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Power and Development in Global Politics

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This is an excerpt from *Understanding Global Politics* by Kevin Bloor. You can download the book free of charge from E-International Relations.

The fifth chapter provides a detailed analysis of power and its broader importance. The typology of power plays a key role within this section alongside the consequences of polarity. The aim of the chapter is to place recent developments within the context of power and polarity. This entails a consideration of concepts such as hegemony, unilateralism and multilateralism. The various systems of government are also considered, ranging from stable democracies to failed states. In order to comprehend power and developments, the Middle East will be offered as a case study of a regional system of power relations.

Types of Power: '**Hard' and 'Soft' Power**

The distinction between hard and soft power is a significant feature within the discourse of International Relations. In basic terms, hard power is the use (or threat) of force via military or economic resources. It is also based upon tangible resources such as the size of a state's nuclear arsenal or its armed forces. Soft power however is attractive or persuasive power. Unlike hard power, it is grounded upon intangible factors such as culture and ideology.

The academic most closely associated with 'soft power' is Joseph Nye. Nye defined soft power as the ability to shape the preferences of other countries via non-coercive methods. In contrast, hard power consists of ordering others to get what they want via the use (or threat) of force. Nye (1990) popularised the concept of soft power in his book '*Bound to lead'* which examined the changing nature of American foreign policy. Since then, the concept has been developed further as an integral part of international relations, power dynamics and foreign policy (Nye 2003). For instance, the diplomat Robert Cooper (2004) emphasises the importance of legitimacy towards the effective exercise of soft power.

The concept has shifted from the world of academia to its usage by policymakers such as Robert Gates, Tony Blair or Xi Jinping. For instance, the term has also gained added credence from an index of soft power, whereby every state has its soft power potential ranked, published by Portland Communications (2019). In 2019, for instance, France came top of the list – whilst the United States came in fifth place. In regards to the inclusion of international organisations into this mix, the Elcano Institute (2021) rated the European Union the highest for soft power presence in its 2020 Global Presence Index, higher than the US or China.

Hard power is a more conventional view of power politics. Hard power entails the use of military and economic means to determine the behaviour of other international actors. As the term clearly implies, hard power consists of an aggressive means to pressurise other agents to act in a certain manner. Hard power entails the ability to wield the 'carrot and the stick' in order to make others submit to demands. The former consists of economic inducements whilst the latter represents a credible and effective existential threat. In the case of the US, the high proportion of foreign aid allocated to Israel is an example of the former, whilst the threat of military action against rogue states is an illustration of the latter.

The concepts of hard and soft power are to some extent reflective of the binary debate that tends to govern our

understanding of International Relations. The realist perspective is built around assumptions that gravitate towards talk of hard power. According to the realist stance, power stems from tangible resources that enable a country to get others to act in a manner that suits their particular interests. States can only ensure their survival via a military deterrent of some form. They must also forge alliances with others, delineated via the means of coercion. In an anarchic system, states must live by the maxim 'if you want peace … prepare for war.' Given the predominance of the realist perspective, it seems reasonable to assume that most of us hold an understanding of hard power as the status quo of what 'power' entails.

Soft power emerges from a slightly different set of assumptions. To some extent, it derives from a liberal lens due to its focus upon measures that might lead to a better world. The emphasis upon volunteer programmes is more consistent with a liberal worldview rather than a hard-headed realist conception of International Relations. Having said this, soft power is a descriptive rather than normative term. Soft power is entirely consistent with both democratic *and* dictatorial regimes. Tyrannical leaders such as Hitler, Mugabe and Stalin exercised a great deal of soft power due to their cult of personality. As Joseph Nye neatly points out 'it is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms' (Nye 2006). He also reminds us that soft power is neither a form of idealism or even liberalism, it's merely a way of obtaining a desired outcome. Crucially, it does not contradict the realist perspective of International Relations.

The effectiveness of hard and soft power depends on a number of factors. In both cases, the most important is the credibility of the threat itself. Given its overwhelming military resources, it is entirely conceivable that the US could respond in a manner that matches the bombastic rhetoric of Donald Trump. This argument also applies in the economic realm. However, this is not to say that Washington can always utilise these resources in an effective manner. The President of the United States faces a number of constitutional constraints based upon an intricate system of checks and balances. For instance, the US Senate can reject treaties signed by the President. There are also times when the President is unable to gain international support for the use of power and therefore cannot offer a realistic threat.

Another dependent factor to consider is the legitimacy underpinning the use of power. The activities of the organisation concerned need to be perceived as legitimate in order to be effective. For instance, the spread of American cultural values within Eastern Europe during the Cold War proved a useful strategy in changing hearts and minds. Many of those living in the satellite states of the Soviet Union welcomed the materialistic goods offered by the American Dream. In stark contrast, the US has a credibility problem throughout most of the Arab world. In the case of hard power, the possession of a nuclear arsenal is rarely going to be seen as a legitimate strategy to employ. Despite having the capacity to plunge the planet into a nuclear winter, US President Lyndon Johnson once lamented 'the only power I've got is nuclear and I can't even use that!'.

A further factor to consider in terms of the effectiveness of hard and soft power is the accessibility of resources. Only the very wealthiest states have the financial capacity to maintain significant military forces and/or place economic pressure upon others. Smaller states however must rely upon their soft power. There are at present over thirty-six countries that do not have an army to defend their territory (Macias 2018). In addition, the historical legacy and constitution of a state may well determine the strength and effectiveness of its soft power. For instance, since 1945 Japan has relied upon resources provided by its alliance with Washington.

Another factor to consider here is that of time. The mobilisation of hard power is more straightforward because tangible resources can be mobilised relatively quickly. This usually means that hard power is more appropriate in the short-term. The persuasive element of soft power takes far longer to construct because of its intangible character. Whilst hard power entails coercion, the behaviour of those affected is involuntary. On the contrary, soft power changes attitudes gradually and on an entirely voluntary basis. In terms of effectiveness, consent offers a much better long-term basis for the successful exercise of power than coercion and conflict.

It is widely accepted that the changing dynamics of international relations have assisted the effectiveness of soft power (Gallarotti 2011). Soft power is the more effective strategy due to its sustainability over time. The ability to co-opt others in a persuasive manner is a far more salient illustration of how politics operates in an age of globalisation.

The changing nature of power was underlined graphically during the US-led invasion of Iraq. The strategy adopted by the Bush administration can be said to have failed in two ways. Firstly, decisionmakers ignored the need for sufficient military intelligence from their allies. Secondly, the question of how to generate legitimacy for the invasion was never adequately considered. These mistakes served to undermine America's standing in the world. Over time, this has been exacerbated by the treatment of enemy combatants held in the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay detention centres.

On a final note, the term 'smart power' is increasingly used. Smart power is the capacity to combine elements of hard and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing. Armitage and Nye (2007, 5) define the concept as 'an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions.' An example of the effective use of smart power is the attempt by the United States to strengthen its presence within Africa. The Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is the largest- ever commitment made by any country towards a global health initiative. This initiative has been combined with a financial aid programme tied to the practice of good governance. In addition, the US has just under 30 military bases on the continent. Such examples to some degree underline the argument that the borders between the two concepts have become blurred. Indeed, some foreign policy strategies may be perceived as an effective combination of both modalities of power (Smith-Windsor 2000).

The Differing Significance of For Classifications of State Power, Polarity and World Order, and Regime Types

Classifications of State Power: Great Powers

Great powers can be defined as those who are recognised as holding the ability and capacity to project their influence on a global scale. The status of a great power is conventionally characterised on the basis of three criteria: power capabilities, spatial aspects and status dimensions. In terms of its spatial dimension, a great power should hold and exert influence within the inter-state system. This helps us to distinguish a regional power, such as Iraq, from a great power with an actual presence upon the world stage, such as France. Finally, there has to be some formal or informal recognition from others. The status entails both rights and obligations within an institutionalised structure.

