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Battles of Influence: A Constructivist and Realist Analysis of Great Power Rivalries and Regional Stability in the 21st Century

Baha' Aldeen Raed Suliman Almomani
University Sultan Zainal Abidin/Unisza, Faculty of Languages and Communication
Email: Almomanibaha5@gmail.com, Safababa2008@gmail.com

Prof. Madya Dr. Mohd Nazri Bin Latiff Azmi
University Sultan Zainal Abidin/Unisza/Malaysia, Faculty of Languages And Communication
Email: mohdnazri@unisza.edu.my

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Abstract
This study explores the impact of modern rivalries represented by major powers such as the United States, China, and Russia on regional stability in the twenty-first century. It outlines how these powerful nations interact and the competitive dynamics that influence conflict-ridden areas, as well as how to utilize international relations theories like realism and constructivism to achieve stability. The study aims to address critical concerns regarding the importance of international alliances and organizations in conflict zones and their role on the global stage. This is carried out by examining various sources that incorporate constructivist and realist perspectives, utilizing analytical approaches, qualitative methods, and contextual frameworks established in the study. This study contributes to the understanding of international politics, providing insights that are valuable for both scholars and policymakers.
Keywords: Great Power Rivalries, Regional Stability, International Politics, Constructivism, Realism.

Introduction

In contemporary times, relations between superpowers such as China, Russia, and the US are crucial as they influence the world positively or negatively in different manners. Their choices that stem from firm geopolitical contours can be felt in the regions that are far and wide from them (Waltz, 1979). Global power was concentrated in a bipolar system following World War II, and this structure persisted until the fall of the Soviet Union brought about a unipolar era controlled by the United States. The global order is still changing, though, as new powerful nations join long-standing players like the European Union and Japan. Even if a more equitable

allocation of power could have positive effects on the economy and society, it frequently causes political and military conflicts, especially when the world order is changing significantly. As power is now more widely dispersed, emerging powers are challenging post-World War II conventions and pursuing goals that may be very different from those of existing hegemons (Ikenberry, 2001).

Because there is no longer a single, dominant global force, this change opens the door for both state and nonstate revisionist players to operate in what some observers have referred to as the "gray zone" (Mazarr, 2015). Strategic operations such as low-intensity conflict and hybrid warfare, which steer clear of direct military combat and enable adversaries to further their objectives without inciting a full-scale reaction, are what define this conceptual space. A number of revisionist entities, including China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and even nonstate groups like the so-called Islamic State, pose a threat to the United States as it struggles with these dynamics. These actors frequently move in ways that circumvent conventional U.S. military capabilities, operating below the line of direct conflict (Wendt, 1999).

The current U.S. doctrine finds it difficult to adequately handle these complex relationships since it is still primarily based on a binary conception of peace and war. A updated theoretical model that takes into account armed conflict, competitiveness below it, and collaboration is crucial to comprehending these complexity (Mazarr, 2015). In acknowledging that national security strategies necessitate a comprehensive approach that takes into account the ideological and normative shifts affecting state behavior, this model offers a framework for addressing both constructivist insights on ideational influence and realist concerns about the distribution of material power (Nye, 2004).

This study, *Battles of Influence: A Constructivist and Realist Analysis of Great Power Rivalries and Regional Stability in the 21st Century*, is based on important works on strategic competition and regional stability, such as Harman (2024), in *Commission on the National Defense Strategy*, and theoretical viewpoints on power dynamics by academics like Mearsheimer (1990), and Wendt (1999). The study examines how great power rivalry impacts regional stability through both the material and ideational aspects of influence by examining various viewpoints. The approach contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how regional stability can be maintained or destroyed amid ongoing struggles for influence by elucidating the circumstances under which great powers navigate competition (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Such tactics can easily help alleviate conflict and competition among competing governments in one way or another to lead the region toward a more stable trajectory in this age of terror.

Research Question
How do great power rivalries shape regional security dynamics?

Research Objective
To investigate how these rivalries influence regional economy, politics, and security concerns.

Literature Review
The corpus of literature now available on international relations offers many theoretical frameworks for comprehending the impacts of great power rivalries. For example, realism

emphasizes the struggle for influence and power and frequently sees international politics as a zero-sum game (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). Constructivism examines how ideologies and identities influence state action, whereas liberalism stresses the need for international institutions and collaboration. Analyses of historical power struggles, like the Cold War, provide important context for understanding how cyclical these conflicts are. Current geopolitical conflicts are also important research topics, especially in locations like the South China Sea and the Middle East.

