

Global Politics – Power and Development

Politics Edexcel and AQA – revision notes – based on Hodder Education revision guides

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Hard power = refers to military and economic power, including structural power; often considered as power that states can employ relatively quickly to address short-term gains. It is a coercive form of power.

Soft power = states using their global position for leverage; often considered as power that states can employ to secure long-term gains, including cultural and diplomatic power.

Great power = states characterised by a significant degree of hard power that they can exercise to influence conditions in the international system = power that is resources-based.

Superpower = a great power with a nuclear capability with a substantial degree of both hard and soft power; combined with technological power and political influence.

Emerging power = any formerly developing state that is becoming economically stronger. The BRICs, Brazil, Russia, India, China and sometimes South Africa are examples in this category.

Polarity = the feature of balance in global power.

Balance of power refers to the nature of the distribution of power in the international system; bipolarity is considered to be the most balanced because of its features, and realists argue it is also therefore the recipe for peace and stability.

1 – Unipolarity = one clear hegemonic power that dominates the international system, thereby capable of effective and relative quick unilateral action.

2 – Bipolarity = two main powers, evenly balanced with matching competing hegemonic status; the most famous example is the Cold War between the USA and the USSR characterised by the doctrine of **mutually-assured-destruction**.

3 – Multipolarity = several significant powers with no clearly defined hegemon or main rivalry that are all vying for power.

Types of power

(1) Hard power

Hard power refers to the ability to influence others and achieve your goals using coercive measures/resources; thus, it involves military, economic and structural resources = **resources that can impose obedience**. Hard power is based on genuine measurable resources: a state has this and that number of soldiers, aircrafts, etc, up to nuclear weapon that can be seen as the ultimate source of hard power.

Joseph Nye, juxtaposed hard power with soft power that is based on achieving goals by the appeal of one's culture, thus it is based on diplomatic and persuasion resources.

Realists = focused their analysis of global politics on hard power. This orientation is based on their basic ideas about **the centrality of the role of the nation-state**. Hard power makes it possible for the state to command obedience and/or cooperation.

Military power = defence spending of states, especially powerful states, demonstrates the importance of this resource within hard power, for obvious reasons. The strength of the military can command influence and deterrence already at the level of potential threat, without even activating any armed forces.

In 2018 the House of Commons Defence Select Committee recommended to increase the UK defence spending from 2% to 3% 'to keep the country safe'.

Nuclear weapon is a prime example of hard power of the highest order; however, on the other hand it is rarely activated thus always an issue in deterrence, because it is more likely that in order to obtain obedience non-nuclear options can be activated.

Military exercises, especially large-scale cooperative ones (NATO), can be seen as an important element as well.

Economic power = the US aid programmes provide an important catalyst in building support for the American strategies regarding particular nation-states such as Egypt, Israel and Afghanistan.

IMF/World Bank loans are contingent upon the recipient state adopting adjustments that are rooted in free market tenets.

China's investment in Africa significantly increased its influence in the region. In 2018, the China-Africa Forum for Cooperation, Beijing pledged \$60 billion to support African development.

The limits of hard power

- Military power does not guarantee the achievement of political goals although it may **achieve obedience particularly in the short-term**. That is the difference

between obedience that is rooted in coercion versus genuine change in values, attitudes and ideology.

- The US military actions in Vietnam (1964-1975) and Iraq (2003 onwards).
- **The challenge of terrorism and radicalisation** including from within for a powerful country with hard power. Extremism cannot be defeated by military means alone, if only because of the different values at its base.

See Huntington's Clash of Civilisations.

(2) **Soft power**

Sometimes the two above are considered to act as the 'carrot' (soft power as the reward) and the 'stick' (hard power as the punishment).

Soft power is rooted in **persuasion rather than coercion**. Consequently, it runs deeper and its impact is long-lasting.

Liberals = by definition are leaning towards soft power, diplomacy and persuasive strategies; to 'sell' the value of liberalism is the best influence on others.

Nye: soft power is 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion'.

The global appeal of the Western American Dream is encapsulating the command of soft power, in all its cultural indicators: music, movies, fashion.

The global media is a powerful mechanism to be employed in the dissemination of ideas and values.