Whilst the term is inherently contentious, it is usually clear who the great powers are based upon these three criteria. For instance, great powers meet on a regular basis in a formal setting, such as the economically advanced states of the G7. Great powers also possess a significant element of military, economic and diplomatic power. For instance, the five permanent members sitting on the UN Security Council possess nuclear weapons and the ability to exercise their veto. Great powers are also likely to be invited on an informal basis to help resolve complex disputes, such as the contact group dealing with the political fall-out in the Balkans during the wars of the 1990s (US, UK, France, Germany, Russia, and representatives from NATO and the EU).

There is however no universal agreement as to what exactly constitutes a great power. Milena Sterio (2013, xii) claims that 'the great powers are an exclusive club of the most powerful states economically, militarily, politically and strategically.' From the neorealist position, Kenneth Waltz (1993) identifies five criteria of a great power: population/territory, resource endowment, economic capability, political stability and military strength. During the nineteenth century, the German historian Leopold von Ranke (2011, 43) observed in an 1833 essay that a great power 'must be able to maintain itself against all others.'

Although each contribution is useful, none of them completely clarifies matters due to the absence of a precise measurement. Accordingly, there are several grey areas that are presented here. For instance, both Japan and Germany could be considered great powers in terms of their economic clout (Gunning and Baron 2014). Having said this, neither country has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. As a result of their historical baggage, neither country projects a far-reaching military presence abroad. In addition, Mohan Malik (2011) has argued that India should be classed as a great power although the country is often classed as an emerging power.

Given the vague character of the term 'great power', it might be more useful to distinguish between superpowers and middle-ranking powers. For instance, it probably makes more sense to categorise four of the five permanent members of the UNSC as middle-ranking powers because their combined military resources are dwarfed by the US. However, this observation is not unanimously accepted by either analysts or policymakers. One thing we can say with certainty is that the status of a great power comes with responsibilities attached. The maintenance of order and stability within the anarchic system requires some degree of intervention from great powers. This could even be applied to an international organisation such as the EU.

Those countries and organisations that may be classed as great powers fluctuate over time. In recent years, China has made impressive strides in both its economic and military standing. This has led some to predict that China will eventually be classed as a superpower, and that the distribution of power within international relations will gravitate towards bipolarity. Since the mid-noughties, there have been a number of proposals for an informal special relationship between the US and China, primarily upon an economic basis. This would be known as the group of 2 (or G2).

Although tensions have always existed between the great powers, direct military conflicts are largely a thing of the past. The academic Joshua Baron (2013) argues that the main reason for this welcome trend centres upon the primacy of American military power. Secondly, there is a degree of consensus among great powers that military force is no longer an effective tool for resolving disputes. Since the Cuban Missile Crisis, influential Western nations have largely resolved disputes amongst themselves in a peaceful manner via diplomacy. The 'West' has also been keen to avoid an escalation of political tensions with either China or Russia. This brings us to the category of 'The Superpower'.

Classifications of State Power: Superpowers

A 'superpower' is more than first among equals, it is first *without* equals. As the hegemonic state, a superpower swaggers around the global stage. The source of their power derives from both hard and soft power, although there is often an overt and unmistakable emphasis upon the former. It is the only country that meets the criteria laid down by scholars such as Paul Dukes (2000, 1), who describes a superpower as one 'able to conduct a global strategy including the possibility of destroying the world: to command vast economic potential and influence; and to present a universal ideology.'

In a system characterised by unipolarity, only one state, by definition, is classed as a superpower. Under a bipolar system, there are two superpowers in existence. During the Cold War, there were two rival superpowers with a defined sphere of influence. International politics was shaped by an ideological battle for the very future of mankind. In proxy wars during that time, the US and USSR supported an assortment of insurgents and governments throughout the world. The division between the two superpowers was embedded within two military alliances facing off against each other. Although there were attempts to create a form of global governance and foster a sense of multilateralism, the period between 1945 and 1991 was overshadowed by relations between the two superpowers.

Since the collapse of the USSR, the US has emerged as the world's only military superpower. As a hegemonic power, even the symbolism of its diplomatic actions can have major repercussions in various hotspots of the world. For instance, Donald Trump's surprise decision to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem empowered the Israeli state. In addition, his description of Jerusalem as the 'undivided capital of Israel' is of a magnitude that no other state could reasonably command.

In the post-Cold War era, the US experienced what became known as 'the unipolar moment'. The United States no longer had to contain the spread of communism. Given the realities of the new world order, Samuel Huntington (1999, 36) observed that the United States was now the only country 'with pre-eminence in every domain of power…with the reach and capabilities to promote its interests in virtually every part of the world.' To underline his point, in 1999 the French Foreign Minister, Hubert Verdine, memorably described the US as a 'hyper-power', due to its dominance within international relations.

Samuel Huntington (1999, 35–36) similarly argued that the world should be characterised as a hybrid system known as a 'uni-multipolar system' with one superpower alongside several major powers. In a uni-multipolar system, there are a number of emerging powers. This is most noticeable within the economic realm with China likely to overtake the US on the basis of current economic trends. China may also utilise its military capacity in order to secure a geostrategic advantage in the South China Sea. Having said this, China still lacks the necessary level of soft power comparable to a truly global superpower.

The military and political resources held by Russia also presents some counter-balance to American hegemony. The Russian Federation has a military presence within the Middle East that limits the ability of the United States to impose its own particular agenda in the region (notably in its relations with Iran and Syria). Having said this, the Russian Federation is nowhere close to the geopolitical status of the former Soviet Union. In the Global Firepower ranking to determine a nation's Power Index, Russia is ranked a distant second to the United States (Global Fire Power 2021).

In this uni-multipolar system, another emerging superpower to consider is the European Union. When conventional wisdom gravitates towards military capacity, it is problematic to classify the EU in this manner. However, the soft power of the organisation is highly impressive. It is the world's largest single market and has diplomatic representation at the top table of global governance. The civilian power of the EU demands a re-examination of traditional realist conceptions of power within the academic field.

The term 'potential superpower' offers a useful conceptual toolkit to comprehend contemporary international relations. In the economic realm, the emerging powers of the BRICS could be classed in such a manner. This is likely to have implications for the future distribution of power within international relations. For instance, relations between Washington and Beijing are likely to have considerable economic and political consequences. Given the economic might of the two nations, a trade war between Washington and Beijing would have a devastating impact upon the global economy.

The European Union may also be described as a potential superpower, particularly if it continues to enhance its capacity within the realm of hard power. The process of European integration has already created a Common Foreign and Security Policy. In terms of its defence capacity, the EU can also mobilise a multi-national battlegroup. Having said all this, forecasting future superpowers will always prove a hostage to fortune. During the 1980s, it was widely predicted that Japan would overtake the United States as the world's largest economy. However, the country experienced a major economic slowdown known as the 'lost decade'. A similar fate may befall China at some stage, although this would be speculation. It is also entirely probable that emerging powers will decline in influence due to an interplay of domestic and external factors. Indeed, it is worth reminding ourselves that during the mid- 80s a third of the world's population lived under a communist system of government. Even the United States might experience a rapid decline comparable to other historical superpowers of the past (Kennedy 1987).

On a final note, it is important to recognise that there are considerable limitations upon the ability of a superpower to either coerce or persuade others. For instance, the US has singularly failed to secure an end to the Syrian Civil War or bring lasting peace to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is also telling that Washington has repeatedly sought to gain support from various allies and organisations. Despite its overwhelming military capacity, American foreign policy is largely consistent with a strategy of multilateralism.

Classifications of State Power: Emerging Powers

There is a perplexing list of acronyms that seek to bracket emerging countries together. However, there is no objective measure of classifying an emerging power from other ranks of power. The one constant characteristic of an emerging power is the existence of a rapidly growing economy. This is based upon the assumption that economic development is a prerequisite for an expansion in both political and military presence. By definition, an emerging power seeks to gain a more powerful role and enhanced status amongst the hierarchy of states. It therefore needs sufficient resources to enhance their relative position.