In their volume *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Buzan and Waever (2003), emphasized that everything regarding security was turned upside down after the Cold War. Superpower rivalry in the past has receded. Countries in different regions have begun implementing their plans free from external influences. Because of this shift, regional nations' interaction with one another as well as their engagement with the international order have become more visible and assertive. The first decade after the Cold War saw major countries like the USA and China, European Union, Japan, and Russia showing less interest and less preparedness to intervene in security issues beyond their immediate periphery (Buzan & Waever, 2003).

In contrast to the widespread engagement observed during the Cold War, Buzan and Waever (2003), argue that while events such as the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States may lead to some renewed great power interventionism, this will probably stay restricted in extent. Buzan and Waever (2003), contend that the new international security order is a clear departure from the strict bipolar framework of the Cold War era and cannot be adequately characterized by the conventional ideas of unipolarity, multipolarity, or globalization. Buzan and Waever (2003), stress that in order to comprehend patterns of amity and hostility in international relations, one must start at the regional level and then take into account both domestic and global actors. They contend that a mix of historical, political, and material variables internally determine regional dynamics rather than imposing them from the global system. While the regional level is crucial for assessing how global powers project influence and engage in rivalries, it is the most important level for security analysis for most states. Brown (1993), in *Disorder in the New World Order* indicates that the lack of a clear objective for international political and economic activities in the post-Cold War world is one of the most striking misunderstandings ever ascribed to the state of human society. The complete absence of focus in the US and other major powers' current foreign policy initiatives is equally perplexing due to its emphasis on competition.

The idea of competition, especially with China and Russia, has become more and more central to U.S. national security strategy, according to Mazarr (2022) in *Understanding Competition: Great Power Rivalry in a Changing International Order – Concepts and Theories*, influencing policy frameworks like the 2017 National Security Strategy and the 2018 National Defense Strategy. Although it wasn't exclusively about competition, the Biden administration's 2021 Interim National Security Guidance emphasized the value of strategic rivalry with China and highlighted domestic investment as the cornerstone of long-term competitive advantage. This emphasis on strategic competition, which Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has heightened, is reflected in important documents such as the 2018 Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning and the 2019 Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 as well as a number of service-specific strategies. These documents highlight the dangers of disorganized interagency efforts and the

necessity of integrated planning. Mazarr contends that although competition is vital, aspects of international collaboration continue to be crucial to U.S. policy. A comprehensive strategy is required for effective competition, utilizing both peace and possible war situations through integrated, adaptable planning to strengthen the United States' strategic position internationally (Mazarr, 2022).

According to Mazarr (2022), there are four main types of interstate competition: (1) continuous attempts by states to increase their power or influence; (2) more intense rivalries between states vying for control of the system; (3) militarized rivalries in which aggressive states are willing or even eager to use force; and (4) the increasingly popular idea of organized campaigns meant to obtain a strategic edge without going to war. Burkhart and Woody (2017) contend in *Strategic Competition Beyond Peace and War* that the post-World War II transition from a bipolar to a unipolar system demonstrates how the global battle for power is a perennial feature of international affairs. They now witness a changing multipolar scene in which existing actors are joined by new forces, bringing with them intricate political and military conflicts. As the United States confronts what General Joseph Dunford referred to as the "four-plus-one" challenges—ISIS, North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia—it faces adversaries that operate below the traditional conflict threshold in order to prevent a military reaction. According to Burkhart and Woody, the U.S. military's dichotomy of peace and war allows adversaries to pursue strategic goals without resorting to open warfare. They put out a conditions-based model that distinguishes between armed conflict itself, competition below it, and collaboration. They contend that this model provides a more thorough understanding of contemporary power conflicts and gives leaders a framework for successfully navigating competition through the use of economic measures, diplomacy, and clandestine activities outside of traditional warfare (Burkhart & Woody, 2017).

The skills of navigating competition require strategic political trends to have them serve the status quo of the competing states and generate an incubator for alternative measures rather than competition. Glaser (2010), developed and improved realism in international relations in his book *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation*. Glaser put forth a "grand theory" that challenges conventional notions of perpetual conflict under anarchy and suggests cooperation may frequently be more advantageous for states than competition. To lower tensions and the possibility of an arms race, Glaser advocates adopting defensive postures that communicate restraint to adversaries, making a distinction between "security-seeking" and "greedy" governments. Without undermining the fundamental tenets of realism, such as the idea of the state as a unitary actor, his theory aims to combine aspects of constructivism, institutionalism, and structural realism.

