

# Bipolarity in Flux: International Political Economy in Contemporary Times

Dana-Marie Ramjit<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Correspondence: Dana-Marie Ramjit, University of Calgary, Canada. Tel: 1-561-377-5454. E-mail: dana-marie.ramjit@outlook.com

Received: February 6, 2025

Accepted: February 19, 2025

Online Published: February 21, 2025

## Abstract

This paper explores the evolving dynamics of bipolarity and International Political Economy (IPE) in the context of contemporary global relations. Historically defined by the Cold War, bipolarity has shaped the interplay of power, economics, and security, creating a framework that dictated international relations and influenced global economic structures. As the world transitions into a post-Cold War era, the disintegration of traditional bipolarity has not eliminated power dynamics but has instead given rise to new forms of polarization characterized by ideological, economic, and cultural divides. The unipolarity that followed has been scrutinized, revealing increasing divisions and conflicts rather than harmony. The theories of Fukuyama and Huntington illustrate the ongoing relevance of bipolarity, as cultural clashes and historical grievances continue to impact international relations. The relevance of IPE in this evolving landscape emphasizes the interdependence of political and economic factors, challenging traditional state-centric paradigms. Insights from scholars such as Susan Strange, Joseph Nye, and Robert Keohane highlight the necessity of integrating economic realities with political analysis, acknowledging the myriad of transnational actors and the complexities of global interactions. The emergence of a “control gap” signifies the challenges states face in maintaining authority in an interconnected world, complicating their ability to navigate the increasingly intricate landscape of international affairs. As global challenges such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and socioeconomic disparities persist, the remnants of bipolarity manifest in various forms. This paper calls for a renewed framework that accommodates the nuances of contemporary power relations and the dynamics of globalization, advocating for a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive understanding of global governance. Ultimately, the interplay between bipolarity and IPE remains a critical area for scholarly inquiry, offering valuable insights into the future of global order as nations navigate the complexities of a world marked by both interdependence and division.

**Keywords:** bipolarity, international political economy, global governance, control gap, unipolarity

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of international relations, the dynamics of power and influence have undergone significant transformations, necessitating a critical reassessment of established theories of global governance. The bipolar structure that characterized the Cold War, wherein the United States and the Soviet Union maintained a precarious equilibrium, has largely dissipated following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As noted by Waltz (1991), the absence of a counterbalancing power raises concerns about the behavior of states wielding disproportionate power, suggesting that such entities may not adhere to norms of decency and moderation in their international conduct. This shift has catalyzed the emergence of a multipolar world, where the interplay of various state and non-state actors complicates traditional notions of sovereignty and governance (Wintrup, 2021).

The post-Cold War era has witnessed the rise of new economic powers, particularly China and India, which, alongside the enduring influence of the United States and the European Union, contribute to a more intricate global order. This evolving balance of power raises critical questions regarding state sovereignty as globalization increasingly blurs the lines between national interests and international cooperation (Ramjit, 2022). As Albekov et al. (2014) argue, the integration of states into global frameworks often constrains their sovereignty, compelling them to navigate a complex web of international obligations and domestic imperatives. Furthermore, Basu (2019) emphasizes that effective governance in this context requires a perspective of sovereignty that balances national autonomy with the realities of global interdependence.

Contemporary challenges such as climate change, technological advancements, and global health crises, notably

exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, are intricately linked to the dynamics of International Political Economy (IPE) and the evolving nature of bipolarity (LeBaron et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has further illuminated the interconnectedness of global challenges, revealing the limitations of traditional state-centric responses. As nations grappled with the immediate health crisis, the pandemic also disrupted global supply chains and economic stability, exacerbating existing inequalities and highlighting the vulnerabilities of health systems (Dentico, 2021). The pandemic's impact on public health has been profound, with studies indicating that the crisis has intensified mental health issues and social disparities, particularly among disadvantaged populations (Lass-Hennemann et al., 2023). This situation calls for a reevaluation of global governance frameworks, emphasizing the need for collaborative intelligence and coordinated responses that address both health and environmental challenges simultaneously (Lucero-Prisno et al., 2022). Moreover, the U.S.-China rivalry complicates these challenges, as both nations vie for leadership in addressing climate change and public health issues. The competition for technological supremacy, particularly in areas such as vaccine development, artificial intelligence, and green technologies, reflects a broader struggle for influence in shaping global governance norms (Bown & Irwin, 2021; Mora et al. 2022). This rivalry can hinder collaborative efforts, as national interests often take precedence over collective action, leading to fragmented responses to crises that require global cooperation.

These issues demand collaborative strategies that transcend rigid categorizations of state power and sovereignty. For instance, the concept of scientific sovereignty highlights how corporate and biomedical interests can reshape state authority in public health, illustrating the intricate interplay between state and non-state actors in addressing global challenges (Samsky, 2012). Similarly, the discourse on economic sovereignty underscores the tension between national interests and the imperatives of an interconnected global economy, (Okoli & Atelhe, 2021; Nour, 2020). Addressing these issues requires innovative strategies that transcend traditional paradigms, fostering collaboration among states, international organizations, and non-state actors. As the world faces an array of interconnected crises, the pursuit of effective solutions will depend on the ability to integrate diverse perspectives and interests, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and equitable global community.