Alongside a burgeoning economy, there are other dimensions of state power that determine a country's status as an emerging power. These include geography, population, resources, military capacity, diplomacy and national identity. Only a great power (or a superpower) can be said to hold all seven dimensions of state power. On this basis, it is clear that South Africa can only be an emerging power because of its decision to abandon its nuclear weapons programme. In addition, India is classed as an emerging power due to social underdevelopment amongst its population. Unlike great powers, it still has a relatively high rate of illiteracy and malnutrition (Panda et al. 2020).

Another characteristic of an emerging power is an attempt to enhance their influence in global affairs. This can be achieved via an expansion in their military capacity, or in a greater ability to utilise their economic resources. Emerging powers can also be classified via a willingness to be identified by others in this manner. The G20 for instance consists of emerging economic powers such as Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey. Along with Nigeria, these so- called 'MINTs' are predicted to become the next batch of emerging economies.

As with other relative terms, there is a debate as to which international actors have moved from their previous status of an emerging power. For instance, the EU is widely considered to have passed from an emerging power to a potential superpower (Moravcsik 2009, 2010). There is considerable evidence to support this view. The EU is in possession of significant political and economic power, a spatial presence and status throughout world affairs. The emergence of the European Union has been facilitated by the growing significance of what Joseph Nye dubbed soft power.

There are a number of emerging powers who undoubtedly have the potential to follow the same trajectory as the European Union. According to the political scientist David Robinson (2011), India is now a great power. For instance, India has the second largest army in the world and is the second most populous country in the world. In terms of a qualitative measurement, the State Power Index for 2017 ranked India, underlined by its nuclear capacity and ambitions, above both France and the United Kingdom. However, according to the Global Diplomacy Index (Lowy Institute 2019) India still sits behind countries such as Turkey and Spain, ranking at twelfth globally.

In the case of Brazil, it could be argued that it will eventually emerge as a great power with an important position in terms of its sphere of influence. As the leading regional power of South America, Brazil's strength lies in its military capacity and a rapidly expanding economy. It is perhaps worth noting here that Brazil is also a member of the G4, which campaigns for a permanent seat on the UNSC (alongside India, Japan and Germany). This is clearly indicative of how the country's policymakers perceive Brazil's relative power.

When considering a typology of states, it is important to note that overlaps are commonplace. For instance, China is rightly referred to as an emerging superpower based upon its economic might. Confusingly, it is sometimes classed as a great power or superpower. Equally, the Russian Federation emerged as the successor state to a superpower (the Soviet Union). Whilst Russia is often called a great power, it is also classed as an emerging power as part of the BRICS. It could also be argued that Russia is actually re- emerging as a global force. Given that such vague typologies exist, there will always be some level of overlap to consider.

Polarity and The Implications of Power Structures

Polarity describes the various modes by which power is distributed within the international system of states. Although the term is commonly applied to states, it is also applicable to international organisations. There are three main categories of polarity and the distinction between each holds implications for global peace and stability. These three modalities of polarity dynamics are: unipolar, bipolar and multipolar.

In order to provide a proper assessment, it is important to define the actual meaning of stability within the context of international relations. According to the neorealist Kenneth Waltz (1979), stability refers to the avoidance of warfare or conflict. This is a definition which recognises that a conflict of interests is inevitable, but that armed conflict is not. Developing this point further, Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer (1964, 390) define stability as 'the probability that the system retains all of its essential characteristics; that no single nation becomes dominant; that most of its members continue to survive; and that large-scale war does not occur'. Their definition introduces the notion of equilibrium (or

balance) amongst states, avoiding the emergence of a single state that structurally dominates the entire global power system without any potential rival – a 'hegemon'.

Unipolarity

In a unipolar system, there is a single state classed as a superpower. In a system based upon unipolarity, the hegemonic state has the capacity to act as the unofficial world's policeman. In doing so, the hegemon maintains order within the inherently anarchic international system of states.

There are a number of illuminating historical illustrations of a hegemonic power acting as the world's policemen, both atop and in control of the global power structure. Between 1815 and 1914, the British Empire intervened in regional wars to balance out power alliances between rival states. However, it is not the case that a hegemonic power is necessarily willing to intervene in every facet of foreign affairs. A superpower will invariably be limited by its own national interests, its capacity to mobilise resources, domestic politics and a historical tendency to overreach (Kennedy 1987). More importantly, international law is based upon the concept of non-intervention and a tacit acceptance that all nations are equal. This is vested in the Latin phrase: *par in parem non habet imperium* (equals have no sovereignty over one another).

Given its massive levels of military spending, the United States has often expressed a desire to place a limit upon its overseas military commitments. Administrations from both main parties have applied pressure upon their allies to shoulder more of the burden. It is also the case that the world's only military superpower has sought to gain support from key allies. For instance, when it commits ground troops or enforces a no-fly zone it does so with the assistance of others (as in the case of Libya in 2011).

The willingness of a hegemonic power to act as the world's policeman by military intervention can oscillate considerably. Since the War on Terror was launched in 2001, the US has repeatedly engaged in military action. However, it has also chosen not to intervene despite the capacity to take swift and decisive action, as in the earlier case of Rwanda in 1994. This reflects a conflicting tradition within the states between engagement and isolation, and these forces continue to shape contemporary American foreign policy.

According to some theorists, a unipolar system provides the best guarantee of stability. For instance, William Wohlforth (1999) claims that unipolarity is peaceful because the distribution of power removes the problem of hegemonic rivalry. Secondly, it reduces the stakes associated with balance of power considerations amongst major states. Wohlforth's argument is based upon hegemonic stability theory, which stipulates that the larger the concentration of power into the hands of the pre-eminent state, the more peaceful the international order will be. Hegemonic stability theory is associated with a number of theorists, but it dates back to Charles P. Kindleberger (1973).

However, this theory has been subject to criticism. Professor Nuno P. Monteiro (2011) argues that warfare is endemic to a unipolar system. Taking issue with Wohlforth, he argues that unipolarity results in two distinct types of war. These include wars contested by a superpower against relatively weaker states, and those involving two (or more) minor powers. It is an argument supported by the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War. The United States has been at war for over half of this period, whilst warfare between relatively smaller powers has occurred repeatedly since the early 1990s.

The dependent factor to consider here are the intentions that drive the global hegemon. A benign hegemon is likely to ensure peace and stability in accordance with its role as the world's global norms forger and enforcer. They can place their own narrow interests to one side in order to uphold the status quo. In stark contrast, a predatory hegemon will use its power purely for its own benefit. In the absence of any effective counterbalance, a predatory hegemon is free to pursue its own interests without any due regard for the broader international system. This can easily lead to instability within the global system and a potential shift in polarity or power dynamics.

Bipolarity

The term bipolarity is applied to a political system in which two powers of roughly equal strength act as a check upon the power of their opponent. The most obvious example of a bipolar system remains the Cold War between the US and the USSR. Under bipolarity, a superpower acts as a security guarantor for weaker states. In a nuclear age, the stability of a bipolar system rests upon the concept of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD). MAD is built upon the assumption that the potential devastation of nuclear war guarantees that neither side will launch a first strike. During the Cold War, both superpowers claimed to possess nuclear weapons solely to act as a deterrent. As a result of an arms race, both sides accumulated a level of nuclear armament that would have led to complete annihilation if either power declared war on the other – thereby deterring direct conflict.

From a structural realist perspective, Kenneth Waltz (1979) argued that bipolarity is the most stable form of power distribution. A bipolar system reduces uncertainty because each superpower relies solely upon its own resources. In contrast, unipolarity is the least durable of international configurations, whilst multipolarity greatly increases the level of uncertainty.

