishes the current international system from its predecessors over the past four centuries (see Figure 1.1). As historian Paul Kennedy observed, "Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing . . . I have returned to all of the comparative defense spending and military personnel statistics over the past 500 years that I compiled in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and no other nation comes close."[16]

The bottom line is that if we adopt conventional definitions of polarity and standard measures of capabilities, then the current international system is as unambiguously unipolar as past systems were multi- and bipolar.

Unipolarity and its consequences

As the chapters that follow indicate, the effects of unipolarity are potentially widespread. For purposes of analytical clarity it is possible to divide these effects in three ways: on the behavior of the unipole, on the actions of other states, and on the properties of the international system itself. Seven chapters address effects along these dimensions. They are followed by three chapters that reflect critically on the analytical utility of polarity under contemporary conditions.

Behavior of the unipole

The specific characteristics and dynamics of any unipolar system will obviously depend on how the unipolar state behaves. But the unipole's behavior might be affected by incentives and constraints associated with its structural position in the international system. Indeed, even the unipole's domestic politics and institutions – the immediate wellsprings of its behavior on the international scene – might themselves change profoundly under the influence of its position of primacy in the international system. The chapters in this volume yield hypotheses concerning four general behavioral patterns.

[16] "The Eagle Has Landed: The New U.S. Global Military Position," *Financial Times Weekend*, February 2004.

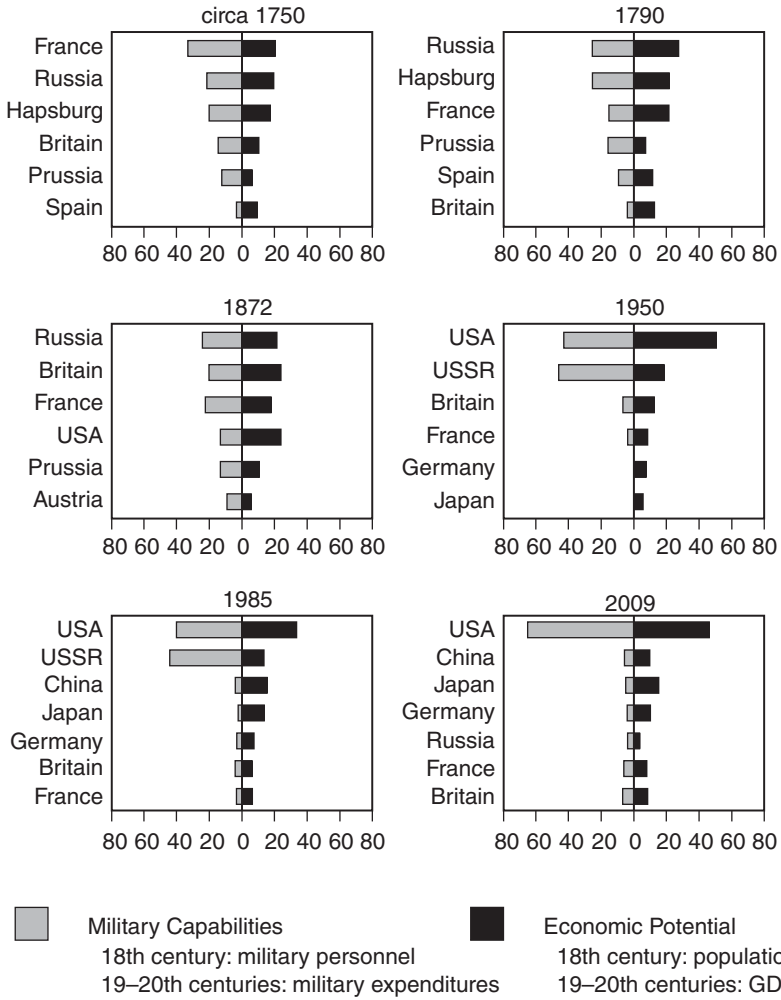

Figure 1.1 Distribution (percentage) of economic and military capabilities among the major powers[a] (seventeenth–twenty-first centuries)

Sources: Eighteenth-century data: Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987). GDP, 1870–1985: Angus Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy, 1829–1992* (Paris: OECD, 1995); GDP, 2009 sources from Table 1.2; military expenditures, 1872–1985: National Material Capabilities data set v. 3.02 at http://www.correlatesofwar.org. The construction of these data is discussed in J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965," in Bruce Russett, ed., *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1972), pp. 19–48. Military expenditures 2009, sources from Table 1.1

[a] Germany = FRG, and Russia = USSR in 1950 and 1985; Maddison's estimates are based on states' modern territories. For 1872, Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia are combined, as are Russia and Finland.