Glaser looks at how governments might communicate non-hostile intentions and concentrate on defensive rather than offensive capabilities to prevent conflict. He criticizes traditional realism's dependence on power-centric metrics, arguing that information about the intentions of adversaries, trustworthy signals, and the costs of defensive vs offensive investments are all crucial to maintaining international peace. Glaser's model aims to be internally coherent, logically consistent, and capable of forecasting state behavior in anarchic environments, despite certain drawbacks, such as its U.S.-centric focus and application mostly to bipolar rivalries. As seen by his scant attention to non-superpower dynamics, his theory

may need more intricacy to account for regional and multipolar conflicts, despite being more ambitious and hopeful than classic realism (Glaser, 2010).

The multipolar conflict is a fact supported by other researchers in the field. According to Solomon (2018) in *Constructive Competition as a Precursor to Cooperation*, relations between the United States and other countries, specifically China, have become more competitive under the present government's America First policy. This policy is designed to improve the welfare of the American people, but it seems at odds with the Chinese policy of Made in China 2025 strategy. Solomon believes this idea of the competition system is exaggerated and counterproductive. He supports better relations with China in general and on such matters as global warming and epidemics that extend beyond national borders.

Solomon (2018), further points out that the threats to national and global security are intertwined in that both countries must recognize the need to work together to meet their aspiration for progress. He criticizes the prioritization of military or trade competition where the interest for the citizens is rather limited. Rather, he calls out American and Chinese elites to be as competitive as possible in fostering social uplift or economic growth, for example in the areas of clean energy technology advancement and health care services.

Solomon (2018), uses, for example, the Space Race to show that competition can also be a resource for innovations meant to benefit all and not for particular groups. He further posits that building varying competitiveness could work towards addressing huge financing requirements for education, infrastructure, and health care, which would enjoin them with developing nations. Cooperation concerning vital issues such as global health, for instance, will help both nations foster confidence and build routes that can be used to tackle other difficult problems in the future. Solomon ends by declaring that implementing constructive competition is very important for the future existence of the countries as well as the entire world.
This literature review section is established according to the existing literature related to my study's objective and question

Discussion

The Influence of Classical Realism on Modern International Policy-Making

In this section, I will introduce a platform for discussing the criticisms of realism's factual role in the use and application of policy in addition to the manners of how the current international and political atmosphere perpetuates and transforms. Antunes and Camisão (2018) examine the fundamentals of realism as an approach to international relations in *Introducing Realism in International Relations Theory*, emphasizing its emphasis on the fundamentally competitive and conflict-driven character of world events. They stress that realism as a structured theory arose in the 20th century, but they trace the conceptual roots of realism back to ancient historical literature, especially Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. According to Antunes and Camisão, realism is based on many fundamental presumptions, including the idea that states are unitary entities pursuing a single national interest, the idea that the nation-state is the primary actor in international interactions, and the idea that state decision-makers are logical actors who put national security and survival first in a largely anarchic international environment (Antunes & Camisão, 2018).

These writers offer a significant viewpoint on the competitive and conflictual elements of realist theory in international relations (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). They stress that although realism is sometimes linked to 20th-century phenomena, its origins can be found in classical literature, particularly Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War. Realism as a fundamental philosophy of international relations: An understanding We gradually conclude that, from that time on—roughly 500 years ago to the present—everything tended to blend into human nature and cold-blooded politics in international affairs. knowledge realist viewpoints require a knowledge of their basic postulates, which include ideas like the state being a unitary actor, states having exclusive national interests, and a focus on national security. But it's equally critical to consider how these connections can evolve in the (less romantic) world of globalization and non-state or transnational players in the twenty-first century. The realist view of international relations, which is merely distributive, is rejected by certain academics like Keohane and Nye (2000), in favor of a more complicated brand in which cooperation occurs as much as competition. Therefore, realism must be viewed as just one aspect of a broader discussion that includes ideas like liberalism and constructivism—analogous traditions regarding how factors influence state behavior—even though it offers priceless insights to the study of international relations.