If we apply his argument to the Cold War, it is true that there was no direct confrontation between the two superpowers. For a period lasting well over four decades, a 'hot' war between the two rivals was avoided. However, there were a high number of proxy wars from the Angolan Civil War to the Vietnam War. In many cases, the proxy wars were instigated when a country gained national independence from its former colonial rulers. Given the dynamics of the Cold War era, a newly independent state often created a chain of events that pulled the superpowers into the orbit of the conflict.

Another issue raised within a bipolar system is the existence of an arms race. During the Cold War, both countries allocated extensive resources towards obtaining the latest weaponry. Not only was the acquisition of such weaponry costly, it also posed a number of security issues. On the basis of a simple miscommunication, the world came close to nuclear war during the stand-off between Kennedy and Khrushchev over Cuba in 1962. This problem of 'brinkmanship' is also present in ongoing tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

A bipolar system also suffers from the problems posed by the security dilemma. The Cold War was an era marked by mutual suspicion and paranoia between the US and the USSR. Although not unique to a bipolar system, the security dilemma can result in a serious deterioration in relations between the two superpowers. In 1983, the world twice came perilously close to a full- scale nuclear war. In November of that year, NATO launched a military exercise called Able Archer. Given the planned arrival of Pershing II nuclear weapons into mainland Europe, the Soviet Politburo viewed Able Archer as preparation for an all-out attack. Before this event, a false alarm on the Soviet side could have easily set in motion a series of events that may have brought the superpowers into direct conflict.

Multipolarity

The third and final system to consider is that of multipolarity. As the term implies, it is defined as a distribution of power in which more than two states have roughly equal amounts of influence. Whilst this is often measured in a military manner, it is also applied on an economic basis. In a system based upon multipolarity, alliances tend to shift until two scenarios occur. The first is that a balance of power is established so that neither side has an incentive to attack the other for fear of reprisal. Alternatively, one side will attack the other because it can effectively defeat the other side (such as the Nazi Blitzkrieg during the early stages of the Second World War). These dependent factors must be considered for any reasonable assessment of the stability (or otherwise) of a multipolar system.

The argument that multipolarity results in peace and stability is a contentious one. During the Concert of Europe, in the nineteenth century, the great powers of Europe assembled on a regular basis to discuss international and domestic affairs. This was built upon the shared principle of collective responsibility for peace and stability within Europe. Although the system did bring some form of peace between the rival powers, the Concert of Europe came to an end due to the Crimean War. Equally, the multipolarity that characterised relations between the great powers during the 1920s and 1930s failed to prevent the rise of fascism and the resultant Second World War.

In a theoretical context, classical realists such as E.H. Carr (2016) argue that multipolar systems are relatively stable

because the great powers are able to enhance their status via alliances and petty wars that in no way directly challenge other states. In contrast, neorealists claim that there is less chance of miscalculation under a bipolar system. To substantiate their argument, a distinction can be made between 'internal' and 'external' balancing. Under the former, states enhance their own capabilities. External balancing however occurs when they enter into an alliance to check the power of more powerful states. As there is only internal balancing in a bipolar system, there is less chance of a miscalculation. War between the superpowers is therefore avoided. In contrast, the great powers within a multipolar system might misjudge the intentions of others and engage in external balancing that eventually leads to warfare.

The academic Joseph Nye further alludes to the changing nature of power with his argument that global politics increasingly resembles a three- dimensional game of chess. In the military arena, power is concentrated into the hands of the United States. Economic power however is distributed in a multipolar manner whilst transnational issues such as climate change require a multitude of actors. It therefore makes little sense to view the world solely through realist prism as this would exaggerate the potential for conflict. Equally, the liberal perspective is flawed in its prediction of cooperation on the basis of mutual dependence. Viewed from a three-dimensional basis, states adopt a smart strategy to deal with different distributions of power in different domains. Nye's argument (2011, 213) that 'the world is neither unipolar, multipolar nor chaotic – it is all three at the same time' remains a salient and perceptive conclusion as to the consequences of polarity within the world order.

The Changing Nature of World Order Since 2000

At the turn of the century, the United States was so dominant it was described by some as a 'hyper-power'. It was *the* hegemonic power in a system based upon unipolarity. However, the hierarchy of states is in a constant state of flux and few expected the US to retain its position unchallenged. Since the year 2000, world order has been disrupted by the emergence of the BRICS (particularly China). American prestige has also been damaged due to the controversial intervention in Iraq, the 2008 financial crash and a growing willingness amongst emerging economies to challenge Washington. The hegemony of the United States has thereby come under attack in terms of both hard power and soft power.

In seeking to assess the changing nature of international relations, it is important to differentiate the various dimensions of power – as the picture is a highly uneven one. Militarily, the US remains without question the world's only superpower. It has a global presence, and it has no peer competitor in the way that the Soviet Union once was. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2020, 21), in 2019 the United States spent $684.6 billion on defence – accounting for over a third of all global military spending. The US has personnel in dozens of countries and a naval and air capability that can be deployed to multiple theatres of conflict. Such figures underline the global capabilities of the world's only military superpower.

The picture is however more mixed when we consider the economic dimension. On the basis of nominal GDP, the US is still the world's largest economy. However, in terms of purchasing power parity the US has already lost out to China. This image is also made more complex by the relative slowdown in the American economy compared to the rapid growth of emerging economies. If current trends continue, the US will, more than likely, lose its economic dominance.

Finally, in terms of soft power, the United States still has an international reach. It provides a considerable amount of international aid in various regions and has the most diplomatic missions of any country in the world. Yet having said this, quantitative measures do not in themselves mean that the world order is necessarily dominated by the US. Even with its considerable military arsenal, the United States has not always managed to translate hard power into a satisfactory outcome. There are several case studies that can be used to analyse this line of argument.

Since the beginning of the century, the United States has intervened in several areas of the world. Most of these interventions have been to ensure a specific objective (e.g., the US deployed a patrol craft in the year 2000 to support evacuation operations from Sierra Leone), or on the basis of drone strikes (as in Pakistan between 2004 and 2018). In relative terms, these interventions have been small-scale. The two most significant long-term interventions

were based in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2001, the US launched the Orwellian-sounding 'Operation Enduring Freedom' when it dispatched armed forces to invade the failed state of Afghanistan. Without a military presence from the US, it seems inconceivable that a coalition of over forty countries would have defeated the Taliban. American troops finally began to leave the war-torn state in 2014. Nonetheless, around half of all military personnel that were deployed in order to guarantee security derived from the US. Intervention in Afghanistan was the longest war in American history. However, with the full withdrawal of all NATO troops and missions in the summer of 2021, the Taliban regained control within a matter of days – bringing a greater sense of instability back to the region.

In 2003, the United States led a 'coalition of the willing' with the goal to disarm Iraq and ensure regime change. American troops finally withdrew eight years later at a total cost running into several trillion dollars. Although a number of other countries were involved, most of the ground troops were from the US. No other country in the contemporary era could likely fight two major wars simultaneously. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the global world order is underpinned by American hegemony.

In contrast, the balance of power has shifted considerably within the economic realm. The credit crunch and the 2008 financial crisis inflicted a major blow upon its international standing, and the US cannot dominate an international organisation comparable to say NATO. It must also negotiate on a bilateral basis with a number of emerging economies and seek some form of accommodation (particularly with the Chinese government).

There are also unmistakable signifiers of the multipolarity that characterises the global economy. For instance, the five countries that make up the BRICS have established the New Development Bank to rival the World Bank (which they claim is biased towards Washington). China is also flexing its economic muscles via the 'Belt and Road initiative' which involves infrastructure development and investments in nearly 70 countries. China has also engaged in currency manipulation and protectionism despite repeated complaints from the United States.

