
Nature and the Relevance of the World Balance of Power after World War II

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Received: 01 October 2023 / Revised: 10 December 2023 / Accepted: 20 December 2023

Abstract

The balance of power, a core concept in an international relations, seeks equilibrium among nations to prevent dominance. Rooted in realism, it deters aggressions and fosters stability by distributing influence across states. As the global landscape evolves, debates persist on adapting the balance to accommodate non-state actors and technological shifts, crucial for international stability. The concept had also been applied in practice in international politics. It is important since its contribution to the maintenance of world peace as an international system had lasted for nearly three centuries. Although the concept of balance of power had been in practice in the international system for nearly three centuries, there are differing views on its relevance and nature. Research problem of this study is to find, what are the balances of power models influencing the behavior of the international system and why is its relevance presently outdated? This research paper contains a qualitative research study on the nature of world balance of power within the post-World War II period and utilized secondary data for the said purpose. Accordingly, the concept of balance of power is still relevant present day context but is relatively outdated compared to the past. But there is still validity for this concept as one of the strategies of power management. There can be no peace without a balance of power, and peace represents an arrangement of power in a stable manner or balance of power.

Keywords: Balance of Power, International Politics, International System, World War II

Introduction

Hans J. Morgenthau, a key figure in realist political thought, provided a nuanced analysis of the balance of power in an international relations. In his seminal work, "Politics Among Nations," Morgenthau asserted that the pursuit of national interest is the primary driver of state behavior. He viewed the balance of power as a dynamic process, acknowledging its role in preventing hegemony and maintaining stability. Morgenthau had been emphasized the importance of power as a tangible and measurable force, guiding statecraft (Elman & Jensen, 2014).

However, he also had recognized the complexities of power politics, highlighting the influence of morality and ethical considerations in shaping an international relations. Morgenthau's analysis remains influential in understanding the enduring dynamics of global power struggles.

Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, and Stephen Walt are influential scholars in the field of an international relations, each contributing unique perspectives to the analysis of the balance of power. Waltz, in his seminal work "Theory of International Politics," Posited a neorealist view, emphasizing the systemic structure of the international system. He argued that states, driven by self-interest, naturally seek to balance power to ensure their survival. John Mearsheimer, known for his offensive realism, builds on Waltz's ideas, asserting that states are inherently power-maximizers and face constant security dilemmas. Mearsheimer argues that great powers engage in a perpetual struggle for hegemony, leading to an anarchic and competitive international system. Stephen Walt, in collaboration with John Mearsheimer in their work "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," extends the analysis beyond the balance of power to include domestic influences (Toft, 2003). Walt emphasizes the impact of interest groups and lobbies on a state's foreign policy decisions, arguing that these factors can shape alliances and power dynamics. In conclusion, Waltz, Mearsheimer, and Walt contribute nuanced perspectives to the understanding of the balance of power, offering insights into systemic structures, power-maximizing behaviors, and the influence of domestic factors in shaping international relations.

World War II had changed the entire journey course of Europe. Not only that but also the whole world. In particular, during the period from 1939 to about 1945, this series of wars unified as Europe that also the continents of Asia, Africa and the America. The said series of wars were far wider devastating than the devastation compared to the World War I. Soldiers from both the Allied parties and Axis parties were killed in this devastating war. Billions of properties were destroyed, and even States were destroyed beyond re-built for years. In addition to that, World War II presented a great deal of social, economic, and political consequences to the world. Based on these reasons, various scholars point out that World War II was the turning point in the route of the world. Changing the world order could be pointed out as the main reason for that. Under it, Socialism and Capitalism became the most popular political ideologies in the world, and an unofficial rivalry competition between Soviet Russia and the United States of America was waged in an attempt to seize world power, without having in direct wars. It had been competing with each other for the power for years as a Cold War.

