

# "International Power Dynamics And 21st Century"

Outline

Well attempted

Keep practicing on different themes

## 1- Introduction

Thesis statement: The trajectory of global power dynamics is shifting from Global North to Global South as it is marked by emerging economies, revolutionary technology, rising global conflicts and climate change. In the 21st century, the balance among global powers can only be maintained through strengthening international institutions and economic cooperation.

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- Democracies Divide by Thomas C. Brune and Andrew O'Donohue

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## "International Power Dynamics And 21st Century"

International power today is like shifting sands in a desert as it is constantly reconfigured by the winds of technology, economic policies and geopolitical strategies. It cannot remain constant. The change in global power dynamics is inevitable. The 21st century has witnessed a significant transformation in international power from westward to eastward direction. As economies are inextricably linked with one another in the 21st century, it has provided opportunities to different countries to gain influence on the world stage. Consequently, it has led to the substantial shift in global power dynamics. It needs to be explored how international power dynamics are

changing in the 21st century.

Undeniably, the trajectory of global power dynamics is shifting from Global North to Global South as it is marked by emerging economies, revolutionary technology, rising global conflicts and climate change. In the 21st century, the balance among global powers can only be maintained through strengthening international institutions and economic cooperation. To

emphasize the importance of technology in changing global power dynamics, Yuval Noah Harari, in 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, aptly said:

"In the 21st century, power means having control over the algorithms that shape our reality."

Historically, before world wars, the power was distributed among different countries and the

world was multipolar. However, after world war II, the world became bipolar with two dominant global powers, USA and USSR. In the end of 20th century, the USSR disintegrated and USA ~~has been~~ ~~became~~ the sole superpower of the world. Then, in the start of 21st century, the unipolar world ~~has~~ gradually shifted towards multipolarity again. It started with multiple events such as 9/11 attack, US invasion in Iraq and Afghanistan and the decline of global image of USA. Therefore, it created vacuum for other countries to emerge as global powers in the 21st century.

Starting with, the unipolar world is transforming into the multipolar world in the 21st century. The revival of different countries, such as China, Russia

and India is its flagrant example. Among these rising global powers, the spectacular emergence of economic power of China provides clear evidence that global power dynamics are shifting from Global North towards Global South. In 20th century, China was a poor country. However, in the end of 20th century, Deng Xiaoping introduced economic reforms in China. It has brought dramatic shift in China's GDP from 1 trillion dollars in 2000 to 17.7 trillion dollars in 2018 according to United Nations report. Now, China has become a threat to the West-led international order. It provides clear evidence that global power dynamics are altering in the 21st century.

While different economies are rising, their policies are also changing global power

dynamics. The economic strategies of emerging economies are further empowering them in the 21st century. For instance, the China's String of Pearls strategy and India's Necklace of Diamonds strategy reflect the rise of multiple powers. An String of Pearls strategy, China is enhancing its geopolitical influence by covering strategic maritime chokepoints. China is establishing Hambantota port in Sri Lanka and Gwadar port in Pakistan. Similarly, India is making strategic alliances with regional countries to counter-balance China in its Necklace of Diamonds strategy. This tug-of-economic war underscores that international power dynamics are shifting towards Asia in the 21st century.



Building on this fact that multiple economies are emerging, the sophisticated technological advancement has intensified shift in global power dynamics. In this age of artificial intelligence, the technological war between global powers has transformed the trajectory of power dynamics. The current chip and semiconductor war between China and USA is its striking example. USA has passed executive order to impose ban on export of semiconductors to Chinese tech companies. In retaliation, China imposed restriction on supply of Lithium and Gallium to USA. These rare earth metals are used in Artificial intelligence, green technology and modern AI warfare. Therefore, gaining technological supremacy is defining power dynamics in the 21st century.

To further understand the changing global power dynamics, global conflicts and the zero-sum race in the 21st century have reestablished international power centers. The Russia-Ukraine war and Palestine war have superimposed multipolarity. In case of both wars, USA could not be able to stop the wars. It has greatly undermined the global reputation of USA as world leader of safeguarding human rights. On the flip side, China is projecting its soft power throughout the world. Moreover, the complicity of USA in Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza has further declined its image. Hence, the global resurgence of wars highlight the greater shift in power dynamics.

Apart from global wars, war in energy politics has also fostered due to climate change. Climate change has become the hot topic of the 21st century. Due to changing climate and the resulting catastrophic events worldwide, the countries are now transitioning from fossil fuels use to renewable energy. Resultantly, it has enhanced struggle between global powers to achieve energy supremacy. China is leading in wind and solar energy. USA is also heavily investing in research and development in order to lead in green technology. This tug of energy war between USA and China demonstrates the changing global power dynamics.