Unipolarity and revisionism: is the unipole a satisfied state?

The stability of any international system depends significantly on the degree to which the major powers are satisfied with the status quo.[17] In *War and Change in World Politics*, Robert Gilpin argued that leading states "will attempt to change the international system if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs."[18] In the quarter century since that book's publication, IR scholars have never seriously debated whether the "expected net gain" of systemic revisionism might be positive for the United States. It is hardly surprising that scholars set aside the question of revising the territorial status quo – plausible arguments for the utility of large-scale conquest in an age of nuclear weapons and low economic benefits of holding territory are hard to imagine. But the territorial status quo is only a part of what Gilpin meant by "international system." The other part comprises the rules, institutions, and standards of legitimacy that frame daily interactions. Why has there been no scholarly debate on whether the United States might seek to revise that aspect of the system? In the 1980s, to be sure, the question did not seem relevant. Scholars believed that the United States was in relative decline, so the costs of changing the system were simply assumed to be high, and a US preference for the status quo appeared obvious.

The transition from bipolarity to unipolarity arguably represented a dramatic power shift in the United States' favor, altering Gilpin's equation toward revisionism. Yet the question of whether, as a new unipole, the United States might adopt a more revisionist stance has not figured centrally in international relations research. The reason was a key assumption built into almost all research on hegemonic stability and power transition theory: that the leading state in any international system is bound to be satisfied. Hence, research on the origins of satisfaction and revisionism is overwhelmingly about subordinate states, not the dominant state.[19]

[17] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1951); Organski, *World Politics*; Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, 1 (Summer 1994): 72–107; and Robert Powell, "Stability and the Distribution of Power," *World Politics* 48, 2 (1996): 239–267.

[18] Gilpin, *War and Change*, ch. 2.

[19] See, for example, Ronald L. Tammen *et al.*, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House, 2000); Jonathan M. DiCicco

Robert Jervis' chapter questions this assumption. While the case can be made that a unipole – particularly one which achieved this status in an international system already strongly shaped by its power and preferences – might rationally opt for conservatism,[20] international relations scholarship is rich with hypotheses that the opposite is equally if not more likely. Jervis argues that unipolarity offers powerful structural incentives for the leading state to be revisionist. These include the absence of countervailing power, the tendency for both the interests and the fears of the leading state to increase as its relative capabilities increase, and the psychological tendency to worry more about the future to the extent the present situation is desirable. Jervis also suggests that these structural incentives are reinforced by particular features of the American approach to unipolarity – the sense after the attacks of September 11, 2001 that the world could and must be transformed, and the enduring and widespread belief that international peace and cooperation will be sustained only when all other important states are democratic. The structural and contingent features of contemporary unipolarity point plausibly in the direction of a revisionist unipole, one simultaneously powerful, fearful, and opportunistic.

Unipolarity and the provision of public goods

Public or collective goods may be consumed by multiple actors without those actors necessarily having to pay the full costs of producing them. The classic theoretical insight is that if enough actors follow their rational self-interest and choose to free ride on the efforts of others, public goods will be underproduced or not produced at all.[21] To overcome the free rider problem requires cooperation among

and Jack S. Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, 6 (1999): 675–704; and Jason Davidson, *The Origins of Revisionist and Status-quo States* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[20] Josef Joffe, "Bismarck or Britain? Toward an American Grand Strategy after Unipolarity," *International Security* 19, 4 (Spring 1995): 94–117; and Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* 21, 4 (Spring 1997): 49–88.

[21] See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and the literature discussed therein.

self-interested actors.[22] A good part of the IR literature, in particular that associated with hegemonic stability theory, hypothesizes that cooperation in international relations requires the leadership of a dominant state.[23] Its preponderance of economic and military resources means the dominant state has the ability to bear disproportionately the costs of providing international collective goods such as an open world economy or a stable security order. The dominant state has an interest in bearing those costs because it benefits disproportionately from promoting system-wide outcomes that reflect its values and interests.

