

Book Guide

A World in Disarray

A World in Disarray traces the origins of contemporary "order," including the state of the world following the Cold War when, for the first time in the modern era, major power rivalry was not the principal cause of disorder.

Summary

In September 1990, as the Cold War was coming to an end, President George H.W. Bush spoke optimistically of a "new world order." Now, some twenty-five years later, no such order has emerged; in fact, many regions and realms of international relations resemble a new world *disorder*. With challenges from terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons to climate change and cyberspace, the revival of great power rivalry, a chaotic Middle East, Asia threatened by China's rise and a reckless North Korea, and Europe facing slow growth and political upheaval, the world is in need of an updated operating system. Richard Haass's *A World in Disarray* examines this current world, details how we got here, and suggests what needs doing. Written for students of foreign policy and international relations as well as for the general public and experts, Haass discusses how approaches to promote order have evolved throughout the modern era and how they should be updated for a globalized world.

The first part of *A World in Disarray* traces the origins of contemporary "order," beginning with the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. Drawing from this foundational document, as well as the Concert of Europe and works such as Hedley Bull's *The Anarchical Society* and Henry Kissinger's *A World Restored*, Haass unpacks the prerequisites of order (such as a shared view of what international arrangements there should be and how they should be set, i.e., legitimacy and balance of power) and discusses how and why orders become disorders. He goes on to explain the fluctuations in order and disorder from the onset of World War I through World War II and the Cold War. He then examines the Cold War order as well as the liberal world order that emerged following World War II in which new global institutions as well as norms emerged.

Part II of the book details the state of the world following the Cold War when, for the first time in the modern era, major power rivalry was not the principal cause of disorder. Yet, Haass notes, there was still a widespread breakdown of order. From the loss of Cold War discipline, to the dispersal of capacity and power into more hands than ever before, to acts of both commission and omission on the part of the United States and others, the past twenty-five years have been marked by growing disarray. In describing how we got to this point, Haass discusses the major power relationships that have been most important, as well as the multitude of regional issues and challenges facing Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Haass then turns to a "global gap" that has emerged: the widening divide between global challenges and the willingness and ability of the "international community" to handle them. Several global issues illustrate such a gap, including cyberspace, climate change, nuclear proliferation, and terrorism.

The final part of *A World in Disarray* offers recommendations on how to deal with such a world. In addition to suggesting what can be done to improve great power relations as well as promote stability in each of the world's regions, Haass calls for "World Order 2.0," an updated operating system for a globalized world. Such a concept would maintain a fundamental respect for sovereignty and borders, but add to it a "sovereign obligation," where sovereign states have a responsibility when it comes to regulating developments within their borders that could have an adverse impact on others beyond their borders. Haass details how this operating system could be applied to several global challenges and regional issues. The book concludes with a discussion of a country—namely, the United States—in disarray. Haass argues that there is no replacement for U.S. leadership in the world, and in order to successfully manage its national security and foreign policy objectives across the globe, the United States must address its own dysfunctional politics, mounting debt, and lack of agreement on the nature of its relationship with the world.

Discussion and Essay Questions

Courses on U.S. Foreign Policy

1. Which U.S. action since the Cold War has had the greatest impact on the current state of global affairs? Why?
2. What is an act of omission versus an act of commission? Describe some recent examples in U.S. foreign policy and their consequences.
3. Compare and contrast Wilsonian idealism and foreign policy realism.
4. Discuss some positive and negative aspects of globalization. How can/should U.S. foreign policy be made to address these?
5. What effect does mounting U.S. debt have on national security?

Courses on International Relations

1. What constitutes “World Order 1.0,” and how does “World Order 2.0” build upon that?
2. Discuss the “Thucydides Trap” and how it has (or has not) manifested itself since the end of the Cold War.
3. What is the “global gap?” Use examples from the text on how/where the global gap is present today.
4. Discuss the phrase “international community” and the extent to which it exists, providing some examples.
5. How does sovereign obligation differ from the responsibility to protect?
6. Discuss the differences between “preemptive” and “preventive” strikes.
7. Discuss international order: what is it? What are the prerequisites?

Courses on World History

1. Discuss how international actions following the end of WWI may have contributed to the start of WWII.
2. Why did the Cold War stay “cold?”
3. During the Cold War, the United States and China found a rationale for relations between the two countries. How has that changed since the end of the Cold War and what effect has it had on the relationship?
4. How have U.S.-Russian relations evolved since the end of the Cold War? What are some causes for the current state of relations?
5. According to the book, a new liberal world order emerged after WWII. Discuss the formation of this “other order” and what it was comprised of.
6. Why does the book describe the world in “disarray” if there has been an absence of great power conflict over the past twenty-five years?
7. Is the descriptor “disarray” warranted? Is there a better word to describe the current state of the world? How did disarray come about? Was it inevitable or could it have been prevented?

Analytical essay

There are a multitude of global and regional challenges discussed in *A World in Disarray*. Imagine you are the new president of the United States. Pick one issue to put at the top of your inbox and discuss why it is the most pressing or important issue to focus on initially.

Supplementary Materials

Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

Francis M. Deng et al., *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812–1822* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1957).

Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York: Penguin, 2013).

Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Peter Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

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