Realism emphasizes how human nature shapes state behavior, suggesting that egoism, a desire for power, and mistrust are innate characteristics that shape state behavior. Antunes and Camisão (2018), also cite Hans Morgenthau's post-World War II articulation of realism, which emphasized that laws derived from human nature control international politics, and Niccolò Machiavelli's focus on the use of force and deceit to secure the state. Defying idealist beliefs, Morgenthau argued that national interest is essentially immoral and driven more by power than by morality, warning that idealistic policies could erode a state's strength and leave it open to attack. I see that they emphasized how human nature's egoistic, power-hungry, and suspicious tendencies shape state-to-state interactions in every area of international relations. Hans Morgenthau articulated this view well when he proposed that international politics is governed by laws derived from human nature, which is why he recommended putting national interest ahead of moral standards (Antunes and Camisão 2018). Morgenthau's claims demonstrate a realist stance that rejects the importance of idealistic goals and cautions against the implementation of policies based on irrational moral presumptions at the expense of its power and security.

Realists contend that because their theory closely resembles how statecraft practitioners view global politics, it is frequently used in policymaking settings (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). Although this strategy reflects Machiavelli's intention to mentor leaders, others contend that realism might unintentionally legitimize the conflict and bloodshed it depicts. Realists may be encouraged to act with mistrust, power, and force by assuming that human beings are egoistic and that states lack hierarchical structure, which could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Additionally, realism is criticized for being unduly negative and for portraying the conflictual nature of the international system as unavoidable. However, realists argue that leaders are always constrained and have few opportunities for collaboration, which makes power politics a sensible strategy rather than a pessimistic one. Realists stress that there is little chance for peaceful or revolutionary transformation in international relations and caution that depending too much on idealistic results could backfire (Antunes & Camisão, 2018).

By creating "neorealism" or "structural realism," which departed from traditional realism's emphasis on human nature, Waltz (1979) brought about a revolutionary change in international relations (IR) theory in *Theory of International Politics*. Rather, Waltz's thesis focused on the idea of "structure" in the international system, suggesting that nations function under anarchic frameworks that limit their behavior. The relative power that each state possesses in relation to others determines the conduct of states, according to neorealism. Waltz (1979), created an empirically based approach to international relations (IR) that served as the basis for later social science techniques in the subject by moving the study away from philosophical presumptions and toward quantifiable variables like state power and international anarchy.

Waltz (1979), challenges Kaplan's interpretation of the balance-of-power theory, contending that the theory's wider applicability is constrained by Kaplan's emphasis on past examples of rivalry between a small number of powerful nations. Waltz asserts that the balance-of-power theory ought to be applicable in any situation involving two or more units functioning inside a self-help, anarchic system. By using new language, Kaplan might unintentionally perpetuate misconceptions and make it more difficult to comprehend that, in Waltz's opinion, balance-of-power theory is really about the results of state action under anarchic situations.

Waltz (1979), criticizes both contemporary and classic political scientists for oversimplifying global systems by concentrating only on their interdependent parts. He emphasizes that both organizations employ a similar methodology that lowers the complexity of global systems, despite variations in their approaches. While modernists tend to ignore this distinction, traditionalists highlight the structural difference between domestic (governed) and international (anarchic) politics. Waltz contends that a more comprehensive knowledge of international politics may be obtained by seeing it through the prism of anarchy, which is a self-help society devoid of centralized authority.

Waltz (1979), claims that a common misconception is that anarchy is the same as chaos or disorder. Because of this misunderstanding, some people believe that if new international organizations are formed, alliances are formed, or cross-border exchanges expand, anarchy decreases. Waltz emphasizes that anarchy persists even when aspects of global government are present and cautions against confusing structure—the lack of a central authority—with process—cooperative acts among states. He emphasizes that structural changes—rather than merely procedural cooperation—are necessary for a real reduction in anarchy.

As Waltz (1979), also highlights the limitations of international collaboration, pointing out that despite growing interdependence, I believe that there is no single body in charge of efficiently overseeing world affairs. Because of its strong economic position, the US is frequently regarded as a leader in both social and economic issues. I support my view with Waltz's warning that a global manager is not produced by more interconnectedness. He contends that fundamental reforms, not the rise of a global authority, are what will ultimately determine the possibility of positive international management. According to Waltz, I can reach a point that neorealism is a significant addition to the field of international relations and a shift away from human nature as the cause of conflict toward structural components that polities must function within. He clarifies how relative power shapes state conduct by asserting that states operate in anarchic environments. What he does say regarding Kaplan's

notion of balance of power should serve as a foundation for comprehending that specific idea as it pertains to much more than Great Power rivalry. I value Waltz's attempt to distinguish between process and structure, particularly his contention that anarchy and disorder are not the same thing.