During the Cold War, the United States took on the responsibilities that Kindleberger argued were needed to promote international economic stability, such as serving as an open market of last resort and allowing the use of its currency for exchange and reserve purposes. International economic stability among the Western powers reinforced their security alliance against the Soviet Union. The United States also bore disproportionately the direct costs of Western alliance security. The Soviet Union, on its side of the international divide, ultimately shouldered disproportionate alliance costs as well.[24] Kenneth Waltz took the argument a step further, arguing that in the bipolar system the United States and Soviet Union may have been adversaries but, as

[22] Kenneth Oye, ed., *Cooperation under Anarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[23] This literature is vast, and its claims have been subject to considerable critical scrutiny. Key statements include Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Robert O. Keohane, "The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes," in Ole Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 131–162; Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28 (1976): 317–347; Bruce Russett, "The Mysterious Case of Vanishing Hegemony," *International Organization* 39 (1985): 207–231; Duncan Snidal, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory," *International Organization* 39 (1985): 579–614; David A. Lake, "Leadership, Hegemony and the International Economy: Naked Emperor or Tattered Monarch with Potential?" *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (1993): 459–489; and Joanne Gowa, "Rational Hegemons, Excludable Goods, and Small Groups: An Epitaph for Hegemonic Stability Theory?" *World Politics* 41 (1989): 307–324.

[24] See Valerie Bunce, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Evolution of the Eastern Bloc from Soviet Asset to Liability," *International Organization* 39, 1 (1985): 1–46; Randall Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

the two dominant powers, shared a mutual interest in system stability, an interest that prompted them to cooperate in providing public goods such as nuclear non-proliferation.[25] Hedley Bull makes a similar point in his classic study of the international system as a society of states.[26]

How might the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar system affect the inclination of the now singularly dominant state to provide international public goods? Two hypotheses arise, with contradictory behavioral expectations. First, we might expect a unipole to take on an even greater responsibility for the provision of international public goods. The capabilities of a unipole relative to other major states are greater than those of either dominant power in a bipolar structure. The unipole's incentive should be stronger as well, since it now has the opportunity to influence international outcomes globally, not just in its particular subsystem. We should expect the unipole to try to "lock in" a durable international order that reflects its interests and values.[27]

A second hypothesis, however, suggests the opposite. We should expect a unipolar power to underproduce public goods despite its preponderant capabilities. The fact that it is unthreatened by peer competitors and relatively unconstrained by other states creates incentives for the unipole to pursue more parochial interests even at the expense of a stable international order. The fact that it is extraordinarily powerful means that the unipole will be more inclined to force adjustment costs on others rather than bear disproportionate burdens itself.

Three of the contributions below address these issues. Michael Mastanduno's analysis of the global political economy shows that the dominant state will be both system maker and privilege taker – it will seek simultaneously to provide public goods and to exploit its advantageous structural position for parochial gain. It enlists the cooperation of other states and seeks, with varying success, to force adjustment burdens upon them. Robert Jervis suggests that because the unipole has wide discretion in the nature and extent of the goods provided, its efforts are likely to be perceived by less powerful states as hypocritical attempts to mask the actual pursuit of private goods. Considering the specific features of the liberal order built around US power, Ikenberry,

[25] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, ch. 9.
[26] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
[27] Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

by contrast, argues that the unipole faces strong general incentives to maintain this order. Even if it periodically acts as a privilege taker on specific issues, its overall support for the institutional-normative order has many attributes of public goods provision.

Unipolarity and control over outcomes

It has long been an axiom of social science that resources (or capabilities as defined herein) do not translate automatically into power (control over outcomes or over the behavior of other actors).[28] Yet most observers regard it as similarly axiomatic that there is some positive relationship between a state's relative capability to help or harm others and its ability to get them to do what it wants. Even if the relationship is complex, more capabilities relative to others ought generally to translate into more power and influence. By this commonsense logic, a unipole should be expected to have more influence than either of the two great powers in a bipolar system.