As mentioned earlier, the Cold War was created as a result of World War II. After the war, a rivalry competition was created between the United States of America and Soviet Russia in order to become the super powers of the New World. The United States of America had been acted centered on Capitalism, and Soviet Russia had acted centered on Socialism in order to retain power. Instead of going into a war, they engaged in a power struggle using various means. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, "Cold War" had been defined and identified as the open yet restricted rivalry that developed after World War II between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies' The Cold War was waged on political" economic and propaganda fronts and had only limited recourse to weapons" (Encyclopedia of Britannica, 2018). As well as that, few other scholars pointed out that- The Cold War was a state of geopolitical tension after World War II between powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its satellite states) and powers in the Western Bloc (the United States) its NATO allies and others). Cambridge Dictionary interprets the Cold War as "a state of extreme unfriendliness existing between countries "especially countries with opposing political systems" that expresses itself not through fighting but through political pressure and threats". The expression has usually used of the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union

after the Second World War (Schweller, 2016). Accordingly, the Cold War could be pointed out as the above.

However, several factors could be identified those influenced to the outbreak of the said Cold War. A brief look at it makes it easy to study the process herein. Especially this was mainly due to the psychoanalysis had been used by the both parties. Russia had adopted Communist principles and America made Liberal Capitalism as the central factor in this regard. Due to these views were contradictory to each other, the two parties had been engaged in a bitter rivalry war of attrition. The rivalry for weapons between the two parties was another factor. While the United States of America was encouraged to increase its military strength, Russia was also increased its military strength compared to the same. Atom bombs, Hydrogen bombs and as well as other deadly weapons created through this. Other European nations also joined the said rivalry competition, and the world was divided into two parts (Encyclopedia of Britannica, 2018). It was the culmination for a Cold War. On the other hand, the nuclear tests carried out by the United States of America were also a stronger factor. Due to United States of America bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki cities during the World War II, Russia stepped up and taken toughest steps for its security. This situation invited for a Cold War. As well as that finally, Russia used its veto power to interfere in the affairs of the European States. As well as that, acted to seize and get the control of the European nations under the Russian power. Even though European countries took it to the United Nations Security Council, but Russia had been failed the same. Later, the United States of America-led European nations' alienation with Russia escalated into a Cold War.

However, activism here is also very important in studying this Cold War period. The nature of the balance of world power was especially important during and after the Cold War. Accordingly, this research paper contains a study on the evolution of the international system and balance of power. Through this research paper it is been expected to analyze the balance of world power, especially after World War II in 1945. Accordingly, the research problem of this study is what are the balances of power models influencing the behavior of the international system and why is its relevance presently outdated? The research problem of this study revolves around identifying and understanding the various models of balance of power that have historically influenced the behavior of the international system. Specifically, the study aims to explore why the

relevance of these balance of power models is presently considered outdated. This research problem addresses the needs to be investigated the evolution and applicability of different balance of power frameworks in shaping international relations. By delving into the historical context and assessing the contemporary landscape, the study seeks to unravel the factors contributing to the perceived obsolescence of these models.

Through this exploration, the research aims to shed light on how shifts in global dynamics, geopolitical structures, or other influential factors may have rendered traditional balance of power paradigms less relevant in the current international scenario. The objectives of this research are study of existing balance of power models within the international system and investigating the relevance of the theory of balance of power to the current world political environment.

To analyze the research problem the researcher used neo realism theory. For neo-realists, Human nature is not the most important basis for power. Instead, the purpose of the international system paves the way for states to pursue power (Priyadarshani, 2023). The theory of neo-realism is divided into two Such as, offensive realism and defensive realism. Offensive realism seeks power and influence to achieve security through domination and hegemony. On the other hand, defensive realism argues that the anarchical structure of the international system encourages states to maintain moderate and reserved policies to attain security. Therefore, researcher used neo realism theory for the analysis of research problem and objectives.