The limits of soft power

- Firstly, the Western culture is not necessarily attractive and appealing for populations in other cultures.
- Western countries were exposed for grave violations of their own values and ideals, for example, images on the internet from US prison Abu Ghraib in Iraq War, 2003.
- In 2014, Russia's annexation of Crimea was condemned all over the world, and in 2018 it was ranked only 28th in the world in terms of soft power. However, the hard power of Russia makes it possible to take actions that are way beyond its 'appeal'.
- Competing influences: Assad in Syria managed to diffuse Western influence by resorting to military support from both Russia and Iran, declaring: 'The Arab Spring Stops Here.'
- The American attempts at influencing human rights issues in China have not been particularly successful; not accompanied by hard power and competing with the local Chinese government.

(3) **Smart power** = a combination of hard and soft power; coined by **Nye**.

An effective way to achieve influence is to combine hard and soft power resources of influence; to combine military and economic resources with positive diplomatic and cultural persuasive appeal.

Effectiveness

- Hard power seems to be more effective in the short-term because of its resources as elements of influence = economic and military.
- Soft power seems to be more influential in the long-run because of its resources in shaping sociocultural aspects.
- Structural power often follows soft power.
- The most powerful states are characterised by their capability to exercise smart power depending on the constellation and objectives in the short and long-run.

(4) **Structural power** = **Susan Strange** argued that structural power refers to the way by which powerful nation-states can determine 'how things can be done'.

For example: the acceptance of the **Washington Consensus** has enabled the USA to influence the direction of development of the global economy.

The highest vote share of the US in the World Bank and the IMF reinforces this power, as well as the US leading role in NATO.

Emerging powers are seeking to gain greater structural power so they can boost their influence in the international arena. China, in 2015, established the Asian Infrastructure Bank to boost its economic and political influence on the developing world.

The EU is also characterised by significant structural power, as other regional organisations such as ASEAN.

Classification of states

(1) **Great power** = with a significant amount of global influence accompanied by the exercise of structural power. Members of organisations such as G7/8, Bretton Woods organisations, and they are highly influential in the UN.

Great powers play a significant role within their region, and by virtue of that role they can exercise greater influence globally. Great powers will also be represented in key international organisations; they have military and economic power, but it lacks the ability to dominate at the scale that a superpower can.

(2) **Superpower** = all the features and status of a great power combined with a military potential for global presence, nuclear power and cyber technology. It would be accompanied by the ability to exercise influence on its allies both

diplomatically and ideologically. When the USA was seen as a clear hegemonic power, it dominated the international system along these lines.

A superpower can demonstrate a considerable reliance on hard, soft and structural power. It comes together with involvement in global crises; a superpower is active in the international arena but can act independently of other global powers.

- (3) **Emerging power** = globalisation facilitated the growth of emerging powers, from developing countries that increasingly gain economic power and significance. An emerging power has a fast-growing economy which equips it with the growing influence; thus, it is consolidating its resources of influence. An emerging power seeks to become a great power.

It requires a high growth rate on various indicators so its economy is growing stronger and can support growing military and diplomatic outreach. They are, therefore, increasingly consulted in international dialogue and strongly represented in intergovernmental organisations such as the G20. Most emerging powers are emerging from the global South and challenge the global North. China can be considered an emerging power, a great power, and some argue, even a superpower.

The changing balance of world order since 2000

Since 2000 there have been significant shifts in the features of power distributed in the international system.

Polarity refers to the way in which power is distributed in the international system.

- (1) **Unipolarity/hegemony** = a unipolar system is characterised by a superpower that is dominant to the point that its influence cannot be challenged = the superpower achieved a hegemonic status.

Scholars hold contrasting views on the effects of unipolarity on global stability:

Some consider the hegemon as being able to act as the global policeman thereby contributing to stability; a hegemon, by virtue of its status, can also have a benign influence and other states can strive to emulate its status and resources.

The United States was considered an uncontested hegemon at the end of the Cold War and therefore could have provided unrivalled global leadership in crises such as the first Gulf War (1991). In that sense alone, some argue that a hegemon is a source of stability in the system.