On a bilateral basis, it is abundantly clear that the US must reach some form of compromise with other major powers. For instance, the US had to reach a compromise with the Indian government over agricultural subsidies and faced stiff opposition from the developing nations during the 2003 WTO conference in Cancún, Mexico. In the contemporary world order, policymakers in Washington have to accept that they cannot dictate the rules of the game. Despite its economic might, the United States must negotiate with other actors and accept the constraints of complex interdependence.

Regime Types

Democratic, Semi-Democratic, Non-Democratic and Autocratic States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a sense of triumphalism within Western circles. Francis Fukuyama captured the spirit of the time with his argument that we had reached the conceptual 'end of history'. Liberal democracy had won the ideological battle against communism. Fukuyama (1989, 1992) predicted that countries throughout the world would embrace liberal values such as universal human rights alongside a political system built upon democratic accountability.

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of democratic states in the world has grown exponentially. According to metrics produced by Polity IV and Freedom House, around half of all regimes can be classed as democratic systems. Many of those once rated as dictatorial or autocratic have made some progress towards democracy. However, in more recent times, there has been a shift towards authoritarianism, illiberal democracy and a surge in nationalist populism. The unipolar moment that characterised the aftermath of the Cold War has also been challenged by the rise of the BRICS (especially China) and the damage done to the credibility of the liberal world order in recent years.

In order to more properly assess this in relation to global order, it is important to highlight the various characteristics of a democratic state. A democratic state is one that combines a multi-party electoral process with a range of civil

liberties (such as freedom of assembly). The power of elected figures is constrained by democratic norms, an independent judiciary and a free media. The political culture of a democratic system is supportive of basic freedoms and fundamental principles. Democracies are relatively common within North America, Europe and Australasia. In terms of population, the world's largest democracy is India.

By contrast, a semi-democratic state combines both democratic and authoritarian elements. Such regimes are usually characterised by a mix of political stability and media censorship. In a semi-democratic state, democratic values and practices exist alongside authoritarian measures. For these reasons, a semi-democratic state is often classed as a hybrid system. One of the most significant examples of a hybrid system is Russia. Given its considerable natural resources and military might, the Russian Federation is one of the major powers on the world stage.

The very existence of semi-democratic states casts valuable insight into the appropriateness or otherwise of democratic values. As a result of their history and political culture, certain countries may be better suited to a form of semi- democracy. A number of Asian states have done exceptionally well in terms of economic growth and political stability on a hybrid basis (such as Singapore and Indonesia). The shift in the global balance of power towards the East may well lead to a greater examination of Eurocentric assumptions that shape our understanding of democracy and its desirability. In particular, the increased political and economic significance of China offers a challenge to liberal assumptions concerning the desirability of democracy.

In a non-democratic state, elections are held without a choice provided to the electorate. In an autocratic state, such as North Korea, the leader holds absolute power, whilst in a non-democratic state power is concentrated into the hands of the ruling party. In historical terms, the number of autocratic regimes reached its peak in the mid-1970s. Since then, such a regime has seen a rapid decline globally. That said, certain autocratic regimes can remain significant due to their geostrategic position. For instance, Saudi Arabia is embroiled in proxy wars within the Middle East and allocates the largest percentage of national income in the world to military expenditure.

Given these various typologies, it is often useful to measure the level of democracy. According to the Economist's Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, the state of democracy is based upon five measures (the functioning of government, political participation, electoral process, democratic political culture and civil liberties). According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2021), democracy is currently in retreat with the global score at its lowest since measurements were first taken. Just over twenty countries were classed as full democracies whilst nearly a third of all countries surveyed were 'flawed democracies' (including the US). The study also found that more than a third of the world's population live under authoritarian rule.

Failed States

In the contemporary world order, failed states pose a genuine dilemma for the international community. Given the potential impact of its disintegration, a failed state often holds geostrategic implications that go beyond its immediate neighbouring states. Having said this, the international community largely ignores failed states in which intervention yields little economic or political benefit; the 1992 intervention in Somalia evidencing this claim.

Although an inherently subjective term, the think-tank 'Fund for Peace' identifies a number of characteristics by which to define a failed state. Firstly, there is a loss of control over its territory. The state can no longer satisfy the Weberian definition of holding a monopoly upon the legitimate use of coercion. A failed state is also unable to perform the basic functions of the state (such as collecting taxes). In addition, it may be incapable of exercising legitimate authority within its territorial boundaries and in relations with other states. Whereas a weak state may have some degree of functionality, a failed state is neither functioning nor legitimate. The Fund for Peace (2021) publishes an annual fragile states index (formerly known as the failed states index) with Yemen ranked as the country with the highest level of alert in 2021.

Since the turn of the century, a number of states have met (and continue to meet) the definition of a failed state. However, in the world of realpolitik there is no universally agreed criteria by which to define a failed state. As such,

the identification of a failed state is open to interpretation. This can mean that the hegemonic power imposes its own definition for their own particular interests. For instance, the United States has a clear geostrategic interest in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Afghanistan-Pakistan border, known as the 'Durand Line', is a recruiting ground for Islamic fundamentalists, and there are significant oil reserves in Iraq.

There are a number of interesting case studies of failed states throughout the world. In 1991, a civil war broke out in Somalia when armed opposition groups ousted the government. In 1992, UNOSOM I (UN Operation in Somalia) was launched in order to re-establish order. Shortly afterwards, the Unified Task Force was dispatched following the failure of the UN's monitoring mission. A later mission entitled UNOSOM II marked the follow-up phase of foreign intervention in Somalia with a mandate to encourage nation-building. Each intervention aimed at establishing a secure environment for humanitarian operations in the absence of a central government. Unlike other military interventions within failed states, the initial involvement of the international community did not present any real controversy. Around forty countries sent military and civilian personnel.

The main issue that faced military intervention in Somalia was the failure to gain ground support from warring factions. American involvement was curtailed after the Battle of Mogadishu, in which images of dead soldiers being dragged through the streets were broadcast. As a result of changing public opinion, President Clinton withdrew American forces (shortly followed by the UN doing the same). Since the mid-1990s, emphasis has been placed upon reconciliation talks between leaders of various factions. The UN estimates that over two and a half million people now live in protracted internal displacement and face serious human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch 2019).

Although intervention in Somalia helped save lives, the inability of the international community to maintain its resolve is a repetitive narrative. During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the international community refused to intervene once the genocide took place and abandoned the people of Rwanda when they most needed protection. A report carried out by the UN found that the organisation and its member states failed to prevent a civil war between Hutus and Tutsis, undermining its own purpose as set forth in the UN Charter.

In one of the worst illustrations of ethnic cleansing, the UN force in Rwanda was sent without a mandate to use all necessary force. Their purpose was limited to peacekeeping based on an accord signed between the warring parties, but as there was no peace to keep their presence was ineffectual. Despite requests from the UN peacekeeping force, led by Roméo Dallaire, for increased military support, the UN Security Council scaled back intervention out of a reluctance to be dragged into another quagmire similar to Somalia. In the perceptive words of the journalist Lindsey Hilsum (1994) 'the UN is only as effective as the great powers want it to be. In Rwanda's case, they did not choose to care until it was too late.'

Whilst the experience of Somalia and Rwanda paints a broadly similar picture, the increasingly contemporary failed state of Syria is markedly different. In contrast to the states discussed above, a number of powers have a clear political interest at stake. The US, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel, NATO and Turkey have all been involved in the Syrian Civil War since its beginnings in 2011. The Assad regime is supported by Iran, Russia and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. In contrast, the neighbouring Turkish government is opposed to the Assad regime. Turkey also occupies parts of North-Western Syria due to concerns about an influx of Kurdish refugees. The US-led coalition has conducted air strikes against Islamic State and areas seen as supportive of the Assad regime. NATO sides with the United States, and although its position is officially neutral; the Israeli government has launched attacks on Iranian and Hezbollah militants.