Literature Review

Man, the State, and War by Kenneth Waltz was a seminal work in the field of international relations, first published in 1959. In this influential book, Waltz provides a comprehensive analysis of the causes of war and the nature of international politics. Waltz's Structural Realism: One of the central themes of the book was Waltz's development of structural realism, also known as neorealism. He argues that the international system's structure, than the internal characteristics of states, is the primary determinant of their behavior. Waltz divides theories into three levels individuals, the state, and the international system and emphasizes the systemic level as the most crucial in understanding international relations (Waltz, 1959).

Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics had been pivotal in shaping international relations subsidy. Waltz's neorealism emphasizes the systemic structure's dominance in shaping state behavior, asserting that anarchy compels states to pursue self-help strategies for survival. Focusing on power distribution and balance, he classifies systems by polarity, influencing state strategies and alliances. While Waltz's theory simplifies the explanations by centering on state-level analysis, it has faced critiques for neglecting domestic factors. Nonetheless, his enduring legacy lies in establishing neorealism as the foundational framework that significantly impacts how scholars conceptualize and analyze international relations (Waltz, 1979).

Naresh Giri provides an analysis of the underlying behavior of states using the theory of power through the research called Balance of Power Theory in the Present International System. The author pointed out that a state feels secure because it is relatively more powerful than the other states, and the presence of similar or powerful states in the international system is clearly a threat to the existence of other states. Also, since the international system is anarchic, every country is worried about security and survival. Noting that there is no global government and the only international law, the law of morality, applies, the researcher states that unequal distribution of power creates the possibility of a powerful country swallowing up a weak one. The researcher points out those relatively weak states always use various techniques to check the power of a powerful one and still they survive. First it discusses power, second it discusses the theory of power, and third it discusses the nature of balance of power in the present context. Finally, the applicability of power theory to small states is described (Giri, 2021).

Randall L. Schweller provides an analysis of the nature of the balance of power in the world politics through his research "The Balance of Power in World Politics". The researcher provides a thorough analysis of the power and through that builds a framework of the power's goals and changes. Many states and theorists have given a wrong interpretation through this theory and indicated that this theory did not use to maintain international peace and stability. The researcher proposes nine suggestions through his study to promote the correct functioning of the power. In the commentary on power, the author who mentions the criticisms as outdated, has a nature of approving the analysis of liberal thinkers that power could be appropriate for the past era. The

balance of power is a theory that deeply rooted in the territorial view of wealth and security, but it points out that it may no longer hold in the world (Randall, 2016).

Through the research article, the Testing Balance-of-Power Theory in World History had been written by William C. Wohlforth and others, power is shown as a very important concept among a set of theoretical ideas in international relations. But through that research, it is tried to show that the concept of power in international systems had not been properly tested. The researchers conducted this research using eight new case studies on balancing and balancing failures in various international systems that comprise more than 2000 years of international politics. Although the balance of power was important in the past, there is no doubt that it had transformed into changes today through industrialization, democratization, globalization and the spread of nuclear weapons, researchers point out. They point out that the theory that had been in power for centuries were able to explain changes and patterns in systems, but it is problematic in modern times. It is pointed out that the European and contemporary international methods should be recreated in a more effective way (Wohlforth et al., 2007).

Polarity, Balance of Power and International Relations Theory, was an academic research written by Goedele De Keersmaeker, had opened a wide discussion on the nature of world power. In particular, the author had mentioned that since the end of the Cold War, at least until the end of the first decade of the new millennium, there had been a consensus among American scholars and policy makers regarding world power. For this analysis, the author had already made an extensive research on the roots of the events that occurred during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. A review of unipolar, bipolar and multipolar approaches had been provided and the author was reflected in his research, how it differs from the other researches (De Keersmaeker, 2017)

The research which is Changing Dynamics of Global Politics: Transition from Unipolar to Multipolar World by Muhammad Muzaffar and others analyzes the future interactions of world politics and the next power structure in the 21st century. In the past, the power transition in world politics had changed from bipolar to unipolar. Researchers showed that the world would be transformed again from unipolar to multipolar. The primary factors identified are the end of US hegemony, the peaceful rise of China and other

emerging states in various regions, and the nature of the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity in the power structure. Through the basic hypothesis theoretical framework, researchers show that it is due to emerging trends in an international relations (Muzaffar et al., 2017).