This argument leads me to introduce Rynning and Guzzini (2002), as they investigate in *Realism and Foreign Policy Analysis* the complex interrelationship between realism and foreign policy analysis, looking at basic arguments about the structure of international anarchy and state motives influenced by human nature. Waltz's (1979) crucial distinction between process and structure is emphasized in their work, especially his claim that anarchy is not the same as chaos. As Waltz argues in his criticism of Kaplan's interpretation, this viewpoint is crucial to comprehend the balance of power, which goes beyond simple Great Power competition. Mearsheimer (1990), in *Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War* offers an alternative perspective, arguing that states are fundamentally offensive and desire expansion, in contrast to Waltz's assertion that states are essentially defensive and aim for stability.

Classical realists, such as Morgenthau (1948), in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, recognize the complexity inherent in state conduct by acknowledging this range of motivations. Given the emergence of foreign policy analysis (FPA) in the 1960s, Rynning and Guzzini (2002), contend that the ambivalence of realists calls for a careful analysis of foreign policy. Realists frequently criticize FPA for being disconnected from the real-world experiences of diplomats, but they also broaden the notion of state motives to include glory and ideas in addition to power. This increases the breadth of the study and makes it possible to comprehend how domestic interests and global processes interact more thoroughly. The analysis by Rynning and Guzzini (2002), in my opinion, emphasizes the complexity of state goals within the context of realism, highlighting the shortcomings of a one-size-fits-all method of comprehending foreign policy. Realists' many points of view demonstrate the necessity of adaptability and flexibility while examining state behavior. We can better comprehend the interaction between domestic and foreign issues by combining ideas from classical and modern realists. To improve our understanding of foreign policy, which is still a crucial field of study in international relations, this dual focus is essential. In the end, acknowledging realism's depth and complexity not only confirms its applicability in the field but also pushes academics to improve their studies and take into account how dynamic world politics are.

Constructivism and Its Implications for Regional Stability in the Context of Great Power Rivalries

Constructivism provides a nuanced view of international relations by highlighting how social structures, identities, and norms influence state actions and the global system. Unlike realism, which focuses on power dynamics and material concerns, constructivism emphasizes how nations' identities and ideas influence their relationships and actions, particularly in the context of great power conflicts. There are significant implications for regional stability from the resurgence of great power competition in the twenty-first century.

Constructivists contend that comprehending the dynamics of these rivalries requires a knowledge of states' identities and perceptions. According to Acharya (2014), in *The End of*

American World Order, for example, regional actors' identities and historical narratives determine how they react to influences from big powers, resulting in different levels of stability or instability within regions. Acharya makes a strong case for a future less reliant on American domination, an incisive and provocative criticism of the collapse of the liberal order led by the United States. Instead of upholding the idea of a resilient America that would one day "bounce back" (Kelly, 2014), Acharya aspires to a new order in which power is more fairly dispersed throughout the regional and global arenas. Acharya promotes genuinely non-Western alternatives, like "global concerts" and strong regional alliances, in contrast to beliefs that "responsible stakeholders" like China might easily fit into the current U.S.-led structure (Kelly, 2014, pp. 1-5). According to Kelly (2014), Acharya's criticism is unapologetically daring and challenges the pervasive ethnocentrism in international relations (IR) that frequently marginalizes non-Western viewpoints.

Acharya (2014), challenges the Western propensity to promote American supremacy as the ideal for the globe by criticizing the IR field's presumption that a world devoid of American hegemony would inevitably be unstable. In his review, Kelly (2014) sees that Acharya contends that this perspective is constrictive since it ignores the durability and steady expansion of non-Western nations like China. Despite possible opposition from Western thinkers, Acharya's idea of a post-American order fits with the new multipolar reality. I found that Acharya's need for frameworks that honor regional variety and non-Western political systems is, in my opinion, according to Kelly's review, essential. *The End of the American World* is a crucial reminder to widen our perspective on the world and get ready for a more multi-centered, balanced global order.

Furthermore, Wendt (1999), in *Social Theory of International Politics* indicates that the formation of national identities can exacerbate rivalry; governments may implement aggressive policies that disturb regional peace when they see threats to their identities (Wendt, 1999). According to Wendt (1999), constructivism faces difficulties in the international system from both a social and a construction perspective. He observes that international politics appear to be ruled by self-interest and compulsion, but domestic politics are frequently guided by conventions and regulations. This suggests that the international arena is less "social" and, thus, supports materialist viewpoints. Wendt further argues that governments, the main players in international relations, function somewhat independently of the social systems that shape their identities and are frequently more impacted by domestic politics than by norms from other countries. This viewpoint promotes an individualist ontology and suggests that the international system has little ability to construct state behavior.