This paper posits that the current state of global relations is characterized not solely by the interactions of established powers but also by the intricate networks of economic interdependencies and political alliances that defy traditional bipolar frameworks. By examining these contemporary geopolitical trends and their implications for the international political economy, this paper aims to elucidate the evolving nature of power structures and their effects on global governance. A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is essential for scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike, as they navigate an increasingly uncertain world where the quest for influence serves as both a catalyst for cooperation and a potential source of conflict.

## 2. Implications of Bipolarity on Global Order

Bipolarity denotes a world order framework where the preponderance of global economic, military, and cultural influence is concentrated within two dominant states. This system is characterized by the formation of two distinct power blocs that engage in ongoing competition, fostering a certain level of stability in global affairs (Fliess, 1966). A quintessential example of a bipolar world is the Cold War scenario between the United States and the Soviet Union, significantly shaping international relations throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. As Gilpin (1975) articulated, international political economy involves the reciprocal and dynamic interaction in international relations of the pursuit of wealth and the pursuit of power.

The existence of bipolarity carries profound implications for global order. A key consequence is that two rival powers cannot maintain equilibrium indefinitely; thus, the emergence of conflict becomes an unavoidable characteristic of a bipolar system (Vlados et al., 2022). This dynamic can be observed as a transitional phase within the broader spectrum of world order, potentially culminating in either unipolarity—resulting from the decline of one superpower—or, conversely, multipolarity, with the rise of a third major power (Bekkevold & Tunsjø, 2022; Ikenberry, 2020). Furthermore, bipolarity often leads to the creation of power blocs, wherein smaller nations align themselves with one of the superpowers, complicating the geopolitical landscape (Buzan, 2018).

During periods of bipolarity, the stability of global order is often called into question. Warfare appears to be a necessary mechanism for resolving rivalries between the dominant powers (Kapitonenko, 2024). Consequently, it is more accurate to characterize the bipolar world as one of dynamic equilibrium; although both sides may initially possess equal power, fluctuations occur where one emerges momentarily stronger before the other reestablishes balance. This ongoing tension fosters competition, potentially escalating into conflict (Scott, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2021).

## 3. Theoretical Insights on Bipolarity

Morgenthau's (1985) seminal work, *Politics Among Nations*, emerged in the context of the early Cold War and

offered a critical lens through which to analyze international relations characterized by bipolarity and nuclear armament. Morgenthau (1985) contended that bipolarity acted as a double-edged sword—possessing the capability to yield both unprecedented benefits and significant perils. He argued that it enabled the fierce opposition of two dominant power blocs while simultaneously offering the prospect of regulating this opposition through a delicate equilibrium of power, supported by moderate competition (Morgenthau, 1985).

Building on these insights, Waltz (1959) developed a formal deductive theory of international relations that emphasized the structural characteristics of the international system. He posited that the nature of the system, the number of dominant actors, and the distribution of their capabilities were fundamental to understanding global stability. Consequently, Waltz minimized the importance of state attributes, such as leadership qualities, in favor of a structuralist perspective. He maintained that bipolarity was inherently less war-prone than multipolarity, attributing the absence of major conflict during the Cold War to the balance of power that bipolarity conferred. He argued that conflicts derived primarily from miscalculations, where states incorrectly assessed the relative power or cohesion of opposing coalitions (Waltz, 1959).

Waltz also anticipated that the international system might transition peacefully from bipolarity to multipolarity; however, he cautioned that such transitions were fraught with the potential for increased conflict. His neo-realist framework acknowledged the heightened war-proneness of multipolar systems, arguing that the long peace of the Cold War era was sustained by the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons. Waltz viewed nuclear capabilities as a critical element within the unit-level complexities of international relations, suggesting that they fundamentally influenced the war-proneness of states within the bipolar system (Waltz, 1959; Morgenthau & Waltz, 2022).

Recent scholarship continues to explore these theoretical foundations, examining their relevance in contemporary global dynamics. Ikenberry (2021) emphasizes the transformative effects of global institutions on power dynamics, while Mearsheimer (2021) highlights the competitive nature of great power politics. Collectively, these theories contribute to an evolving understanding of how contemporary bipolarity may shape global governance and conflict. For instance, the U.S.-China rivalry presents a markedly different landscape compared to the historical bipolarity of the Cold War. Unlike the rigid ideological divide that characterized the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, the current power dynamics are shaped by a complex interplay of economic interdependence, technological competition, and multifaceted global challenges (Wyne, 2022). In the Cold War era, bipolarity was defined by a clear dichotomy of military might and ideological supremacy, where each superpower sought to expand its influence through direct confrontation and proxy wars. By contrast, the U.S.-China rivalry is characterized by a subtle competition that encompasses not only military capabilities but also economic strength, technological innovation, and soft power strategies (Nye, 2023). The U.S.-China relationship is marked by deep economic ties that complicate the rivalry as the two nations are each other's largest trading partners, creating a paradox where economic cooperation coexists with strategic competition (Bown & Irwin, 2021). This interdependence complicates traditional notions of sovereignty and power, as states must balance their national interests with the realities of globalization. Nye's (2004) concept of soft power is particularly relevant here, as both nations leverage cultural influence and diplomatic engagement to enhance their global standing while simultaneously competing for strategic advantages.