Chapters in this volume argue that the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity may not be an unambiguous benefit for the unipole's ability to wield influence. On the contrary, a unipolar state may face the paradoxical situation of being simultaneously more capable and more constrained. Two distinct theoretical logics suggest that a unipole might enjoy less power to shape the international system than a superpower in bipolarity. First is the logic of balancing, alliance, and opposition, discussed in the contributions by Stephen Walt and Mastanduno. The increased concentration of capabilities in the unipole may only elicit increased opposition – in the form of either traditional counterbalancing or subtler soft balancing – from other states. Even if such resistance falls short of providing a real counterweight, it may materially hamstring the unipole's ability to exercise influence. As Walt argues, the structural shift to unipolarity removed one of the major motivations for the middle-ranked great powers to defer to the United States. Mastanduno offers a similar argument: the collapse of a unifying central threat signifies that after the Cold War the United States has less control over adjustment struggles with its principal economic partners,

[28] Robert Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2 (1957): 201–215; Baldwin, *Paradoxes of Power*.

because it can no longer leverage their security dependence to dictate international economic outcomes. Globalization reinforces this US predicament by expanding the number of relevant players in the world economy and by offering them alternatives to economic reliance on the United States. While under bipolarity the propensity of other middle powers to defer to the United States was structurally favored, under unipolarity the opposite may obtain. Even if observable balancing behavior reminiscent of bipolarity or multipolarity never occurs, a structurally induced tendency of the middle-ranked great powers to withhold cooperation may sap the unipole's effective power.

Second is a social logic of legitimacy, analyzed by Martha Finnemore. To use capabilities effectively, she argues, a unipole must seek to legitimate its role. But any system of legitimation imposes limits on the unipole's ability to translate capabilities into power. Finnemore stresses that the legitimation strategy followed by the United States after World War Two – institutionalization – imposes especially severe constraints on the use of its material capabilities in pursuit of power. The rules, norms, and institutions that make up the current international order are thus especially resistant to the unilateral use of superior capabilities to drive outcomes. Hence, for reasons Finnemore spells out in detail, the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity may well have diminished the effective utility of the United States' preponderant capabilities.

Yet Ikenberry's chapter suggests that these constraints are only one side of a complex equation of influence. While active attempts to translate capabilities into influence on specific issues may frequently be frustrated by the institutional constraints Finnemore highlights, in diffuse and admittedly hard-to-measure ways, the rules and institutions molded and maintained by US capabilities arguably shape patterns of outcomes in ways favorable to Washington.

Unipolarity and domestic politics

The impact of domestic politics on foreign policy is of longstanding interest in the study of politics. In his classic appraisal of the United States, Tocqueville concluded that the US political system was "decidedly inferior" to other types in the conduct of foreign policy, with a tendency to "obey impulse rather than prudence," and to "abandon a

mature design for the gratification of a momentary passion."[29] During the Cold War, Theodore Lowi, Stephen Krasner, and others reinforced the idea that American political institutions create disadvantages in external policy.[30] More recent literature has reversed the presumption and argues that democracy offers distinctive advantages in foreign policy including legitimacy, transparency, the ability to mobilize the public for war-fighting efforts, and the potential to use competition among branches of government to gain advantage in diplomacy and negotiations.[31]

Political scientists have placed greater emphasis on the impact of regime type on foreign policy than on how changes in the relative international position of a country affect the role domestic politics play in its foreign policy.[32] Nonetheless, conventional wisdom during the Cold War suggested that the bipolar structure had a double disciplining effect on the conduct of US foreign policy. The external threat disciplined American society, leading interest groups and the public generally to defer to central decision makers on the definition of national interest and how best to achieve it. Domestic politics stopped at the "water's edge" because the international stakes were so high. The Cold War constrained American decision makers as well, forcing them to exercise caution in the international arena and to assure that public opinion or interest groups did not capture or derail foreign policy for parochial reasons.

[29] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. I (New York: Appleton and Co., 1890), 299–300.

[30] Theodore Lowi, "Making Democracy Safe for the World," in John Ikenberry, ed., *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays* (New York: HarperCollins 1989), pp. 258–292; and Stephen Krasner, "United States Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unraveling the Paradox of Internal Weakness and External Strength," in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 51–88.

[31] For example, David Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review* 86, 1 (March 1992): 24–37; Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Robert Pastor, "The President vs. Congress," in Robert Art and Seyom Brown, eds., *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Search for a New Role* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 11–31.