As a whole, when examining the contents of the above-mentioned researches, the analysis of the nature of the balance of world powers and their changes could be seen. In particular, research had revealed many facts about the transition from a multipolar balance of power to a bipolar balance of power and then to a unipolar balance of power. But this research is different, because it points out that the balance of power theory is based on power models had become obsolete at present. Therefore, this research is more important for understanding the power balance of contemporary world politics.

Materials and Methods

This research is a qualitative research and this study had been used some principal methodologies to examine the above mentioned objective. When consider about the type of data that had used in the study, the secondary data had been used as its sources. Books, journals, paper articles, previous research publications, opinion papers and web sites had been used to collect secondary data. Mainly, documentary analysis and theoretical analysis are the key analyzing methods for this had used to examine the above mentioned objective. This study had been used descriptive analysis as well.

Results and Discussion

The period of following World War II, marked a transformative era in the nature and relevance of the world balance of power. The devastating conflict had led to the emergence of two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union setting the stage for a bipolar international system. The Cold War is been characterized by ideological, political, and military rivalry between these superpowers, defined global geopolitics for much of the post-war period.

The bipolar structure of the world balance of power during the Cold War had profound implications. Nations aligned themselves with either the Western or Eastern bloc, creating a global chessboard where strategic considerations often outweighed ideological affinities. The arms raced and the development of nuclear weapons

contributed to a delicate equilibrium known as Mutually Assured Destruction. The fear of catastrophic consequences deterred direct military confrontation between the superpowers, shaping a unique and tense stability.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a significant shift in the world balance of power. The bipolar order gave way to a unipolar moment with the United States emerging as the sole superpower. This unipolarity had both advantages and challenges. On one hand, it provided a semblance of stability under American hegemony. On the other hand, concerns about unchecked power and unilateralism arose, raising questions about the effectiveness and fairness of a single superpower-dominated world. The early 21st century witnessed the emergence of new dynamics challenging the traditional notions of the world balance of power. The rise of China as an economic and military powerhouse marked the return of multipolarity. This shift added complexity to global power dynamics, with China challenging the United States' hegemonic position in various spheres.

Globalization further altered the nature of power, emphasizing economic interdependence and connectivity. Non-state actors, including multinational corporations and international organizations, gained influence in shaping global affairs. Transnational challenges like climate change, terrorism, and pandemics underscored the limitations of traditional state-centric approaches to power and security. Regional power shifts also played a crucial role in redefining the world balance of power. The European Union, despite challenges, emerged as a formidable economic and political bloc, contributing to the multipolar landscape. Regional powers in the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America asserted themselves, influencing regional and global dynamics.

The term balance of power as a concept was used in international politics after the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, after the Thirty years of war in Europe during the period from 1618-1948. Balance of power literally means as balancing the power. It means maintaining the balance of power that demonstrates the political strength of a state in a proportional or balanced way between all States. Due to the certain practical aspects of the concept of balance of power, international scholars had been offered various interpretations in the interpretation and interpretation of the balance of power. Therefore, it is more important to pay attention to its interpretations first. According to the person called Castel Reagh, Balance of power means as "maintaining a just balance

of power by preventing one of the family members of the nations from gaining enough power to impose his or her will on other nations." Morgenthau interpret the same as, "it is a reality circumstances arising from the expansion of power mostly in equal manner within few nations. According to Quincy Wright, balance of power define as, "it means a system designed to perpetuate in the national bourgeoisie the perception that if any state attempts an act of aggression, it will face strong opposition from other nations."