Moreover, Strange's (1996) insights into the control gap highlight the challenges states face in maintaining authority in an increasingly interconnected world. As states navigate the complexities of global governance, they often find their capacity to exert control undermined by transnational actors and economic forces that operate beyond their jurisdiction. This dynamic is also evident in the U.S.-China rivalry, where multinational corporations and non-state actors play significant roles in shaping policy outcomes and public opinion, further complicating the ability of states to assert their authority (Kahler, 2020). These complexities are crucial to comprehend the current power dynamics and their implications for global governance and stability.

#### **4. The Transition from Bipolarity**

The conclusion of the Cold War marked a shift in the global political landscape, signifying the dissolution of bipolarity and culminating in the end of a prolonged nuclear standoff and decades of strategic containment focused on the Soviet Union (Egeland, 2020; Siracusa & Coleman, 2000). The international order established during the mid-20th century was underpinned by foundational principles that governed the organization and interactions among Western liberal democracies. These principles included a steadfast commitment to an open world economy characterized by multilateral management, as well as efforts to stabilize socioeconomic welfare across nations (Everett, 2020).

The political vision that undergirded this order was deemed as significant as the anticipated economic benefits it would yield. As a result, the major industrial democracies moved to domesticate their international engagements

through a complex web of multilateral institutions, intergovernmental relations, and collaborative management of both Western and global political economies (Quazi et al., 2019; Telljohann et al., 2009). This collective commitment rendered security and stability in the West intrinsically linked to a plethora of institutional frameworks, such as the United Nations and its various agencies, alongside the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Bell & Quek, 2017). These institutions not only facilitated cooperative governance but also acted to mitigate conflict and cultivate a sense of political community among the member states (Meyerrose, 2020; Neumann & Sending, 2010).

The contemporary discourse increasingly frames the world as a global village devoid of traditional boundaries or frontiers. Advances in communication and information technology have ostensibly minimized the distances between individuals, enabling instantaneous access to global events for citizens across geographic divides. However, the realities of globalization present a counter-narrative. Globalization exacerbates inequalities within this so-called village, leading to pronounced divisions between affluent minorities and impoverished majorities (Sid-Ahmed, 2000). Thus, while the erosion of boundaries may create the illusion of a more connected world, it simultaneously magnifies the stark contrasts and disparities inherent within it (Sassen, 2014). In this context, Sid-Ahmed (2000) articulates, we inhabit an 'Einsteinian world' in which broader distances are created within smaller spaces, where dualities proliferate rather than diminish, and at the core of these dualities lies a new manifestation of bipolarity. The transition away from a strictly bipolar world order requires an understanding of these interconnections and inequalities, posing significant challenges for global governance and international relations in this complex new era.

### **5. The Emergence of a New Bipolarity**

The conclusion of the Cold War indeed heralded a significant transformation in the global political landscape, often perceived as a shift towards a unipolar world dominated by the United States. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States emerged as the sole superpower, leading to a reconfiguration of international relations characterized by American primacy (Bhattarai & Lamichhane, 2024). The unipolar moment was characterized by the United States' ability to shape international norms and policies without the constraints previously imposed by a rival superpower (Hehir, 2023). This period was marked by an expectation that the United States would lead the world towards greater stability and prosperity, leveraging its unmatched military and economic power (Hehir, 2023). The implications of this shift were profound, as the U.S. sought to promote its values and interests globally, often through multilateral institutions and alliances that were redefined considering the new geopolitical reality (Morra, 2016).

Furthermore, the emergence of a unipolar world order has been analyzed in terms of its sustainability, with some scholars arguing that unipolarity is inherently unstable due to the dynamics of international relations and the potential for rising powers to challenge U.S. dominance (Abdulle, 2024). The post-Cold War era has seen the United States engage in various military interventions and diplomatic efforts to maintain its hegemonic position, reflecting the complexities of managing a unipolar world (Naji & Jawan, 2011).

Theories celebrating the end of bipolarity, such as Fukuyama's (1992) "end-of-history" thesis, posited that historical conflict would yield to a new era of cohesion and cooperation. However, the resurgence of conflict in various forms has undermined this assertion, leading to Huntington's (1996) clash of civilizations theory, which suggests that cultural and civilizational identities are destined to collide. By contrast, Sid-Ahmed (2000) advocates for a dialogue of civilizations, promoting the idea of diversity within unity rather than inevitable conflict. This new bipolarity manifests not through ideological allegiance to an alternative world order but through a shared sense of alienation from a system perceived as failing to meet the aspirations of diverse populations.