However, others like Noam Chomsky, argue that a hegemon can have a 'malign' or 'predatory' influence in the international arena, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, that increased instability in the system.

The impact of a hegemon depends not only on its status but also on its popularity and appeal.

Another important angle is emerging powers and great powers: a hegemon's influence can seem to contribute to stability insofar as other states do not aspire to 'compete' and when a state gains power, it does aspire to compete... the loss of economic power of the US and the rise of economic power of China means that China's aspirations rise in tandem with its economic growth, its defiance and its role in the region; all contributing to destabilising effects.

- (2) **Bipolarity** = two relatively evenly matched but opposing powers share the influence in the system; each seeking to extend its influence at the expense of the other.

Realists favour bipolarity because the powers balance each other by mutual deterrence, and the Cold War is used as a prime example of bipolarity and stability. In a bipolar system, the tension, according to realists, creates equilibrium.

The balance of power between India and Pakistan is considered to have similar consequence in terms of the deterrence and avoiding an escalation of tension into a full-scale confrontation.

Liberals, however, are critical of bipolarity because the system maintains peace based on the threat of retaliation rather than consensus.

Events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) demonstrate how the tension inherent in a bipolar system can pose quick and grave dangers.

Because within a bipolar system there is constant preparation to war, the conditions for long-lasting stability that are based on cooperation and proximity of consensus are lacking.

- (3) **Multipolarity** = several great powers share influence between them and neither one can claim hegemonic status, thus the distribution of power is evenly matched.

Liberals favour a multipolar system because they believe in the rationality of the nation-states as actors, and their natural inclination to cooperate.

The distribution of power is deterring nations from being defiant of international standards and rules. In the absence of a coercive power/hegemon, the states must cooperate to act collectively in addressing crises of global nature.

Realists consider a multipolar system to be the most threatening and dangerous form of distribution of power because the nation-states inherently seek to maximise power, and will be inclined to pursue alliances in such a system.

Consequently, the system is in constant flux, being dynamic and prone to changes, all contributing to the destabilising effects between many more players in the system.

- **Hegemon in decline?** = the USA was considered to be a clearly defined and uncontested global hegemon (1990/early 2000s). However, increasingly the consolidation of other powers, such as China, is shifting the distribution of power. Parallel to that there is a rise in regional powers changing the focus from the global arena to more specific regions within the international system.
- **Multipolarity** = seems to be developing in tandem with the progress of globalisation processes. The feature of interconnectedness consolidated the need for greater multilateralism, cooperation and diplomacy, eroding further traditional hard power.
- **Regional bipolarity** = with regionalism on the increase, more countries are vying for becoming a regional power seizing opportunities for regional influence rather than 'fighting' for status in the competitive international global system. Thus, two significant actors are competing for domination in a specific geographic location, such as India and Pakistan or Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The United State

Yes, a hegemon

- The US can still extend its influence anywhere in the world, with more than 800 military bases in 70 countries, and superiority of structural power in institutions of global governance.
- Solid ideology and reliance on hard power to advance ideas and values that are part of this ideology. Crisis resolutions is a platform.
- Cultural outreach 'Coca-colonisation'.

Not a hegemon

- Since its intervention in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) the US played its leadership role in global politics less eminently. Under Obama, it did not support the pro-democracy movements in the Middle East during the Arab Spring (2010-2013) and its lack of intervention in Syria opened the gates for Russia and Iran to establish their influence.
- Trump's policy of 'America First' implies a certain degree of retreat from activism in the international arena. It includes his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Change Treaty (2015).
- Isolationist approach in general in the international arena including a growing criticism of NATO.

- Trump imposed tariffs on more than \$250 billion of Chinese goods in 2019 demonstrating that America is shifting its perspective to consider globalisation as not always in line with American interests.
- Consequently, the US is curtailing some of its involvement and influence which means other states increase theirs; there's no vacuum in power dynamic.

Can China rival the US?

Some scholars suggest that the balance of power in the international system is shifting in favour of emerging powers. **Jim O'Neill** has coined the terms **BRIC** Brazil, Russia, India and China, and **Mint** Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey, to pinpoint the emerging powers. On the other hand, while emerging powers increase their economic growth and thereby influence, they face various challenges that hinder an uncontested domination.