[32] See Otto Hintze, "Military Organization and the Organization of States," in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 178–215; and Peter Alexis Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed," *International Organization* 32, 4 (Autumn 1978): 881–912.

Under unipolarity, the double disciplining effect is no longer operative, with neither publics nor central decision makers as constrained as in a bipolar context. The consequent impact of domestic politics on foreign policy will depend in part on whether initiative is taken more by less constrained central decision makers or less constrained societal actors. One hypothesis is that under unipolarity the line between domestic and foreign policy will blur and domestic politics will no longer stop at the water's edge. With less at stake in foreign policy, it is harder for leaders to discipline societal actors and easier for societal actors to capture aspects of the foreign policy agenda to suit their parochial needs. The likely results are a less coherent foreign policy and a tendency for the state to underperform in the international arena, missing opportunities to exercise influence commensurate with its preponderant capabilities. A second hypothesis is that central decision makers will exploit the lack of constraint to manipulate a public – one that no longer has clear guiding principles in foreign policy – to respond to a wide array of possible threats and opportunities. As Jervis suggests, for the unipole threats may be nowhere – or everywhere.

The contribution by Jack Snyder, Robert Shapiro, and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon takes up the impact of domestic politics under unipolarity. They find that the George W. Bush administration took advantage of the structural discretion offered by unipolarity to conduct a far more active and risky foreign policy than would be possible under the constraints of bipolarity. Developments in American politics such as political polarization have not only encouraged this effort by leaders, they have enabled interest groups to tie their particular domestic concerns to the more activist foreign policy agenda, and they have encouraged opportunistic leaders to use foreign policy as a salient issue in domestic political debate.

Unipolarity and the behavior of secondary states

Unipolarity may present secondary states with dramatically different incentives and constraints than bipolar or multipolar settings. Authors in this volume highlight three general behavioral patterns that may be shaped by the unipolar stucture: strategies of resistance to or insulation from the unipole's overweening capabilities; alliances and alignments; and the use of international institutions.

Balancing and other forms of resistance

The proposition that great concentrations of capabilities generate countervailing tendencies toward balance is among the oldest and best known in international relations.[33] Applying this balancing proposition to a unipolar system is complex, however, for even as unipolarity increases the incentives for counterbalancing it also raises the costs. Walt and Finnemore each analyze the interplay between these incentives. They agree on the basic proposition that the current unipolar order pushes secondary states away from traditional "hard" counterbalancing – formal military alliances and/or military buildups meant to create a global counterweight to the unipole – and toward other, often subtler strategies, such as "soft" balancing, hiding, binding, delegitimation, or norm entrapment. These analyses lead to the general expectation that a shift from a multipolar or bipolar to a unipolar structure would increase the relative salience of such subtler balancing/resistance strategies.

Walt argues that standard neorealist balance of power theory predicts the absence of counterbalancing under unipolarity. Yet he contends that the core causal mechanisms of balance of threat theory remain operative in a unipolar setting. Walt develops a modification of the theory that highlights the role of soft balancing and other subtler strategies of resistance as vehicles to overcome the particular challenges unipolarity presents to counterbalancing. He contends balancing dynamics remain latent within a unipolar structure, and can be brought forth if the unipole acts in a particularly threatening manner.

Finnemore develops a contrasting theoretical architecture for explaining secondary state behavior. For her, both the absence of balancing and the presence of other patterns of resistance can only be explained by reference to the social, as opposed to the material, structure of international politics. In particular, secondary state strategies that have the effect of reining in the unipole cannot be understood as the result of standard security-maximizing incentives. Rather, they are partially the outgrowth of the secondary states' internalization of the norms and rules of the institutional order. If the unipole acts in

[33] See the reviews and discussion in Levy, "Balances and Balancing" and Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Hegemonic Threats and Great-Power Balancing in Europe, 1495–1999," *Security Studies* 14, 1 (2005): 1–31.

accordance with those rules, the tendency of other states to resist or to withhold cooperation will be muted. Finnemore establishes three social mechanisms that constrain the unipole: legitimation, institutionalization, and incentives for hypocrisy. Each of these entails a logic of resistance to actions by the unipole that violate certain socially defined boundaries. Ikenberry highlights the flipside of this dynamic. Resistance exists and is important, but it is comparatively muted, he argues, because both the benefits of buying into the institutionalized hegemonic order and the costs of opting out of it are high.