In his discussion of constructivist thought's resurgence following the Cold War, Wendt (1999), highlights how conventional theories were unable to adequately explain the systemic changes that occurred at that time. In support of an idealist ontology that emphasizes how ideas and culture shape power and interests, he makes the case for a better understanding of constructivism and how it differs from materialist and individualist viewpoints. By taking into account both macro-level structures and their impact on state identities and interests, this method promotes a comprehensive understanding of the international system. Wendt's criticism of the materialist paradigm, in my opinion, is essential to enhancing the conversation on international relations. Discussions on justice and accountability are made easier by his

knowledge of the social context of state identities, which fosters a more inclusive view of global governance. In sum, Wendt's writing pushes us to reconsider the fundamentals of international relations and to create a world that represents a range of viewpoints and beliefs. Constructivism also highlights the role that international norms and institutions play in mediating disputes between superpowers. *In International Norm Dynamics and Political Change* (1998), Finnemore and Sikkink assert that norms can either promote cooperation or escalate conflict. Finnemore and Kathryn (1998), present a convincing argument for how norms and economic principles influence international relations (IR). They contend that realism perspectives that perceive human nature's tendency toward self-interest as a barrier to international cooperation are refuted by liberal IR experts using microeconomic models such as the Prisoners' Dilemma. By arguing that mutual benefit and collaboration are possible even when states put their own interests first, this economic viewpoint reframes discussions of international relations. This method, in my opinion, is enlightening because it demonstrates that, even if realists may be correct about the enduring nature of self-interest, cooperation is not only feasible but also realistic when seen from the perspective of economic tactics.

Finnemore and Kathryn (1998), also raise an interesting point regarding social norms, contending that both domestic and foreign laws function similarly by reflecting common societal expectations rather than just enforcing them. The idea that domestic order and foreign relations are essentially distinct because of the existence of a governing body is called into question by this comparison. This realization, in my opinion, is essential, particularly for comprehending international cooperation: if norms are the "glue" that binds states to common expectations, then the strength of laws may be found in agreement rather than force.

In order to investigate the "is" and the "ought" of international politics, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), urge IR scholars to study disciplines such as political theory, ethics, and law. This multidisciplinary approach shows that while destructive beliefs like nationalism and xenophobia are also becoming more popular, norms like those supporting gender equality or human rights have changed the global landscape. This dual character of norms serves as a crucial reminder to me that, although they can be strong drivers of constructive change, they can also serve to further polarize society. We can better comprehend the intricacies underlying global changes in behavior and policy by looking at this equilibrium in IR. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), point out that IR researchers argue over the part that motivation and choice play in norm-based behavior and advocate for a more adaptable strategy that cuts across disciplinary lines. I share their opinion that if we want to fully capture the complex ways that norms influence state actions in a globalized environment, we must expand our IR methodologies.

Regarding norms evolution to help states act in a commensurate manner that serves their internal interests and poises their international relations to overcome regional crises, other political theorists highlight the evolution of the norms that serves this purpose. Dobbin et al. (2007), in *The Global Diffusion of Public Policies: Social Construction, Coercion, Competition, or Learning?* highlight how the evolution of international norms on intervention and sovereignty has affected how states respond to regional crises. Great powers' varying interpretations of international rules have led to conflicting actions and increased tensions in situations like the Syrian civil war, making regional peace more difficult (Dobbin et al., 2007).

Dobbin et al (2007), put up four primary models, each of which captures a distinct reason underlying this trend, to explain the spread of policies between nations. Though may be too segmented, I think this theoretical segmentation is smart. Since these frameworks frequently overlap in practice, it's critical to identify overlaps that might more accurately represent the complexity of the real world. According to the constructivist theory presented by Dobbin et al., international organizations and epistemic communities establish criteria for human rights and economic advancement, which in turn create policy norms. This viewpoint supports the notion that nations enact laws because they believe that particular behaviors are the "best" in the world, particularly when adopted by peers who share similar cultural or historical backgrounds. In my opinion, this method effectively explains how nations in comparable circumstances embrace common policies as a component of a global community identity. However, it frequently downplays coercive or financial incentives, which seems to limit its ability to explain how these standards are internalized.