Expanding on this perspective, the global dominance of multilateral

institutions has declined in the 21st century. The failure of United Nations Security Council in preventing war in Russia and Palestine is a blow to its global image. Although UNSC has passed several resolutions to prevent war, it could not be able to stop them. It shows that global power dynamics are shifting from multilateralism to unilateralism. Moreover, the west-led world order was threatened by the emboldened support of USA to Israel in UNSC. It has vetoed 37 UNSC resolutions out of 42 to call for a ceasefire in Palestine. Hence, these global institutions have lost their power, which illustrates the change in global dynamics in the 21st century.

Furthermore, the world has witnessed democratic decline and the rise of political polarization in the 21st century. It has substantially changed the global power dynamics. Thomas Carothers and Andrew O'Donohue, in their seminal work, *Democracies Divide* highlight how democracies are declining in the current era. They highlight that in USA, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Russia, political polarization has caused the downfall of democratic norms and values. For example, in USA, the rising polarization between Democratic and Republican parties has greatly undermined democracy. It provides insights that in the 21st century, power dynamics are shifting from democracy to authoritarian rules.

Building on this perspective the shift from internationalism to nationalism is also leading world to multipolarity. The rise of populist leaders has amplified nationalist policies. Jan-werner Muller in 'Populism' argues that populist leaders such as Donald Trump, Viktor Orban, Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen have led the world to nationalism. These populist leaders have threatened the internationalism and multilateralism. The revival of nationalist policies of these leaders such as anti-immigrant policies and trade tariffs have transformed the geo-political dynamics of the world. Hence, nationalist policies are also changing global power dynamics.

Lastly, revolution in

information technology in the 21st century has increased global activism. Consequently, it has brought a significant shift in global power. The Arab Spring in 2011 provides a case study of how information technology has changed global dynamics. The Arab Spring has revolutionized the use of digital platforms to gain civilian rights. Through online platforms, the global activists have initiated their movement, which brought revolution in Arab countries. Consequently, it overthrew many authoritarian regimes. Therefore, information technology has also changed global power dynamics in the 21st century.

After expounding that international power dynamics are shifting from unipolarity

to multipolarity in the 21st century, it is imperative to discuss the strategies for maintaining balance of power in the world.

Firstly, international institutions need to be strengthened to avoid conflicts and anarchy in the world. It requires bringing reforms in the United Nations, making it more inclusive to prevail global justice. It can be done by increasing number of veto power countries in the UNSC and its non-permanent members. It can dilute USA's over use of veto power in the UNSC. In this way, global conflicts can be resolved and wars can be prevented. Without global governance, the world will remain anarchic.



Secondly, international laws should be enforced in true letter and spirit to maintain sovereignty of weaker countries in changing global power dynamics.

International laws such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) and Geneva Convention on war crimes need robust implementation. It can only be done by collaborative efforts of global stakeholders.

The member countries that ratified these laws should participate actively in applying these laws at the times of war and crisis.

It can hinder tug of war in multiple sectors such as economic security and politics.

Thirdly, the global power of emerging powers can be balanced through harnessing the

potential of powerful nations in resolving shared challenges.

The emanating challenges such as climate change and global wars can be mitigated through collaboration of all stakeholders.

For example, in case of climate change, USA, China and other European countries should recompense developing countries, providing them climate finances. It will also bolster ties between developed and developing countries. Moreover, it will ensure peace and equality throughout the world.

Fourthly, economic cooperation between leading global powers can also stabilise the global power dynamics.

Particularly, the global power rivalry between China and USA can only be curbed through

economic integration instead of trade war. ✓ By prioritising the democratic values, such as internationalism, free trade, multilateralism and human rights, it can be achieved. ✓ Moreover, regulatory frameworks to mitigate the misuse of technology can pave the way to inclusive development and prosperity in global arena. ✓

In a nutshell, the international power dynamics are changing from unipolarity towards multipolarity in the 21st century. ✓ As the 21st century started, multifarious geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic events have transformed the global power trajectory. ✓ The advancement in technology has added fuel to the fire. ✓ It has initiated a tug of war between established

and revisionist powers. Moreover, the catastrophic climate disasters have brought shift in energy politics. It has further threatened the west-led world order.

To prevent the world from indulging in chaos and conflicts, balance of power needs to be maintained. Although the road to stability is fraught with formidable challenges, the concerted efforts of all global powers can maintain peace and stability in this changing world order. As Mother Teresa said:

"You can do things, which I cannot  
I can do things, which you cannot  
Together we can do great things"