Regarding China:

Yes

- China is a significant economic player rivalling the US, surpassing purchase power and on the direction to overtake the US in terms of its GDP. It is currently the second biggest economy in the world, and counting...
- China commands a significant structural power: permanent member of the UNSC, regional influence, opposition to US foreign policy and defiant acts.
- China is a nuclear power with the largest military in the world.
- China has the largest population in the world.
- After the US, China is the world's second biggest military spender; \$178 billion in 2020 and a keen investor in smart military technology.
- The China Belt and Road Initiative is designed to nurture global trade dominance by creating a complex network of land and sea routes centred in China. The construction projects are in 71 countries with a total cost of \$760 billion: that is a clear 'preparation' for economic hegemony; and economic hegemony is intertwined with the status of a hegemon politically and culturally.
- Increasing cultural influence globally.
- China is currently the biggest investor in some regions of the world such as Africa and South America.

No

- The US retains its global economy; China is still a developing country with its own domestic challenges.
- Greater structural power compared with China across various global governance international organisations, rooted in its status as a global hegemon. Demonstrated by the Washington Consensus approach that characterised Bretton Woods organisations.

- China's military spending is nevertheless far lower compared with the \$718 billion of American spending.
- America's military has a higher ability to deploy anywhere in the world at any given time, more international bases and superior technological and military capabilities. It also has the largest number of aircraft carrier.
- China has one military base abroad in East Africa, compared with the 800 American ones.
- America is still a significant player shaping culture globally; and China is with a limited soft power.
- America with a greater soft power in the international system; combined with its significant hard power it becomes rather superior and hence it is considered to be the global leader.
- China is not yet the uncontested regional hegemon: Japan and South Korea have military alliances with the United States and Taiwan is still seeking independence from China who doesn't give in.

Russia

- Under Putin, Russia reasserted its military and geostrategic influence in the international system through interventions. In 2015 it intervened in the Syrian civil war supporting Assad against the rebels.
- In 2014, the annexation of Crimea, and in 2018 Russia launched the Vostok-2018, one of the biggest military exercises since 1981.
- Despite Russia's military power, its defence spending is about 10% of the American spending, with only 10 overseas bases thus it lacks the global outreach. Its military is not as advanced and modern.
- The Russian economy is heavily reliant on the export of raw materials such as oil and gas, and it is dependent on the global price for these goods. This is usually a feature of a developing economy rather than a developed one.
- Its structural power is more limited in comparison with the US.
- Strong national ideology that lacks the global outreach that is required for soft power.

The EU

- The EU's economy represents 22% of the total global economy; a significant hard power.
- Strong stance and outreach on democratic values and human rights; a significant soft power.

- However, EU foreign and defence policy is subject to the national veto, and it failed to secure a collective response to international crises such as the civil war in Syria.
- Most EU member states prioritise their security interests through NATO. The EU lacks a military body that can compete and assert its policy, let alone enforce it.
- The rise of national sentiments and nationalist movements in various countries across the EU is undermining the ability to form policy as a cohesive body, let alone implement it.
- Brexit has raised important questions about the future of the EU.

The consequences for global order based on the characteristics of different systems of government:

Democratic state = a state with an elected and representative government that was chosen via free and fair elections. Combined with ideas of liberalism and protection of human rights, such as US and UK.

Semi-democratic state = a state which may appear democratic but is characterised by clear undemocratic/authoritarian features, such as South Africa because of high levels of corruption.

A non-democratic state = a dictatorship or autocracy in some form or other where power is concentrated in the hand of one person (autocratic) or a small group (authoritarian) with despotic and totalitarian features; Russia.

Autocratic state = wherein one person dominates the political system as the ultimate and uncontested head of state.

- **The democratic peace thesis** = liberals argue that democratic states are less likely to engage in war with one another because they are reliant on legitimacy from their citizens who are perceived to be rational and innately predisposed for cooperation.
- A derivative of the peace thesis is that the spread of democratic regimes created '**zones of peace**' at the expense of '**zones of conflict**'.
- Democracies are more naturally inclined to cooperate and comply with international organisations.
- Fukuyama's '**The End of History**'.
- While democracies depend on legitimacy anchored in a social contract that is based on democratic values with bottom-up orientation, non-democratic regimes are the opposite: their so-called legitimacy or more accurately, 'right' of existence, is rooted in military might and triumph, rather than consent and mandate.
- Liberals argue that China entrenches its military influence to nurture its appeal to the Chinese citizens which in turn will make them more willing to put up with the lack in democratic rights.