Efforts to establish a viable alternative to the prevailing world order have indeed emerged, notably through the Sid-Ahmed's (2000) concept of the "Third Way." This approach seeks a middle ground between unbridled capitalism and the forces of extremism, often represented by terrorism. The idea of the Third Way has been discussed as a response to the challenges posed by globalization and the perceived failures of both neoliberal capitalism and authoritarianism (Macdonald & Macdonald, 2019). However, the realization of this Third Way remains elusive, as the transition from a bipolar world order characterized by two antagonistic blocs to a globalized framework has resulted in a singular legitimacy that lacks the checks and balances of its predecessors (Nishantha & Upul, 2016).

The previous bipolar legitimacy stemmed from a shared commitment to combat fascism, which ultimately devolved into a Cold War marked by mutual suspicion and conflict. The dissolution of the communist bloc in the late 20th century further complicated the search for a new normative framework, as the unipolar moment led to a dominance of U.S. hegemony without a corresponding global consensus (Casier, 2021). Scholars argue that the

current international system is experiencing a profound crisis, as the normative foundations that once underpinned the post-Cold War order are crumbling, leaving a vacuum that has not yet been filled by alternative frameworks (Close, 2010). Moreover, the emergence of new global powers, particularly China and Russia, has challenged the existing order and prompted discussions about the need for a more pluralistic approach to international relations (Korkmaz & Turan, 2021). This shift reflects a growing recognition that the unipolar world order is increasingly contested and that a multipolar world may be on the horizon, demanding new forms of governance and cooperation among states (Karkour, 2017). The challenges posed by terrorism, economic inequality, and environmental crises further underscore the need for innovative approaches that transcend traditional geopolitical rivalries and foster collaborative solutions (Sakwa, 2024).

The United States' capacity to assume a leadership role in this context is crucial. However, the rise of terrorism and the persistence of nuclear apartheid—where select states maintain nuclear arsenals—underscore the significant flaws within the current order. Such disparities threaten to exacerbate tensions between the forces advocating for international law and order and those challenging it, thereby complicating the global commitment to peaceful conflict resolution (Sid-Ahmed, 1998). The emergence of a new bipolarity reflects global dynamics that challenges the simplistic narratives of unipolarity and ideological conflict. The ongoing transformation of international relations calls for a reevaluation of legitimacy and governance structures to address the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century. Understanding these shifts is essential for navigating the contemporary international landscape, where the quest for legitimacy and stability continues to shape the interactions among states and non-state actors alike.

#### **4. The Role of International Political Economy**

The field of International Political Economy (IPE) has evolved significantly since its inception, driven by the recognition of the interconnectedness of politics and economics in shaping global affairs. Strange's (1970) seminal article, "International Economics and International Relations: A Case of Mutual Neglect," underscored the critical gap between these disciplines, arguing that neglecting their interrelationship hindered understanding of the evolving world economy. Strange (1971) called for a more integrated approach that would occupy the middle ground between political and economic analysis, thus laying the groundwork for the development of IPE as a distinct field of study.

IPE posits that politics and economics are inseparable, a view supported by Hirst and Thompson (2002), who contend that the international economy is the product of complex interactions between economic relations and political dynamics, shaped by the struggles of Great Powers. This perspective challenges the validity of the distinction between the international and national spheres, emphasizing that global economic transformations have profound implications for domestic politics and vice versa. In this context, questions surrounding systemic transformation—how the world economy has evolved and the consequences of that evolution—remain crucial. Strange (1971) noted fundamental changes in the balance between states and markets, highlighting the "unequal pace of change" between the international political and economic systems. Keohane (1984) further elaborated on this transformation, identifying a "control gap" that emerged as governments struggled to maintain authority in the face of increasing economic interdependence. The post-World War II revival of trade and investment fostered vast areas of international interaction that often occurred without direct governmental involvement, leading to the rise of transnational actors who play significant roles in global governance.

While states remain pivotal actors in global affairs, the expansion of world markets has diminished their exclusive power to determine outcomes. This shift necessitated a departure from the state-centric focus of traditional realist theory, advocating for a more encompassing transnational paradigm consistent with liberal perspectives. Their concept of complex interdependence emphasized the multiple channels connecting national societies and the absence of a hierarchical structure among global issues (Keohane and Nye, 2001). The implications of complex interdependence have been interpreted differently by scholars. Cox (1981) viewed the changes as a radical transformation of social forces within the global economy, suggesting the emergence of a new global class structure that coexists with national class structures, driven largely by the internationalization of production through multinational corporations. He argued for a broader analytical lens that transcends traditional IR theories, as new social relations are being forged that could fundamentally alter the existing world order.

Conversely, Ruggie (1982) focused on the concept of international regimes, defined by Krasner (1983) as principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in each issue area. Ruggie (1982) distinguished between norm-governed change, which preserves existing normative frameworks, and norm-transforming change, which signifies a deeper, more fundamental transformation. He posited that the post-World War II economic regime aimed to balance domestic stability with an open multilateral

market system, coining the term embedded liberalism to describe this compromise.

