

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVITALISATION OF THE STATE-CENTRIC APPROACH

The state-centric approach to global governance places emphasis on the sovereignty of nation-states and their capacity to exploit hierarchical authority in order to mobilise and manoeuvre their respective states, and even groups of states, in the pursuit of collective goals. It is generally believed that such an approach has become more difficult to maintain with the combination of globalisation and, since the end of the Cold War, the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar superpower system. The effect of globalisation on the weakening of the nation-state is more easily seen with the greater need for states to seek transnational powers in order to interact on an equal footing with transnational enterprises and with globalised non-government organisations that seek a greater influence in setting the collective goals. The end of a bipolar system substantially reduced the international tensions that provided much of the “glue” to hold together the alliance of Western nation-states under the umbrella of economic and military power of the United States. With a reduction in international tension there was less incentive to pool resources and to present a unified position on international affairs. For these, and for additional reasons, the cost of remaining a sole superpower is perceived to be greater than the benefits.

The first of our four mainstreams collects thoughts and judgments on reviving the state-centric approach in such a way that the sovereignty of nation-states is not materially reduced nor is the hierarchical nature of the governance process significantly altered. Several of the articles cited examine a return to the bimodal system with the People’s Republic of China occupying the opposite pole to that of the United States. Other commentators visualise changes to the globalisation process by placing it under the influence of group of seven large nations (G7) and with greater coordination between that group and the newly emerging powers. This could, perhaps, be achieved without loss of the state-centric objectives provided that a more effective interaction among the G7 and the newly-emerging powers is achieved without threats or coercions.

A more complete discussion of the state-centric approach is available in Stephen Bell and Andrew Hindmoor, *Rethinking Governance: The Centrality of the State in Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 2009. Both authors are currently at the University of Queensland.