The situation in Syria is a highly delicate one, especially due to: the prospect of Islamic extremists spreading their influence in northern Iraq, the potential escalation of conflict between Turkey and the Kurds, the prospect of the war crossing over into Lebanon, the on-going refugee crisis and the abuse of human rights within the war-torn country. Despite attempts to broker peace, fighting has continued with no obvious or immediate prospect of a resolution in sight.

Since the turn of the century, the two most important military interventions in failed states have occurred in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2001, an invasion led primarily by the United States sought to remove the Taliban from

power in retaliation for the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The Taliban had also seized control of Kabul in 1996 and imposed a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Although the American-led alliance quickly drove the Taliban from power, the task of repairing the failed state proved more protracted. In order to ensure stability, the UN Security Council established an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to train and assist National Security Forces, which ended its mission in 2021. One of the most intractable problems in dealing with a failed state is the potential for insurgent groups to reform, as seen clearly with the Taliban's re-ascendance to power in 2021 with the withdrawal of the ISAF.

The international community's involvement in Iraq was always more controversial than intervention in Afghanistan. Opponents of the invasion argued that the United States was motivated solely by economic benefits. The manner in which military action was justified did a great deal of damage to the credibility of American hegemony. It has also made it more difficult for a US president to mobilise public and congressional support for subsequent foreign interventions.

Perhaps the most important lesson from the invasion of Iraq is the inability of the international community to 'fix' a failed state. Despite considerable military resources and financial expense; the US-led alliance has failed to repair the state of Iraq. Being an invention of colonial powers with no shared national identity, sectarian divisions have posed a major problem. Secondly, the historical traditions of a failed state often tend to be of a non-democratic character. Democracy can only really be effective when the domestic environment is amenable. It has also proved problematic to resolve deep- rooted problems surrounding corruption within the Baghdad-based regime.

Rogue States

As with the term failed states, a rogue state is another somewhat subjective phrase. The definition of which countries should be classed as rogue is skewed towards the worldview adopted by great powers within the global world order. Those allied to the United States are therefore highly unlikely to be classed as rogue. It is also possible for a powerful state to act in a manner contrary to international law without being classed as rogue. Moreover, there are some situations in which great powers may disagree over which states should be labelled in such a manner. For instance, the US and Russia hold opposing views of the Assad regime in Syria. Similarly, the Chinese government has political ties with North Korea whilst the rest of the world views the North Korean regime as a rogue state.

There are some fundamental observations that could be applied to the term rogue state. Firstly, a rogue state is a threat to global peace and stability. This may entail possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), state-sponsored terrorism or a regime that acts in a manner contrary to international norms. Given these characteristics, it is clear that some countries are able to change their classification. For instance, the United States removed Libya from its state-sponsored terrorism list during the mid- noughties. Equally, the Trump administration described Venezuela as a 'dangerous narco-state' due to human rights violations and international drug trafficking.

The term rogue state has also been subject to changing developments. Under the Clinton administration, the term was replaced by the phrase 'states of concern', whilst the Bush administration used the term 'Axis of Evil' (referring primarily to Iran, Iraq and North Korea) after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The phrase 'rouge state' has also been used by countries other than the US. For instance, Turkey has labelled Greece in this manner due to its alleged support for Kurdish groups. The Ankara-based government also declared Syria as a rogue state for shooting down a Turkish warplane. Somewhat fittingly, the term has been used against the Turkish government due to the authoritarian policies implemented by President Recep Erdogan.

The threat posed by a rogue state differs significantly throughout the world. Given its military arsenal and diplomatic isolation, the regime in Pyongyang poses a very real danger to the world. North Korea has already fired several short-range missiles into the Sea of Japan. However, there has at least been some rapprochement with South Korea in recent years. In contrast, the case of Iran is a more nuanced one. Since the turn of the century, the Iranian nuclear programme has raised understandable concerns and led to international sanctions. Yet unlike in Pyongyang, the regime in Tehran is more amenable to international diplomacy. In 2015, an agreement was reached with the P5 (plus Germany and the EU) to restrict the production of enriched uranium whilst weakening some of the sanctions imposed

against Iran.

The Development and Spread of: Liberal Economics, The Rule of Law and Democratic Peace

The Development and Spread of Liberal Economics

The development and spread of liberal economics enable us to consider the liberal perspective on International Relations. According to a number of liberal thinkers, the spread of liberal democracy should create a more stable and peaceful world. There is a considerable body of literature within global politics that supports the spread and development of liberal economics. Sometimes known as the economic peace theory, classical economists have consistently argued that free trade generates a more peaceful world order. This is often allied to two other normative elements of liberalism, such as support for the rule of law and the spread of democratic values.

Economic peace theory stipulates that market-oriented economies will not engage in war with one another. This is based upon an assumption that states act via their own rational interests, and that we should adopt an optimistic view of human nature. Although the argument is a lengthy one, it has gained added relevance in an era of globalisation. In an integrated and mutually dependent global economy, countries will seek to avoid the heavy financial cost and loss of life attributable to warfare, deterring conflict.

Those who support the economic peace theory claim that 'the freer the market, the freer the people.' The forces of demand and supply enable individuals to make their own decisions. A market free from state intervention also leads towards the most efficient allocation of scarce resources. However, those on the left of the political spectrum point out that capitalism has long been upheld via agents of a repressive state. Secondly, decision-makers may reject the 'win-win' assumptions that lie behind the economic peace theory for a more zero-sum view of power. As a result, wars will always occur on the basis of economic gain for capitalist powers, linking to the world system and dependency theories discussed in Chapter one.

Liberal assumptions concerning the peaceful implications of capitalism and democracy are also criticised from within the realist perspective. Realists firmly reject the view that we should be optimistic about human nature. Regardless of economic and political ties, relations between states always hold the potential for a conflict to emerge. The normative tone of the liberal argument is entirely absent from the realist position.

During the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant declared that the spirit of commerce was incompatible with war. It was a philosophical argument that captured the prevalent mindset of the time. In the contemporary era, the economic peace theory has been upgraded by Thomas Friedman (1989), who argued that when a country had reached a level of economic development with a strong middle-class it would become a 'McDonald's society'. His argument encapsulated the triumphalism of the end of the Cold War and proved a marker for the forthcoming era of globalisation. As with all theoretical arguments, the 'golden arches theory' has been subject to criticism. Most notably, there are exceptions one might consider such as the Kargil War in 1999 between India and Pakistan. There was also a short-lived conflict between NATO and Serbia in the same year.

In response to those conflicts, Thomas Friedman further developed his argument via the 'Dell theory' of conflict prevention. Friedman (2005, 421) argued that 'no two countries that are both part of a major global supply chain…will ever fight a war against each other as long as they are both part of the same global supply chain.' This is a theory that underlines yet further the significance of mutual dependence between countries. The Dell theory is an update of an earlier argument put forward by Sir Norman Angell in *The Great Illusion* (1909), reasoning that economic interdependence makes war unprofitable for all belligerents. Although not a cast-iron guarantee, both mature and developing economies will seek to maintain the trading benefits that come with globalisation, as opposed to descending into conflict.

Unsurprisingly, there is evidence to support and undermine the latest version of the economic peace theory. In terms of the former, the strained relationship between China and Taiwan is a useful illustration to consider. The level of economic ties between them prevents the possibility of actual warfare. Although diplomatic relations between Beijing

and Taipei are often strained, a military stand-off has been avoided since the mid-1990s. However, there are also counter examples to highlight, such as the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 or the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014. It should also be noted that Friedman conceded that his argument was offered in a somewhat 'tongue-in-cheek' manner.

The Development and Spread of The Rule of Law

Along with free trade and economic interdependence, liberals claim that a more peaceful world can be created via those institutions that maintain international law. Liberalism advocates an active role for international institutions in order to aid cooperation between states and ensure positive outcomes for all. This is based upon the assumption that states act in a rational manner and seek to maximise their utility. This is sometimes known as the institutional peace theory.

