

PP5182: 04–05.
(New and Old)
Models of Global Power Relations

LKY School of Public Policy

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OUTLINE

1. A First Definition
2. Liberal Internationalism
3. Realism
4. Conclusion

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What is World Order?

- “World Order” / “The International System” / “The International Regime”
- Doesn't mean the opposite of disorder and chaos

Definition Given a collection of nation states, world order is

1. a distribution of power across individual nation states, together with
2. a shared understanding of the relations between them.

Leadership in World Order

1. Simply that nation state with the greatest power? (military, economic, R&D, corporate champions, Nobel Prizes?)
2. Best liked?
3. Electable — if there were elections?
4. Technical competence?
5. Can do the heavy lifting?
6. Kishore's boat?
7. Some other appropriately legitimate claim ...?

“The Age of American Unipolarity”

“American global power—military, economic, technological, cultural, political—is one of the great realities of our age. Never before has one country been so powerful or unrivaled. The United States emerged from the Cold War as the world’s only superpower and grew faster than Europe and Japan in the decade that followed. American bases and naval forces encircle the globe. [. . .] For the first time in the modern age, the world’s most powerful state can operate on the global stage without the fear of counterbalancing competitors. The world has entered the age of American unipolarity.”

“The United States is not just a powerful state operating in a world of anarchy. It is a producer of world order.”

(Ikenberry 2005)

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO AMERICANS



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“It’s not what it looks like”: Despite that map, this is not triumphalism

European politicians describe what the US does:

“[...] inspire the dreams and desires of others, thanks to their mastery of global images through film and television and [...] for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the US to finish their studies.”

“America’s soft power was even larger than its economic and military assets. US culture, low-brow or high, radiates outward with an intensity last seen in the days of the Roman Empire—but with a novel twist. Rome’s and Soviet Russia’s cultural sway stopped exactly at their military borders. America’s soft power, though, rules over an empire on which the sun never sets.”

If this is hegemony, it looks pretty good.

The soft beginnings to US unipolarity

In 1961, ‘To the question of what in his presidency had made him most proud, Truman replied, “That we totally defeated our enemies and then brought them back to the community of nations. I would like to think that only America could have done this.” Conscious of America’s vast power, Truman took pride above all in its humane and democratic values. He wanted to be remembered not so much for America’s victories as for its conciliations.’

(Henry Kissinger, 2014)

Not “Crush your enemies. See them driven before you. Hear the lamentations of their women.”

(Conan the Barbarian)

GLADIATOR
KING



CONAN
THE BARBARIAN

Liberal Internationalism

1. Liberal principles from domestic politics, applied to the international system
2. Constitutional government. Rule of law
3. Harmony of interests
 - Any disagreements only chimerical, due to misunderstanding and ignorance, or manipulation by narrow special interests
 - Reconciliation is always possible; even if just by simple explanation
4. “Law. Not War”. Negotiation and arbitration

Liberal Internationalism (2)

1. Anarchy undermines prospects for peace.
2. Each member state needs to be a liberal democracy, with constitutional and legitimate governments.
3. Openness and collaboration
4. International institutions help maintain world peace; not balance of power, and 1-1 threats and bargains
5. WW1. Fabians. Woodrow Wilson
6. The League of Nations. The United Nations. ILO, WHO, ...
7. ... WW2

Offshoots and Variant Narratives

1. Utopian and idealistic
2. Unipolarity. Multipolarity
3. “The American Century”. Soft power
4. Tributary System

The (China-US) Tributary System

China and the US manage foreign relations:

1. **Exceptionalism** China's Sinocentric self-perception of good governance, proper conduct, cultural superiority—derived from Confucianism; US blessed with geography, resources, people, ideas—derived from liberal democracy and the imperative to be the world's guardian of freedom
2. **Hierarchy** Both see natural order in a sharp inequality across nations. China at the top, all others secondary; the US, similarly, as the world leader in a unipolar international system, if need be as (benevolent) hegemon, but, without doubt, the leader.

The (China-US) Tributary System (2)

3. **Rapport.** Affinity through emulation in China culture, emulation in US ideological and political organization in liberal democracy
4. **Idealizations of Soft Power.** Non-coercion. Prestige, moral suasion, voluntarism. What do the upstream want? China - trade and civilization? US - recognition and emulation?

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Realism

“the strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must”

(Thucydides)

1. Conflict is the defining feature of relations between nation states (haves v have-nots; global superpower v rising power).
2. Scarcity defines the world.
3. Some might think law protects them. But the reality is ...
4. Powerful agents have no respect for law: neither haves nor have-nots, neither global superpower nor rising power.

Offensive Realism

Can a change in world order be peaceful? Can China's rise be peaceful?

Offensive Realism. Axioms:

1. As a matter of sheer survival, great powers seek to maximize their share of world power.
2. Multipolar systems which contain an especially powerful state—in other words, a potential hegemon—are especially prone to war.

Great Power Politics

“... if China continued its ascent, it would build formidable military forces and try to dominate Asia the way the US dominates the Western Hemisphere. Becoming a regional hegemon ... is the best way for a country to maximize its prospect for survival.” (John Mearsheimer, 2014)

“China’s quest to enhance its world leadership status and America’s effort to maintain its present position is a zero-sum game. It is the battle for people’s hearts and minds that will determine who eventually prevails.” (Xuetong Yan, 2011)

“Offshore balancing”

Consciously reject for its being a costly failure the previous prevailing wisdom that the US should seek to:

1. solve the world's problems;
2. promote a world order based on “international institutions, representative governments, open markets, and respect for human rights”.

The US has over-reached.

“Offshore balancing (2)”

But not a retreat into isolationism, simply noting:

1. “No one knows if a world composed solely of liberal democracies would in fact prove peaceful, but spreading democracy at the point of a gun rarely works, and fledgling democracies are especially prone to conflict.”
2. “If the American people want to encourage the spread of liberal democracy, the best way to do so is to set a good example. Other countries will likely emulate the US if they see it as a just, prosperous, and open society. And that means doing more to improve conditions at home and less to manipulate politics abroad.”

Liberal internationalism was bound to fail. Don't over-reach. Pick and choose.

A Rational World Order — The Ramsey Problem

“Design world order for good”

1. Globalized, inter-connected world economy \mathcal{J}
2. Global Public Goods G . Externalities \mathfrak{X}
3. Maximize world well-being U by allocating consumption C across the world, subject to
 - 3.1 Inter-connections \mathcal{J} ; and
 - 3.2 Resource constraints \mathfrak{R} ; while
 - 3.3 Internalizing externalities \mathfrak{X} , to serve up Global Public Goods G .

In other words, solve:

$$\text{Program } \mathfrak{M} \begin{cases} \max_{C, G} U(C, G) \\ \text{s.t. } \mathcal{J}, \mathfrak{R}, \text{ and } \mathfrak{X}. \end{cases}$$

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Concepts to remember and use

1. What is World Order?
2. Liberal Internationalism; Hegemony; Realism; . . . ; (Constructivism)
3. Is World Order an accident of history? Or does it have a purpose?