In addition to the above-mentioned opinions, definitions of balance of power, it is very important to consider the concept of balance of power in a practical analysis of the views expressed by many scholars. One of such idea is that there are two views on the balance of power. Sometimes it means the balance of power and other times it means the preponderance of power. Some scholars have pointed out that, this applies in the first sense in times of peace and second meaning used in times of diplomatic crisis or war eras. Therefore, Inis L. Claude illustrated that, the problem with the concept of the balance of power is not that it has no meaning, but that it has many meanings. According to him, Morgenthau had applied the balance of power on in four-fold meaning. That is, as a policy aimed at the expansion of some form of power, as a description of the prevailing reality in international politics, as a very rough description of the proportional distribution of power internationally, as a simple word describing any form of expansion of power in international politics (Morgenthau, 1978).

As mentioned, by Ernst B Hass, power balance has an eightfold meaning and a fourfold usage. Those eightfold meanings are: balance, dissolution of power, balance, domination, stability and peace, instability and war, power politics, universal law-maker, system and policy-making guide. Its fourfold uses include the use of power balance as a description, its use as propaganda and semantics, its use as an analytical concept, and its use as a recommendation. States are often interested in the balance of power only when it is to their advantage, so every nation seeks to extend its power to some extent for its own survival. Abraham Kaplan had been presented an analysis of the balance of power in an international politics. According to his analysis, the behavior of the international system was analyzed in terms of balance of power. Thus, notably multi polar balance of power system, bipolar balance of power system, tight bipolar power system and loose bipolar power system, universal balance of power system, hierarchical balance of power system and univeto balance of power system (Morton, 1957).

The special feature of the multi polar balance of power system situation is the concentration of more than two states in international political power. For an example, before World War II, the power of international politics was centralized on several European countries. The special feature of the bipolar balance of power system is the power of international politics is concentrated in the power of the two major powers. For an example, it could be illustrated that, before World War II, the power of international politics was concentrated on several European countries. The special feature of the bipolar balance of power system is the power of international politics is been centralized around two major States. For an example, this balance of power shown between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) lasted until 1989 from World War II. All the states of the world were in a position to accept this balance of power, directly or indirectly. Even the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement indirectly contributed to this balance of power. Such a balance of power leads to limited wars. Weapons control, disarmament, weapon rivalry competition could be seen. Tight bipolar power system means as, a situation where the intermediaries' countries between the great powerful nations are not allowed to act in such manner. Then there is a situation illustrated, where the influence of the great powerful nations over the intermediaries' countries. We can also see a situation where the super powerful nations are been able to gain the compatibility of consensus and non-aligned countries. The loose bipolar power system means that a third powerful group can direct its influence to the international arena. Here we see a situation where the super powerful nations are directed by a group of non-aligned countries for their existence. In the universal balance of power system situation, we can see that the whole international system is somehow subjected to an unitary power base. Thus, that is, the obedience of the international community taken into a universally recognized authority. The special feature of the hierarchical balance of power system situation is, International balance of power is built on a pattern or arrangement. Where the upper balance of power could be influenced on the lower balance of power. However, the lower powerful States cannot influence the higher balance of power. In the universal balance of power system situation, each and every state has the same strength and value. Also, each of those units has the power to destroy the other unit. Thus, accordingly they ensure that their own survival due to their competitive ability to destroy. Here we see a situation where every State has the same value.