According to liberal institutionalists, democracy and capitalism create an international system which ensures long-term peace and provides beneficial economic opportunities for those countries involved. International institutions underpin both the global economic order and the spread of democratic values. International law itself is governed and maintained via a series of intergovernmental forums, and the framework provided by these institutions generates the conditions for peace and stability. Institutions can also provide the basis for global governance, as seen in earlier chapters.

There are of course flaws with institutional peace theory. Perhaps the most obvious is that institutions are only as powerful as states allow them to be. This often means that powerful countries avoid responsibility for their actions. For instance, the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein led to international condemnation and the mobilisation of multilateral forces to restore the sovereignty of the oil-rich regime. However, the invasion of Iraq by a US-led military alliance did not face anything like the same degree of condemnation over a decade later. Such institutions are also hampered by a lack of funding and non-compliance amongst certain states. As always, there is the thorny problem of enforcing international law.

Those who do not share the liberal mindset have also criticised the excessive and idealistic faith placed in global governance. For instance, the philosopher John Gray points out that 'global problems do not always have global solutions' (Gray 2020). It should also be noted that liberalism itself can be challenged for its double-standards and hypocrisy. From the perspective of the Global South, the institutions that uphold the liberal world order lack credibility, explaining much of the Global South's plight.

The Spread of Democracy and Democratic Peace Theory

It has long been a fundamental tenet of this normative body of liberal theory that democracies are more reluctant to engage in armed conflict with other democratic countries. This is more commonly known as the democratic peace theory. Dating back to the Enlightenment, the theory stipulates that the spread of democratic values will lead towards a more peaceful and stable world order.

The theory is based upon several interlinked assumptions. First and foremost, democratic leaders are directly accountable to the public for losses incurred during a war. In addition, democracies are more inclined to view other comparable systems as partners rather than enemies. Moreover, democratically elected politicians have a clear incentive to engage in cooperation and diplomacy with other democratically elected politicians. Democratic states are also more likely to accept third-party mediation when they are in dispute with one another. This is based upon a greater level of trust in the intentions and predicted behaviour of other democratic states. More importantly, democracies tend to be interdependent and are therefore highly reluctant to engage in the potentially system-wide disruption caused by conflict.

In terms of academic research, Dan Reiter (2017) found that there is enough evidence to conclude that democracy does lead to peace between democracies. Having said this, the last time two democracies fought against each other is a contested point. Some have claimed that the last inter- democracy conflict was the ancient Peloponnesian wars,

whilst others argue that the NATO-led bombing of Belgrade in 1999 provides an example. Given the discursive nature of academic theories, contestability should always be expected, and this hinges on how we understand democracy.

Following on from this point, one of the most persuasive counterarguments is that the democratic peace theory confuses correlation with causation. Secondly, there is no universal agreement as to what classifies either of these terms. For instance, there have been militarised interstate disputes between democratic countries, and these could be classed as warfare. In order to actually prove the theory, the meaning of the terms democracy and war have, at times, been distorted.

In seeking to properly assess the democratic peace theory, there are some caveats to consider. For instance, it could be argued that the theoretical concept can only be applied towards mature democracies as sufficient time is needed for democratic procedures to become embedded (Rummel 1997). Evidence also suggests that countries in transition towards democracy are more likely to be engaged in warfare (Mansfield and Snyder 2002). Moreover, the number of democracies has until relatively recently been quite small. As such, even those who support the theory concede that it is going to take many more decades of peace to build our confidence in the stability of the democratic peace theory.

Another term to consider is the distinction between a 'dyadic' peace and a 'monadic' peace. The former refers to the argument that democracies do not fight one another. This is based on the argument that liberal democracies build up a habit of cooperation with one another that conflict would clearly undermine. The term 'monadic peace' however relates to the assumption that democracies are more peaceful. They are simply less inclined to engage in warfare than a non-democratic regime. The dyadic peace argument is more persuasive than the latter. For instance, Reiter and Stam (2003) found that autocracies initiate conflicts against democracies more frequently than democracies do against autocracies. However, Quackenbush and Rudy (2009) found that democracies initiate wars against non-democracies more frequently than non-democracies do with each other. In another study, it was shown that democracies are no less likely to settle border disputes peacefully than non-democracies.

Given this conflicting and contradictory evidence, it must be noted that there are several causal factors that have very little to do with the spread of democratic values. The outbreak of military conflict may occur due to a dispute over valuable resources or territorial boundaries. Most warfare in the contemporary world occurs in the form of civil war, as opposed to inter-state conflict. This requires some modification of the original democratic peace theory. The probability for a civil war is also enhanced by political change regardless of its eventual goal (Hegre et al. 2001).

On a final note, a cost-benefit analysis casts further insight into the debate. Since the net benefit to an autocrat exceeds the net benefit to a citizen of a liberal democracy, the autocrat is more likely to go to war. The disincentive to war is increased between liberal democracies via the establishment of political and economic linkages that further raise the actual costs of going to war. Liberal democracies are therefore less likely to go to war, especially against each other.

The Extent to Which the Changing Relations and Actions of States Address and Resolve Contemporary Global Issues

Regarding changing developments and the interplay of power politics between states, a fascinating case study is the political situation in the Middle East. Given its complex and multi-dimensional character, relations between Israel and Arab states have an impact upon conflict, poverty, human rights and the environment. Underlying the geostrategic and economic importance of the Middle East, a number of powerful actors have a clear and vested interest in the region.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Historically, the major powers have played a significant role in the search for stability between Arabs and Israelis. Most notably, the United States has provided considerable political and military assistance to Israel. Equally, the role

of external powers has at times created barriers towards reconciliation. For instance, a number of Arab states still refuse to recognise Israel.

Right from the beginning, the international community was actively involved in seeking a solution. In 1947, the United Nations approved a proposal to partition Palestine into two separate states. Following the end of the British mandate, the vast number of Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from Israel, whilst thousands of Jews migrated to Israel. After a short-lived war, the State of Israel controlled the area specified by the UN for the proposed Israeli state, alongside over half of the proposed Arab state.

In 1956, the second Arab-Israeli war occurred over the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian leader, President Nasser. Along with the UK and France, troops from Israel invaded Egypt to secure regime change against his pan-Arab ideology. However, foreign troops were forced to withdraw after diplomatic pressure from the UN and the two superpowers. As a concession, the State of Israel gained assurance that the Straits of Tiran would remain open. Yet, by the time of the third Arab-Israeli war in 1967, President Nasser announced that the Straits of Tiran would be closed off to Israeli vessels.

In response to the mobilisation of Egyptian forces under Nasser, Israel launched pre-emptive air strikes against Egyptian airfields. After gaining air supremacy, Israeli forces launched a ground offensive that established control over the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. The UN Security Council called for Israeli troops to retreat from their territorial gains, but, despite international condemnation, Israel continued to violate international law. This is made possible by financial and diplomatic support from the United States.

The economic importance of the dispute was graphically brought home during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. A coalition of Arab states, led by Egypt and Syria, sought to take back control of the Sinai and the Golan Heights. Although taken by surprise, Israel managed to push back the Syrians and advance towards the Suez Canal. The State of Israel had once again demonstrated its ability to defeat hostile neighbours. However, policymakers also recognised that there was no guarantee that they would always dominate Arab States in military terms. This shifted the focus towards the search for a peaceful long- term solution to the conflict. The OPEC oil price rise and the damaging impact upon the global economy gave yet further impetus towards the desire for a peaceful settlement.

Marking a new phase in relations between Israel and Egypt, negotiations surrounding the 1978 Camp David accords were spearheaded by the United States. The Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, secured recognition from an Arab state for the first time, whilst the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, gained back the Sinai Peninsula after the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops. The American President Jimmy Carter had therefore managed to break-up the Arab alliance, marginalise the Palestinians and offer security to the State of Israel. However, tensions remained between the two rival camps.