Alliances and alignment

Scholars have long recognized that the dynamics of alliance and alignment transcend the imperative of counter-hegemonic balancing.[34] Aggregating capabilities against a potentially dominant state is thus only one of the many purposes alliances serve. States may also choose to ally with a dominant power either to shield themselves from its capabilities or to seek to influence its policies. In addition, secondary states may ally with each other for purposes not directly connected to resistance to the dominant state, such as influencing each other's domestic or foreign policies or coordinating policies on regional or functional issues.

Larger patterns of such alliance behavior may be systematically related to the international system's structure. Scholars contend that in classic multipolar systems, especially those with no clear hegemon in sight, a large proportion of alliance behavior was unconnected to systemic balancing imperatives.[35] Under bipolarity, the proportion of alliance dynamics that was an outgrowth of systemic balancing increased, yet the rivalry between the two superpowers also created opportunities for secondary states to use alliance choices as leverage, playing each superpower off against the other. Walt argues that in a

[34] See, for example, Glen H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in Theory and Practice: What Lies Ahead?" *Journal of International Affairs* 43, 1 (1989): 1–17; Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, 1 (1997): 156–179; and Paul W. Schroeder, "Historical Reality versus Neorealist Theory," *International Security* 19, 1 (1994): 108–148.

[35] See Schroeder, "Historical Reality," and R. Harrison Wagner, "What was Bipolarity?" *International Organization* 47 (1993): 77–106.

unipolar system nearly all significant alliance behavior will be in one way or another a reaction to the unipole – to contain, influence, or exploit it. As a result, independent alliances focused on other threats will be relatively rare, compared to bipolar or multipolar systems. Walt also contends that under unipolarity leverage opportunities dramatically decline compared to bipolarity and he specifies the conditions under which secondary states will tend to opt for alignments with the unipole, neutrality, or resistance. This is consistent with Ikenberry's analysis, which shows that most alliance behavior has been with the unipole, while alliance formation around other potential poles, such as Russia and China, remains negligible.

Use of international institutions

Although their relative power affords opportunities to go it alone, dominant states find a variety of reasons to use international institutions. Institutions may be helpful in coalition building. They facilitate the exercise of power by creating patterns of behavior that reflect the interests and values of the dominant state. Institutions can conceal or soften the exercise of power, and they can lock in a hegemonic order and enable it to persist "after hegemony."[36]

Weaker states in a unipolar structure similarly have incentives to utilize institutions. Two types of motivation are relevant. First, weaker states may engage a unipole by enlisting its participation in new or modified institutional arrangements in order to constrain or tie it down. Since a unipolar state may be powerful enough to follow its own rules, possibly to the detriment of weaker states, those states may appeal within an institutional context to the unipole's concern for its reputation as a member of the international community, or to its need for cooperating partners, in order to persuade it to engage in rule-based order even if it cannot simply determine the rules unilaterally. The dispute between the United States and some of its allies over US participation in the International Criminal Court reflects the attempt by weaker states to tie the unipole down and the unipole's effort in turn to remain a free agent in the event it cannot define the institutional rules. Second, weaker states may create or strengthen international institutions that exclude the unipolar state. These institutions might be

[36] Keohane, *After Hegemony;* Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

designed or intended to foster a common identity (e.g., the European Union, the East Asian Economic Caucus), build capacity to withstand influence attempts by the unipole (e.g., the European common currency), or create the potential to act independently of the unipole or at cross purposes with it (e.g., the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, European Rapid Reaction Force).

In bipolarity, weaker states tend to participate in institutional arrangements defined and dominated by one or the other of the major players. The Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War was distinctive precisely because it sought – not necessarily with success – to institutionalize a path independent of either superpower. Under conditions of unipolarity, we can hypothesize that weaker states, lacking the capacity to balance the unipole, will turn to a variety of institutional initiatives intended to constrain the unipolar state or enhance their own autonomy in the face of its power. The use of international institutions by weaker states is highlighted below in the chapters by Walt and Finnemore, while "lock-in effects" are analyzed in Ikenberry's contribution.