In addition to the balance of power systems which had been mentioned above, the relevance of the concept of balance of power and its practicality were also explored in this research paper. Accordingly, the eternal situation that could be seen in the international community is that the power of the States and as well as the power relationship and the world power systems are constantly changing. Therefore, a balanced of power, which is interpreted by words could not be expected in practice. As the world is changing constantly, so the power relationship had been changed too. It seeks that, each individual attempt to develop their power in particular. As well as that, another factor is the discrepancy between the intended objectives of the balance of power and the actual action. In practice, the world political environment is constantly changing and moving forward. Hence if you try to create a balance of power without considering this situation, it will be failed. Therefore, the contradiction between the intended objectives and the actual situation through the balance of power persists. Another important factor is how the states that actually exist stated that there is a balance of power. Because when we study the factors that influence the determination of the national power of a State, it appears that they have different factors. Such factors could be categorized as visible factors, invisible factors, reliable and unreliable factors and so on. For these reasons, it is very difficult to compare the magnitude of the national power of one State with that of another country. Accordingly, as the volume of national power changes, there is no balance of power in reality. Another point that can be made here is the question of how truly to interpret the status of balance of power. That is, when two opposing States have the same power, there is a balance of power. But the views of the State leaders can sometimes be the complete opposite opinion (Michael, 1964). In many cases, State leaders claim that there is a balance of power when their power is greater than any other States. States are interested in a balance of power only if such status quo is favorable and advantageous to them. In fact, truthfully, they do not except a balance of power but an advantage in terms of power. This means that every ruler of the State declares that he is acting in order to protect the balance of power and is attempting to establish his dominance in the world system by actively working to develop his own power.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the evolving nature and relevance of the world balance of power after World War II had been profound implications for global politics and security. The transition from a bipolar Cold War era to a unipolar world led by the United States and, subsequently, the resurgence of multipolarity with the rise of China and the empowerment of regional actors had reshaped the international relations. The end of the Cold War brought about a sense of optimism with the potential for a more cooperative and interconnected world. However, the unipolar moment underscored challenges associated with a single dominant power, including concerns about unilateralism, hegemony, and the ability of one nation to address complex global issues effectively. This period also witnessed the increased influence of non-state actors and a growing awareness of transnational challenges that necessitate collective responses.

The return to multipolarity has both positive and challenging implications. On the positive side, a multipolar world allows for a more diverse array of voices and perspectives, fostering a balance of power that discourages unilateral actions. It also provides opportunities for cooperation and diplomatic solutions to global issues, as no single power can dictate outcomes. However, the reemergence of multipolarity also brings with it increased competition, potential for conflict, and the need for effective global governance mechanisms.

The implications of regional power shifts, such as the rise of the European Union and the assertion of influence by regional actors in various parts of the world, highlight the importance of recognizing multiple power centers. These developments emphasize the need for flexible and adaptive diplomatic strategies that can navigate a complex and dynamic international landscape.

Furthermore, the impact of globalization on power dynamics cannot be understood. Economic interdependence and the interconnectedness of societies have already created new opportunities for collaboration, but also vulnerabilities that require collective management. Transnational challenges, including climate change, terrorism, and pandemics, necessitate coordinated responses that go beyond traditional state-centric approaches.

In practical terms, the changing nature of the world balance of power calls for a re-evaluation of international institutions and governance structures. Reforms that reflect the evolving distribution of power and ensure greater inclusivity and representation are essential. Effective diplomacy and cooperation become imperative in addressing global challenges, emphasizing the importance of multilateralism.

States are often interested in the balance of power only when it is to their advantage. Therefore, every nation seeks to extend its power to some extent for its own survival. Also, the concept of balance of power can be described as ambiguous alias not clear concept. However, it should be emphasized here that in practice this concept has been used in international politics for nearly three centuries. As such, its contribution to the maintenance of world peace as an international system had been lasted for nearly three centuries. Furthermore, this system ensured the existence of non-powerful small nation-states, and the development of international law through the general recognition of the right to sovereignty, territorial integrity and mediation of each country greatly aided the survival of an international relations. Although the use and validity of this concept had been diminished in the present compared to the past, there could be no peace without a balance of power, and peace represents a stable arrangement or balance of power.

Finally, the post-World War II trajectory of the world balance of power has far-reaching implications for global stability, cooperation, and governance. Adapting to the realities of a multipolar and interconnected world requires, strategic foresight, collaboration, and a commitment to inclusive and effective international institutions. As the dynamics of power continue to evolve, the international community faces the ongoing challenge of building a more resilient, cooperative, and equitable global order.

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