As the 1990s ushered in discussions of globalization, many scholars argued that the integration of national economies had reached a point where the balance of power had shifted decisively in favor of markets over states. The control gap identified by Nye and Keohane (2001) appeared increasingly unbridgeable, leading to debates about the nature of power in international relations. Gilpin (2001) contended that while national governments still play a crucial role in economic decision-making, their influence is tempered by the realities of globalization. Garrett's (2000) empirical analysis identified the information technology revolution as a primary driver of financial market integration, while the internationalization of production was largely a response to rising costs faced by governments attempting to insulate their economies from external pressures. He concluded that globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon, resistant to simplistic generalizations.

The discourse surrounding multipolarity has also evolved, with some scholars arguing that the concept of superpower status is outdated considering complex global interdependencies. This perspective suggests that the United States, despite its significant economic influence, is not self-sufficient and relies on mutual dependencies with both developed and developing nations (Thompson, 1988). The intricate web of diplomatic and economic relationships has made it increasingly challenging for states to pursue foreign policy independently. Recent studies have further explored the implications of these dynamics. Feng (2023) provides a comprehensive analysis of the United States-China trade war, examining its causes and significant impacts on global trade and economic stability, highlighting the complexities of contemporary international relations. Animashaun (2023) discusses how religious networks can be leveraged for public health promotion, particularly in settings with limited access to formal health insurance, thereby emphasizing the multifaceted relationship between health outcomes and economic stability. Vargas et al. (2023) analyze the impact of economic crises on the agricultural sector in Mexico, demonstrating how health and economic factors are intertwined during periods of instability. This intersection is further illustrated by Çiraklı (2021), who investigates the effects of economic crises on health systems in Turkey, highlighting the decline in health spending during economic downturns.

The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a critical case study in understanding these dynamics. Recto and Lesser (2020) emphasize the disproportionate impact of health crises on marginalized populations, illustrating how economic factors exacerbate health inequalities. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2023) argue that public health crises, such as COVID-19, have severe consequences on economic stability and societal sustainability, reinforcing the need for comprehensive governance approaches that address both health and economic challenges. Massuda et al. (2018) note that external shocks, including economic and political crises, can adversely affect health systems, leading to increased demand for social protection programs and highlighting the interconnectedness of health and economic policies. Bambra et al. (2020) explore the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on health inequalities, emphasizing the need for robust public health policy responses to mitigate these effects. Undoubtedly, the challenges of global governance in the context of these crises are complex and multifaceted.

The arena of international political economy is critical for understanding globalization's impact on state power and legitimacy. As the international economy serves as the principal conduit for globalization, it is essential to analyze the changes occurring at both global and local levels. The complexities of global governance indicate that straightforward solutions are unlikely, as these issues are poised to intensify in the years to come (Okeke et al., 2022).

## **7. The Role of State and Non-State Actors in Addressing Global Challenges**

The interaction between state and non-state actors has become increasingly pivotal in addressing global challenges, particularly in public health and economic sovereignty. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies how these actors influence global governance and the complexities surrounding sovereignty. During the pandemic, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international health organizations played crucial roles in vaccine development, distribution, and public health messaging. For instance, the collaboration between pharmaceutical companies and governments facilitated the rapid development of vaccines, underscoring the importance of private sector innovation in public health crises (Hickmann & Elsässer, 2020). However, this collaboration also raised significant questions about economic sovereignty, as countries grappled with the implications of relying on foreign entities for critical health resources (Hummel et al., 2021).

The concept of data sovereignty has emerged as a critical issue in the digital age, particularly concerning health data management and privacy. Data sovereignty refers to the legal and regulatory frameworks governing how data is stored and accessed within national boundaries. In the context of contact tracing apps developed during the pandemic, states faced the challenge of balancing public health needs with individual privacy rights. This scenario illustrates how state authority can be undermined by the actions of technology companies that operate across

borders, complicating the notion of sovereignty in the digital realm (Sircar et al., 2020).

Additionally, global health partnerships (GHPs) exemplify the shifting dynamics of sovereignty in public health. GHPs often involve collaborations between states and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and private foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. These partnerships can enhance the capacity of national health systems but may also lead to a reconfiguration of sovereignty, as external actors gain influence over domestic health policies and priorities. For example, in Zambia, the Clinton Foundation's involvement in health initiatives raised questions about the extent of state authority and the implications of outsourcing health governance to non-state actors (Wintrup, 2021).

The relationship between state and non-state actors in public health and economic sovereignty underscores the necessity for collaborative strategies that transcend traditional state-centric approaches. A heterarchical framework can be particularly useful in this context, as it allows for a more fluid and dynamic interaction among diverse actors, recognizing that power and influence are distributed across multiple levels rather than being concentrated in a single hierarchy (Ramjit, 2024). This approach fosters collaboration and innovation, enabling states to leverage the expertise and resources of non-state actors while maintaining a degree of sovereignty over their health policies (Nivette et al., 2021). As global challenges become increasingly complex and interconnected, effective governance will require the integration of diverse perspectives and expertise from various stakeholders. This collaborative approach is essential for addressing pressing issues such as pandemics, climate change, and economic inequality, ultimately fostering a more resilient and equitable global community (Calzada, 2021). The challenges of global governance are multifaceted, indicating that straightforward solutions are unlikely as these issues are poised to intensify in the years to come (İşeri & Botetzagias, 2024).