Palestinian protests at the twenty-year anniversary of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza were launched in 1987. Known as the first 'intifada' – meaning 'shaking off' in Arabic – such protests were met with a military response from Israel and widely criticised as disproportionate. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Israeli government once again held talks supported by international efforts to broker peace between them. This culminated in the 1993 Oslo Accords, which awarded Palestinians a degree of autonomy in return for officially recognising the State of Israel. The peace process also aimed to establish a lasting agreement based on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Although there was some goodwill generated by their representatives, public opinion was largely hostile. Many Israelis viewed the PLO as a terrorist organisation responsible for both the intifada and the short-lived 1982 war in Lebanon, whilst Palestinians argued that the peace process gave Israel access to water from the West Bank. Although the peace process continued, the Camp David talks broke down over contentious issues such as Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, an issue that continues to stoke tensions today.

The second intifada (2000–05) began after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made a visit to the Temple Mount. Palestinian protests were eventually brought to an end when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005. Despite the

withdrawal of its troops, Israel exerted control over its airspace, maritime waters and land crossings. Gaza is also dependent upon Israel for its water, electricity and other utilities. Economic sanctions, travel restrictions and diplomatic sanctions against the regime are also in place.

Since the 2006 electoral victory of Hamas in the Palestinian National Assembly, the Gaza Strip has also been blockaded by Egypt. The Cairo- based government wants to prevent any additional Iranian influence within the region (who are widely thought to be funding Hamas). The role of the Egyptian government is supported by the President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas. Israel, however, is more concerned with protecting its citizens from Hamas. Along with Iraq, Iran, Libya and Syria, the organisation Hamas does not recognise the State of Israel. The fundamentalist group is also opposed to the conditions for peace as laid down by Israel and the Quartet on the Middle East (the UN, the US, the EU and Russia).

Throughout the conflict, the role of the US as a protector of the Israeli state has been absolutely vital. For instance, the State of Israel has been allowed to occupy land based on self-defence, whilst building Jewish settlements contrary to international law. Moreover, the Biden administration advocates a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. As the term implies, both countries would recognise each other's sovereignty and co-exist in a peaceful manner. As envisioned by the Oslo Accords, a two-state solution could result in greater stability between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. The only other practical alternative is a one-state solution. However, this would present a major headache for Israel regarding the status of Palestinians currently residing in the West Bank. The one-state approach would almost certainly result in Muslims outnumbering Jews, which would materially change the national identity of the self-styled Jewish state.

In terms of the environment, Israel has signed bilateral agreements that provide a framework for the exchange of information and expertise with Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. These agreements cover environmental protection, desertification and climate change. The implementation of these agreements entails exchange visits of professionals and researchers. Moves towards the protection of the environment underline the extent to which rivals can work together to ensure a mutually beneficial objective. There is even an agreement to share water access between Israelis and Palestinians. The latter agreement also serves to underline the salience of soft power in one of the most contentious areas of the world.

From the opposing angle, the on-going tensions between Arabs and Israelis presents several environmental problems. For instance, access to the Golan Heights will always be difficult because the area provides a substantial portion of the water from the Jordan River. Only Israel and the US recognise Israel's claim to sovereignty over the Golan Heights. The provision of water and other services essential for everyday survival underlines the difficulty in maintaining the human rights of those living in the Middle East. For instance, the Palestinian civil war between Fatah and Hamas has caused deep and lasting disruption to the lives of ordinary people living in Gaza.

In terms of human rights, the Westphalian system implies that territorial boundaries should hold some relationship to the wishes of the people. Clearly, this is not the case in the disputed territory surrounding Israel. For instance, the West Bank (including the symbolic city of East Jerusalem) has been under Israeli occupation since the late-1960s. Having said this, Israel is not the only occupying force within the region. For instance, Syria occupied parts of Lebanon from 1976 to 2005. It could also be acknowledged that the State of Israel would have never survived if not for its highly effective military arsenal and intelligence services. Human rights within the Jewish state have been under threat for several decades from Islamic militants and neighbouring Arab states.

Perhaps the most problematic issue presented by the Palestinian-Israeli dispute is its zero-sum character. When one side gains territory, the other side loses out. This in turn holds major implications for living standards. For instance, access to the supply of freshwater is of major importance within the region. It must also be recognised that both sides in the conflict have a persuasive religious claim over the city of Jerusalem. Mistrust and rivalries between warring groups makes compromise extremely difficult to achieve in the region. Indeed, it is also worth noting that figures who have pushed hardest for peace (such as Anwar Sadat, Bachir Gemayel and Yitzhak Rabin) have been assassinated by extremists from their own side.

It is, perhaps, no surprise that the Middle East region is one of the most significant areas of focus within International Relations. It helps us consider the theoretical context of power and development within global politics. There is undoubtedly some salience to both the realist and liberal perspectives in terms of the Middle East. Moreover, the implications of politics within the Middle East will always hold a great deal of importance towards other actors within global politics.

Saudi Arabia and Iran

Another significant inter-state relationship for the security of the Middle East is the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Whilst they have never fought directly against one another; they have engaged in proxy wars within Syria, Iraq and Yemen. There is also a degree of sectarian division to consider, as the Saudi population is majority Sunni whilst most Iranians are Shia Muslims.

The tension between the two regional powers dates to the Islamic revolution of 1979 when the spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini rose to power following mass protests that toppled the regime of the US-backed 'Shah' of Iran. Saudi Arabia had long viewed itself as the prominent Muslim state in the region, but Iran subsequently claimed that mantle based upon theological purity. Iran also sought to spread revolution towards other Arab countries in a move bitterly opposed by the ultra-conservative Saudi monarchy. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Saudis provided financial and military assistance to Saddam Hussein's troops. Whilst Saudi Arabia remained aligned to the West, Iranian political discourse routinely portrays the US as 'the Great Satan.'

The US-led invasion of Iraq also heightened tensions between the Saudis and Iranians. In the resultant civil war, both Shia and Sunni groups took control of Iraqi territory. Consistent with their predilection towards proxy wars, both countries supported their own side in a war that neither really wanted. Up until that point, Iraq acted as a buffer zone between Tehran and Riyadh. During the Arab Spring, the two countries also found themselves on different sides. As a status quo power based upon an absolutist form of government, the Saudis opposed the wave of democratic protests in the Middle East and Northern Africa. In stark contrast, Iran endorsed those groups calling for change.

Not surprisingly, the situation is more complex within Syria. The Saudi regime supports the Sunni militia whilst the Iranians favour the Assad regime. The Tehran administration also supports the militant group Hezbollah, which is based in Lebanon. Founded as part of an effort to bring together Shia extremists under one umbrella organisation, Hezbollah acts as a proxy for Iran in their long-standing conflict with the State of Israel. For instance, Hezbollah fought against Israeli troops in Lebanon during 2006, and Iran does not recognise the Jewish state.

An understanding of the political situation within the Middle East holds ramifications for several elements of international relations. In seeking to comprehend the ways and extent to which changing relationships and the actions of states affect the political situation, we are forced to consider the impact upon issues ranging from security to human rights. In doing so, we are reminded that global politics will always be shaped by the actions of states and the importance of concepts such as the balance of power and the security dilemma.

Conclusion

In summary, the aim of this chapter has been to provide a thorough analysis of power within global politics. This has been related to the notion of polarity and its broader consequences. A number of relevant concepts have been considered alongside the various types of governments. The case study provided by the Middle East casts considerable light on power and developments. It also provides an insight into the broader debate between realists and liberals.

About the author:

Kevin Bloor is an author, Principal Examiner and teacher. He has over twenty years of experience in the social sciences and is the author of several texts and educational resources such as*Understanding Global Politics*, *The Definitive Guide to Political Ideologies, Understanding Political Theory* and *Sociology: Theories, Theorists and Concepts*. He holds a BA in Politics and International Relations and an MA in International Relations, both from Staffordshire University, and an MPhil in Government from Manchester University.