Coercion, competition, constructivism, and learning are the four primary concepts put forth by Dobbin et al (2007), to explain how policies proliferate over the world. Coercion theorists contend that strong governments and global organizations such as the IMF use incentives and sanctions to influence policy choices in weaker countries. I think this perspective oversimplifies the agency of smaller nations, even as it draws attention to significant power relations. A large number of these countries pragmatically modify coercive policies to fit local circumstances or even use them to further their own development objectives. According to the competition perspective adopted by Dobbin et al., nations adopt policies that reduce trade barriers or business costs in response to the global rivalry for investment.

This perspective, in my opinion, may ignore wider effects, though, since nations may implement competitive policies to draw in foreign investment as well as to demonstrate ideological consistency and conform to international norms. Considering diffusion as a cumulative process influenced by observable results, the learning framework recommends that nations develop policies based on their own and others' experiences. Although this theory places a strong emphasis on national agency, I think it occasionally undervalues the impact of international ideological norms and coercive forces that shape what is learned and embraced. Dobbin et al. (2007) contend that because researchers hardly ever test all four mechanisms simultaneously, the isolation of these theoretical camps restricts empirical study. They support a more comprehensive strategy that might produce a sophisticated comprehension of the diffusion of policies. I concur that integrating viewpoints helps highlight the nuanced reasons for adopting policies and how ideology, power, competitiveness, and learning interact to shape global policy trends. The realities of policy dispersion in a diversified global environment may be better reflected by this integrated approach.

Constructivist academics also stress the value of communication and diplomatic initiatives in reducing the dangers of great power competition. States can increase trust and lessen the chance of conflict by promoting mutual respect and understanding. The concept of "strategic culture" highlights how historical experiences shape governments' strategic preferences and actions, and it suggests that resolving these grievances can enhance regional stability, according to Johnston (1995), in *Thinking about Strategic Culture*. The idea of "strategic culture" first appeared as an analytical tool to explain the different strategic actions that the US and the USSR were accused of during the Cold War, particularly in the early 1980s,

according to Johnston (1995). Contrasting descriptions of American and Soviet propensities for war served as justification for the growing focus on nuclear warfighting in U.S. military strategy at the time. The U.S. was portrayed as morally motivated, employing force occasionally with a feeling of exceptionalism and a belief in conflict as a departure from regular statecraft, whereas the Soviet Union was portrayed as supporting aggressive, preemptive action founded in a history of expansionism and centralized power (Johnston, 1995).

According to Johnston (1995), these stereotypes challenge the boundaries of conventional, ahistorical frameworks for comprehending strategic decision-making and are a reflection of a larger "strategic culture" that has influenced national security strategies. In my opinion, this emphasizes the drawbacks of structural methods that overlook the subtleties of historical and cultural influences on policy decisions. With its strong historical foundations, strategic culture provides a deeper framework for understanding why governments choose particular tactics that could otherwise appear at odds with unbiased evaluations of technology or strength.

A change toward acknowledging ideational elements—like national identity and historical memory—that influence state conduct beyond traditional material metrics is reflected in the growing interest in strategic culture over the past few decades. According to Johnston (1995), governments' ability to adapt to shifts in their strategic environment may be limited by their strategic culture, which takes into account the philosophical traits and formative experiences of its elites. I concur that this viewpoint, which emphasizes a resilient and slow-changing strategic mindset that only adapts incrementally, offers crucial insight into why states may respond in ways that appear "irrational" in terms of material considerations. Johnston (1995) warns, meanwhile, that if strategic culture studies are used without sufficient behavioral data, they run the risk of perpetuating prejudices, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. For instance, claiming that East Asian strategic culture is essentially defensive may unfairly restrict the range of formalized, multilateral security arrangements available by implying that they go against ingrained cultural tendencies. Johnston's (1995), contention that strategic culture should be used judiciously is, in my opinion, particularly relevant today as its use could delay collaborative security efforts by reinforcing oversimplified viewpoints. Policymakers may be able to steer clear of simplistic caricatures and instead employ cultural insights to create more intelligent, adaptable plans that value local viewpoints and promote genuine international collaboration if they have a sophisticated understanding of strategic culture.

Strategic culture is encountered by several geopolitical and military competitions in the world. I see that the flux and instability in the presidential protocols and the foreign policy in America affect international politics in terms of economic competition and military influence. As included in the literature review section, according to Solomon (2018), in *Constructive Competition as a Precursor to Cooperation*, relations between the United States and other countries, specifically China, have become more competitive under the present government's America First policy. In my opinion, Solomon's advocacy for the productive competition between the United States and China is a highly valid argument given the current global politics. The prevailing 'America First' policy tends to be more aggressive than engaging, which may hamper constructive engagement crucial in dealing with global issues, for instance, global warming and pandemics. To me, the overblown race to outdo the other superpower,

as is the case now, only undermines the advantages of cooperating given that the two nations' security and prosperity are dependent on the rest of the world.