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the complexities of bipolarity and International Political Economy (IPE), elucidating the complex dynamics that define the contemporary global order. Historically, bipolarity, epitomized by the Cold War, has profoundly influenced power, economics, and security on the world stage. The dichotomy of two superpowers established a framework that dictated international relations and shaped global economic structures and cultural exchanges. However, this competitive equilibrium, characterized by constant tension and the potential for conflict, underscores the inherent instability of a bipolar system, where the emergence of rival power blocs complicates international interactions.

As the world transitions into a post-Cold War era, the disintegration of traditional bipolarity has not signified the end of power dynamics; rather, it has given rise to new forms of polarization, often defined by ideological, economic, and cultural divides. The scrutiny of the unipolarity that followed the Cold War reveals that instead of fostering harmony, the world has witnessed increasing divisions and conflicts. The theories of Fukuyama and Huntington illustrate the ongoing relevance of bipolarity, albeit in a transformed context, as cultural clashes and historical grievances continue to shape international relations.

The relevance of IPE in this evolving landscape emphasizes the interdependence of political and economic factors, challenging traditional state-centric paradigms. Insights from scholars such as Susan Strange, Joseph Nye, and Robert Keohane highlight the need to combine economic realities with political analysis, acknowledging the myriad of transnational actors and the complexities of global interactions. The emergence of a “control gap” signifies the challenges states face in maintaining authority in an interconnected world, complicating their ability to navigate the increasingly intricate landscape of international affairs.

Considering the pressing global challenges we face—ranging from terrorism and nuclear proliferation to socioeconomic disparities—it is evident that the remnants of bipolarity persist in various forms. There is an urgent need for a renewed framework that accommodates the nuances of contemporary power relations and the dynamics of globalization. This requires a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive understanding of global governance that embraces the diversity of interests and identities present in the global village.

Ultimately, bipolarity and IPE remains a critical area for scholarly inquiry and practical application. Scholars and policymakers must engage with these historical and contemporary dynamics to develop innovative approaches that transcend traditional frameworks. By fostering dialogue among civilizations and promoting collaborative strategies, the creation of a more equitable and harmonious global community is possible. This collective effort is essential for enhancing society's ability to address the pressing challenges and ensure stability in an increasingly polarized world.

## References

Abdulle, M. (2024). The rise of the multipolar world order: Opportunities and challenges for Africa. *Journal of*

- International Relations and Policy*, 5(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.47941/jirp.1720>
- Albekov, A., Polubotko, A., & Akopova, E. (2014). The problem of preserving the nation-state sovereignty in the context of globalization. *Asian Social Science*, 10(23). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n23p178>
- Animashaun, J. (2023). Contagious crowds and rational faithfuls: A club theory approach. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 51(2), 199–226. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijse-11-2022-0719>
- Bambra, C., Riordan, R., Ford, J., & Matthews, F. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and health inequalities. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 74(11), 964–968. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2020-214401>
- Basu, P. (2019). State sovereignty and stability: Conflicting and converging principles. In P. Basu (Ed.), *State sovereignty and stability* (pp. 1-7). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74336-3\\_290-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74336-3_290-1)
- Bekkevold, J. I., & Tunsjø, Ø. (2022). The geopolitical foundations for U.S. strategy in a new U.S.-China bipolar system. *China International Strategy Review*, 4, 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-022-00109-y>
- Bell, M., & Quek, K. (2017). Authoritarian public opinion and the democratic peace. *International Organization*, 72(1), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s002081831700042x>
- Bhattarai, G., & Lamichhane, D. (2024). Twigging the US-China competition from the lens of offensive realism: Implications for Nepal. *Journal of APF Command and Staff College*, 7(1), 219–240. <https://doi.org/10.3126/japfsc.v7i1.67005>
- Bown, C. P., & Irwin, D. A. (2021). The U.S.-China trade rivalry and its implications for global governance. *Journal of International Commerce and Economics*, 13(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3732043>
- Buzan, B. (2018). *The evolution of international security studies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Calzada, I. (2021). Data co-operatives through data sovereignty. *Smart Cities*, 4(3), 1158–1172. <https://doi.org/10.3390/smartcities4030062>
- Casier, T. (2021). Stumbling from incident to incident: The systemic crisis of the post-Cold War order. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 36(3), 410–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1869182>
- Çiraklı, Ü. (2021). Investigation of the impacts of economic crises on the health system in Turkey: An ARDL bounds testing approach. *International Journal of Health Management and Tourism*. <https://doi.org/10.31201/ijhmt.819982>
- Close, P. (2010). Olympiads as mega-events and the pace of globalization: Beijing 2008 in context. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27(16-18), 2976–3007. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2010.508303>
- Dentico, N. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on global health systems. *Global Health Action*, 14(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2021.1896896>
- Egeland, K. (2020). Who stole disarmament? History and nostalgia in nuclear abolition discourse. *International Affairs*, 96(5), 1387–1403. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaa096>
- Everett, J. (2020). The future of EU-Russian relations: A common European home? *The Review of European Affairs*, 4(1), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.51149/roea.1.2020.5>
- Feng, X. (2023). Shaping the global business environment on the United States-China trade war. *Pacific International Journal*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.55014/pij.v6i3.424>
- Fliess, P. (1966). *Thucydides and the politics of bipolarity*. Louisiana: Baton Rouge.
- Gilpin, R. (1975). *US power and the multinational corporation: The challenge of the American economic empire*. Basic Books.
- Gilpin, R. (2001). *Global political economy: Understanding the international economic order*. Princeton University Press.
- Hehir, A. (2023). 'An expensive commodity'? The impact of hope on US foreign policy during the 'unipolar moment'. *European Journal of International Relations*, 29(1), 202–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540661221143941>
- Hickmann, T., & Elsässer, J. (2020). New alliances in global environmental governance: How intergovernmental treaty secretariats interact with non-state actors to address transboundary environmental problems. *International Environmental Agreements Politics Law and Economics*, 20(3), 459–481. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-020-09493-5>



