

# **A World In Disarray Book Summary, by Richard Haass**

by Allen Cheng

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## **1-Page Summary of A World In Disarray**

### **Overview**

World War Two was a major turning point in the world order. It led to the Cold War era, which was mostly peaceful due to a variety of factors. However, things are changing again and new tactics are required. Since the end of World War 2, international relations have changed drastically—there are more powerful players now than before and they're all trying to get their way. The United States is one of those powerful countries that needs to change its foreign policies so that there can be more stability around the globe.

You will also learn that the Cold War was not as violent as it's often portrayed to be. In fact, it took a genocide to make international intervention a valid principle. You'll see how inaction in Syria led to one of the worst humanitarian crises in history and why this is an example of passivity leading to disaster.

**Big Idea #1: After World War II, the world was relatively stable because of balanced power and the threat of nuclear war.**

If you look back at history, it appears that World War Two was followed by a long period of peace. However, this wasn't the result of world leaders suddenly turning pacifist. Instead, there was a balance of power during the Cold War era which prevented active conflict.

For example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created by a group of countries in Europe and North America that decided to work together militarily. This meant that an attack on any one of these nations would be considered an attack on all of them. The United States also implemented the Marshall Plan following World War II after it became clear that there was growing influence from communist Soviet Union.

Military and financial agreements helped keep the peace during the Cold War. When the Soviet Union blocked road and rail access into West Berlin in 1948, there was no war despite a dramatic stand off between East Germany and Western countries. Instead, Western countries launched a series of supply drops to West Berlin from hundreds of planes flying over East Germany daily.

The greatest safeguard against armed conflict was the existence of nuclear weapons, which significantly reduced military ambitions. Both countries recognized that a nuclear confrontation would be unconscionably destructive and were therefore highly motivated to avoid any direct altercation.

The balance of power and the threat of nuclear destruction were important factors that contributed to global peace during this period. However, there are other key elements worth discussing as well.

## **Big Idea #2: Economic and diplomatic agreements helped create a stable post-war world order.**

People often feel like finance rules the world. In fact, there was a shift toward prioritizing finance after World War II. This shift occurred because of how the economy was propped up after the war as well as global stability.

The Bretton Woods system was launched in 1944 to create a uniform financial system. It set the dollar as the world's currency and backed all currencies with gold. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided loans for financially troubled countries, while GATT cut costs on exporting and importing goods across national borders, thereby encouraging global trade.

Because of the financial support from the US to its allies, a global world order was created. This reduced the risk of armed conflicts and promoted diplomacy between nations. The most famous example is when many nations came together to form an institution called UN (United Nations). It allowed them to negotiate their interests without resorting to war.

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