My conviction is strengthened by Solomon's assertion that the vying for military and trade supremacy attributes more to the worries of the leaders than to the common citizen's wellbeing in either country. This is because there is no profit in wrangling over power, when there are very lucrative ideas that can be harnessed, for instance, on clean energy or even healthcare. Competing with one another for such purposes has already proved its worth in historical instances such as the Space Race where changes occurred that benefited even those who were not directly involved in the struggle.

In addition, I appreciate the part played by Solomon in her insistence on collaboration in areas such as global health, which is though not without issues of its own, considered one of the most valuable possibilities. To me, to build up trust in teamwork first paves the way to the most difficult aspects later. I remain positive that a willingness to engage in competition that is beneficial to both sides in the US and Chinese relations is equally important for the well being of all nations in the future. Elinor Ostrom's work shows how nations resolve to work together for mutually advantageous ends rather than destructive ends without formal constraints and control over their behavior.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to delve into understanding the existing modern manifestations of rivalry between several great powers – namely the United States of America, China, and Russia – and their repercussions on regional issues. The strategy is outlined in two stages as follows:

1- Conceptual Context: The research relies on two schools of thought that equally share the principles of international relations. First, realism emphasizes power, the behavior of states, and security concerns, and constructivism elaborates on how relationships between states differ depending on their identities and norms. This approach enables a better understanding of the issues affecting regional stability.
2- Analytical Approaches: Content analysis of qualitative data is a method that is used in this study.

Findings

*The analysis reveals that the competitive dynamics with particular referent powers such as the USA, China, and Russia contribute to regional stability. The strategic interests and military posturing of each of these powers create an ambiance of tension that may aggravate conflicts in the South China Sea, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East in particular.

*The principles of realism, in its essence, assume a 'power politics' approach that regards states as actors who pursue their core interests and their very survival first rather than engaging in coalition-building strategies. Such states cannot help but engage in an arms race and conquest in their region as this zeal leads to instability as such countries can turn maneuvers into warfare because of their ambition to fight for their interests.

*In my focus on major powers, I argue that the self-images of those polities determine how they relate to each other. Constructivist theory shows the role of history, social cues, and

identity in the formation of animosities. Rivalries are constructs and serve specific purposes, such as building or influencing existing coalitions, and are therefore important in understanding regional dynamics.

*The findings of this research show that international alliances are important instruments for conflict resolution and peace maintenance. The performance of the alliances will depend on the member states' resolution and capacity to confront their adversaries together.
*The study proves that regional organizations play a contradictory role in both pacifying and increasing hostilities. The alliances serve as coping mechanisms and offer forums for constructive engagements. However, the surpassing influence of great powers' geostrategic pursuits often renders them ineffective, resulting in decision-making deadlocks.
*The study finds that regional actors are compelled to align with one of the major powers, often leading to proxy conflicts. This alignment can either stabilize or destabilize regions, depending on the nature of the alliances formed and the regional context.
*The conclusions drawn from the analysis call for the adoption of a sophistication that acknowledges the intricacies of power contests. The recommendation of such methods as diplomacy, collective action, and building trust will counter existing tensions and contribute to a more orderly world.
*The study finds, however, that rivalries between great powers are likely to produce an interminable cycle of conflict and instability, which will require incessant diplomacy and modification of strategies to neutralize threats and enhance security.

Conclusion

Regional tensions or conflicts exist in all regions of the world, but the importance and extent of the rivalry between major states depends on the region. This study advances research by proposing additional research on the effects of global politics on the politics and policy of smaller nations and regions. Furthermore, my research proposes a method for determining the possible future of international relations that may assist in formulating diplomatic relations and international cooperation in a practical way. Ultimately, this study argues that the region's future stability will depend upon how well great powers manage to avoid both excessive cooperation and excessive confrontation with each other. It is possible to manage the threat posed by emerging powers more successfully and, at the same time, contribute to the maintenance of an international order that is more predictable and peaceful, by appreciating the significance of social constructions as well as the politics of power in international relations. In this context, the two perspectives of constructivism and realism are relevant, since they go a long way in explaining international relations as an evolving field, making it necessary to adopt strategies that are both physical and non-physical if peace is to be achieved.

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