- Hirst, P., & Thompson, G. (2002). *Globalization in question: The international economy and the possibilities of governance*. Polity Press.
- Hoffman, J., & Cowderly, J. (2020). Interprofessional education and collaboration in public health: A multidisciplinary health professions IPE project. *Journal of Public Health, 10*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-020-013811>
- Hummel, P., Braun, M., Tretter, M., & Dabrock, P. (2021). Data sovereignty: A review. *Big Data & Society, 8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720982012>
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2001). *After victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars*. Princeton University Press.
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2020). The end of liberal international order? *International Affairs, 94*(1), 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz246>
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2021). The rise of China and the future of the West: Can the liberal system survive? *Foreign Affairs, 76*(1), 23–37.
- İşeri, E., & Botetzagias, I. (2024). Communication on climate change in the Mediterranean by non-state actors: A framing analysis. *Alternatif Politika, 16*(1), 91–114. <https://doi.org/10.53376/ap.2024.04>
- Kahler, M. (2020). The rise of non-state actors in global governance. *International Organization, 74*(1), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818319000344>
- Kapitonenko, M. (2024). How the Russian-Ukrainian war is transforming international system and international order. *Actual Problems of International Relations, 158*, 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.17721/apmv.2024.158.1.26-35>
- Karkour, H. (2017). Unipolarity's unpeacefulness and U.S. foreign policy: Consequences of a 'coherent system of irrationality'. *International Relations, 32*(1), 60–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117817726363>
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (2001). *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*. Longman.
- Korkmaz, H., & Turan, İ. (2021). Analysis of the competition between China and the U.S. in the 21st century from the perspective of the concept of hybrid cold war. *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 21*(2), 367–390. <https://doi.org/10.18037/ausbd.959232>
- Lass-Hennemann, J., et al. (2023). Mental health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Medicine, 53*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291722000011>
- LeBaron, G., Mügge, D., Best, J., & Hay, C. (2020). Blind spots in IPE: Marginalized perspectives and neglected trends in contemporary capitalism. *Review of International Political Economy, 28*(2), 283–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1830835>
- Lucero-Prisno, D. E., et al. (2022). Global governance in the context of health and environmental crises. *Global Health, 18*(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-022-00864-0>
- Macdonald, T., & Macdonald, K. (2019). Towards a 'pluralist' world order: Creative agency and legitimacy in global institutions. *European Journal of International Relations, 26*(2), 518–544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066119873134>
- Massuda, A., Hone, T., Leles, F., Castro, M., & Atun, R. (2018). The Brazilian health system at crossroads: Progress, crisis, and resilience. *BMJ Global Health, 3*(4), e000829. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2018-000829>
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2021). *The great delusion: Liberal dreams and international realities*. Yale University Press.
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2021). *The great delusion: Liberal dreams and international realities*. Yale University Press.
- Meyerrose, A. (2020). The unintended consequences of democracy promotion: International organizations and democratic backsliding. *Comparative Political Studies, 53*(10–11), 1547–1581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414019897689>
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1985). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*. McGraw-Hill.
- Morra, M. (2016). The Palestine-Israeli peace process after the Cold War. *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy, 4*(2). <https://doi.org/10.15640/jirfp.v4n2a4>
- Müller-Jentsch, W. (2015). Formation, development and current state of industrial democracy in Germany.

- Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 22(1), 45–62.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258915619294>
- Naji, S., & Jawan, J. (2011). U.S.-Iran relations in the post-Cold War geopolitical order. *Asian Social Science*, 7(9).  
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n9p94>
- Neumann, I. B., & Sending, O. J. (2010). The international relation of the state. *European Journal of International Relations*, 16(2), 205–226.
- Nishantha, H., & Upul, A. (2016). The U.S. attempt at supremacy in the twenty-first century: Russian and Chinese response. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 10(7), 96–104.  
<https://doi.org/10.5897/ajpsir2016.0888>
- Nivette, A., Zahnow, R., Ruiz, R., Ahven, A., Amram, S., Ariel, B., ... & Eisner, M. (2021). A global analysis of the impact of COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions on crime. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(7), 868–877.  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01139-z>
- Nour, A. (2020). National sovereignty and globalization. *European Journal of Economics Law and Politics*, 07(03).  
<https://doi.org/10.19044/elj.v7no3a1>
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public Affairs.
- Nye, J. S. (2023). Soft power and great-power competition. In *China and globalization*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0714-4>
- Okeke, C., Eigbiremolen, G., Uzochukwu, B., Mbachu, C., & Onwujekwe, O. (2022). The role of contextual factors in private sector engagement: A case study of private sector contribution to COVID-19 mitigation in Nigeria. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.915330>
- Okoli, A., & Atelhe, A. (2021). Africa and the ‘globalization bargain’: Towards a collective economic sovereignty. *Austral Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations*, 10(19). <https://doi.org/10.22456/2238-6912.113344>
- Quazi, R., Ballentine, W., Bindu, F., & Blyden, L. (2019). Multilateral foreign aid, bilateral foreign aid, and foreign direct investment in Latin America. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 9(2), 284–290.  
<https://doi.org/10.32479/ijefi.7520>
- Ramjit, D. (2022). From postinternationalism to heterarchy: Turbulence and distance proximities in a world of globalization and fragmentation. In Philip G. Cerny (Ed.), *Heterarchy in world politics*. Routledge.
- Ramjit, D. (2024). Navigating power dynamics among state and non-state entities. In D. Burrell (Ed.), *Leadership action and intervention in health, business, education, and technology*. IGI Global. <https://www.igi-global.com/book/leadership-action-intervention-health-business/338400>
- Recto, P., & Lesser, J. (2020). Young Hispanic fathers during COVID-19: Balancing parenthood, finding strength, and maintaining hope. *Public Health Nursing*, 38(3), 367–373. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12857>
- Ruggie, J. G. (1982). International regimes, transactions, and change: Embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order. *International Organization*, 36(2), 379–415. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300018991>
- Sakwa, R. (2024). The international system and the clash of world orders. *China International Strategy Review*, 6(1), 39–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-024-00163-8>
- Samsky, E. (2012). Scientific sovereignty: The role of corporate and biomedical interests in public health. *Global Health Governance*, 6(2), 1–15.
- Sassen, S. (2014). *Expulsions: Brutality and complexity in the global economy*. Harvard University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2014). *Expulsions: Brutality and complexity in the global economy*. Harvard University Press.
- Sid-Ahmed, M. (2000). The new bipolarity. *The Arab Studies Quarterly*, 22(4), 1–15.
- Siracusa, J., & Coleman, D. (2000). Scaling the nuclear ladder: Deterrence from Truman to Clinton. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54(3), 277–296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049910020012561>
- Sircar, N., Yadav, A., & Bialous, S. (2020). Assessing sector representation of non-state actors within the World Health Organization framework convention on tobacco control. *Global Public Health*, 16(7), 1111–1121.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2020.1823451>
- Strange, S. (1970). International economics and international relations: A case of mutual neglect. *International Affairs*, 46(2), 304–315.

- Strange, S. (1971). Sterling and British policy: A political view. *International Affairs*, 47(2), 302–315. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2613930>
- Telljohann, V., Costa, I., Müller, T., Rehfeldt, U., & Zimmer, R. (2009). European and international framework agreements: New tools of transnational industrial relations. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 15(3–4), 505–525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10242589090150031701>
- Thomas, B. (1991). The end of the Cold War. *International Affairs*, 67(4), 775–776. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2622457>
- Vargas, M., Lázaro, L., & Ortiz, H. (2023). Health and economic crises and the Mexican agricultural sector. *Agro Productividad*. <https://doi.org/10.32854/agrop.v16i7.2545>
- Vlados, C., Chatziniolaou, D., & Iqbal, B. A. (2022). New globalization and multipolarity: A critical review and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership case. *Journal of Economic Integration*, 37(3), 458–483. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27158034>
- Waltz, K. (1959). *Man, the state, and war: A theoretical analysis*. Columbia University Press.
- Waltz, K. (1991). *Theory of international politics*. McGraw-Hill.
- Wintrup, J. (2021). Outsourcing sovereignty: Global health partnerships and the state in Zambia. *Critical Public Health*, 31(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2021.1945535>
- Wyne, A. (2022). The evolving geopolitics of economic interdependence between the United States and China: Reflections on a deteriorating great-power relationship. *Asia Policy*, 17(3), 81–105. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27227221>
- Zhang, D., Pee, L., Pan, S., & Wang, J. (2023). Information practices in data analytics for supporting public health surveillance. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 75(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24841>

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).