- Under Putin, Russia became more authoritarian and a form of a semi-democratic state, lacking as well in the political culture that is necessary for democracy to thrive.
- Realists, on the other hand, argue that all nation-states are power maximisers. Thus, this deep-seated motivation is at the heart of their existence regardless of the type of the political system. India and Pakistan are both democracies and yet their contesting claims over Kashmir were not abated by features of their political system.
- The attempt to expand democratic values into other regions and countries is in itself destabilising (Vietnam, Iraq) and that's without even considering the moral justification of democratic outreach.

Failed state = a state that is no longer regarded capable to fulfil its functions effectively nor is considered to exist as a sovereign entity; its government is weak and unable to protect its citizens or to exercise authority. Often the country descends to anarchy with no viable political authority, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

- The intervention of other states in failed states in for itself creates further destabilising effects. The intervention of Iran, Turkey and Russia in the civil war in Syria increased regional tensions that threaten global stability.
- The breakdown of the political system in Yemen significantly increased tensions in the Middle East especially as different groups aligned with different interests/states.

Rogue state = a state that is considered to be hostile and volatile in the international system and therefore poses a threat to stability. Defiance of the international system, contravening the international law in developing weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism; North Korea, Iran.

- Rouge states such as Iran and North Korea are perceived to pose a great threat on stability, because of the features of such states.
- Some criticise the use of the term 'rouge' arguing that it is applied by the US to undermine the legitimacy of such regimes.
- On the other hand, some other states that have broken the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India and Pakistan, are not called rouge states.
- This difference, according to some, suggests the application of the term is pretty selective and serves narrow interests of America.
- Therefore, some suggest that the US itself present some features of a rogue state: its unilateral withdrawal from the Iranian Nuclear Agreement in 2018 and its controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003.

- On the other hand, the way in which Iran and North Korea are prepared to use their nuclear arsenals as a bargaining tool suggests that their actions are anchored in realist tradition.

Consequences of different systems of government to the global order

- **Fukuyama** = arguing that liberal democracy became the most common form of government signalling the end of political evolution by the victory of democracy over any other form of political systems.
- **New wars** = within states and regionally rather than in the global international arena as a whole.
- **China** = increasingly a rival to the US status.
- Regionalism and the feature of multipolarity in the distribution of power.

Development and the spread of democracy

- **Liberals** argue that globalisation by its nature raised the need and opportunities for cooperation between states, thus increasing multilateralism, diplomacy and multipolarity. Global issues require global measures.
- **Liberal economies** = free trade as a key feature of liberal democracy is galvanising international stability because states are more likely to benefit from cooperation at the expense of conflict.
- **Rule of law** = similar to liberal democracies as sovereign in the sense that no one stands above the law, including heads of states. It is accompanied by the increased awareness of international tribunals and courts, although they often lack mechanisms of enforcement.
- **Democracies** = became the dominant political system of government in the contemporary world. Liberals argue that it reinforces the effectiveness of global governance institutions because they reflect multilateralism, transparency, accountability, tolerance and cooperation.

Synoptic

How changing relationships and actions of states address and resolve contemporary global issues?

- **Conflict** = liberals argue that multipolarity reduces conflict whereas realists argue it increases conflict. The nature of conflict shifted from between states into within states and regionalism.
- **Poverty** = liberals argue that global governance and free trade had a positive impact on global poverty and globalisation increased international aid.
- **Human rights** = a feature of global governance but seems to be in decline because less humanitarian interventions take place. Realists argue that sovereignty of states will always be the gatekeeper against such interventions.

- **Environment** = liberals argue that increased governance was a significant factor in tackling global environmental issues via global international organisations. Realists argue that many of the agreements achieved are lacking ability of enforcement because states will always prioritise their own self-interests over global ones (tragedy of the commons) and sovereignty enables states' defiance.