Systemic properties: how peaceful is unipolarity, and will it endure?

The classical systems theorists were preoccupied with two dependent variables: peacefulness and stability.[37] Scholars today have reason to be less optimistic that deterministic laws of stability or peacefulness can be derived from the structural characteristics of any international system.[38] Nonetheless, the questions of whether some types of international systems are more prone to conflict than others, and whether some types are more likely to endure than others, remain critical and take on added significance in the context of the more novel international system of unipolarity.

[37] See the discussion in Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), ch. 3, and "Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective" in this volume.

[38] See Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Alexander Wendt, S*ocial Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Unipolarity and great power conflict

Two major theoretical traditions deal with causes of war in ways that may relate to system structure: neorealism and power transition theory. Applying these in the context of unipolarity yields the general proposition that military conflicts involving the unipole and other major powers (i.e., "great power wars") are less likely in unipolar than in either bipolar or multipolar systems. According to neorealist theory, bipolarity is less war-prone than multipolarity because each superpower knows that only the other can threaten it, realizes that it can't pass the buck to third parties, and recognizes it can balance accretions to the other's capabilities by internal rather than external means. Bipolarity blocks or at least complicates three common paths to war in neorealism: uncertainty, free riding, and fear of allied defection. The first and second operated during the 1930s, and the third prior to World War One. By the same logic, unipolarity is even less war-prone: none of these causal mechanisms is relevant to a unipole's interactions with other great powers. Power transition and hegemonic theories predict that major war involving the leading state and a challenger becomes more likely as their relative capabilities approach parity.[39] Under unipolarity, parity is beyond the reach of a would-be challenger, so this mechanism does not operate. In any event, many scholars question whether these traditional theories of war remain relevant in a world in which the declining benefits of conquest, nuclear deterrence among most major powers, the spread of democracy, and changing collective norms and ideas reduce the probability of major war among great powers to an historically low level.[40] The absence of major conflicts among the great powers may thus be overdetermined or have little to do with unipolarity.

Wohlforth develops an alternative theoretical framework for assessing the consequences of unipolarity for great power conflict, one that focuses on status or prestige seeking as opposed to security as the core preference for major states. He derives from a diverse theoretical literature a single hypothesis on the relationship between unipolar capability distributions and great power conflict. He tests it in the current

[39] See Gilpin, *War and Change*; Tammen *et al.*, *Power Transition*; and DiCicco and Levy, "Power Shifts and Problem Shifts."

[40] Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (London: Routledge, 2005), 31.

international system and historically, and he derives further implications for relationships between the unipole and secondary states. He supplies theoretical reasons and initial empirical support for the proposition that unipolarity itself helps to explain low levels of militarized interactions among great powers since 1991. The same logic and evidence, however, suggest that the route back to bi- or multipolarity may be more prone to great power conflict that many scholars now suppose.

The durability of a unipolar system

The current unipolar system already has lasted longer than some scholars anticipated at the end of the Cold War.[41] How much longer it will persist before transforming into the more "normal" systemic pattern of multipolarity or perhaps to a new bipolarity remains to be seen. Durability will depend primarily on developments in the capabilities and behavior of the unipole and other major powers. Because the unipole is such a disproportionately powerful actor in this system, the evolution of its own capabilities and behavior is likely to carry the greatest weight. Other actors are more likely to react to the unipole than to trigger system-transforming processes on their own.

The evolution of relative *capabilities* is obviously a crucial variable, and there is no clear theoretical presumption. One hypothesis is that unipolarity is self-reinforcing. The unipole is so far ahead militarily that it finds it relatively easy to maintain and even widen its capability lead over would-be peers – especially if, as some scholars argue, the contemporary US defense industry benefits from increasing returns to scale.[42] Given massive investments in the military requirements of unipolar status over many years, other states face formidable barriers to entry – technological, economic, and domestic political – in any effort to become peer competitors.

[41] See Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Arise," *International Security* 14, 4 (1993): 86–124; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, 2 (1993): 44–79; and Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War." See also the retrospective in Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited," *International Security* 31, 2 (2006): 7–41.

[42] See Jonathan Caverley, "Killer Apps: American Hegemony and the New Economics of Defense," *Security Studies* 16 (October 2007): 597–613.