The journal of El-Ryssala for studies and research in humanities

Volume : 11 / N° : 03/2026. pp 445-466

PISSN : 2543-3938 - EISSN : 2602-7771

The Issue of Change in the Current International Balance of Power: A Realist School Perspective

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Received: 02/12/2025 **Accepted**: 23/05/2026

Abstract:
This study focuses on one of the major topics in international relations, namely the issue of change in the balance of power at the global level. It adopts the theoretical framework of the realist school, in its various streams, in order to analyse and interpret this phenomenon. This research paper examines the possibility of establishing a multipolar international system and changing the structure of power equilibrium as part of the emerging powers' efforts to reshape the international system. This is a result of the new global distribution of power and their influential contribution in steering the course of international crises, as they play increasingly significant roles in managing them in line with their national security interests. At the same time, the United States has experienced a relative decline as the hegemonic power in the management of international affairs during certain historical periods.

Keywords: Balance of power, Change, International system, Realist School, Hegemonic power, Rising powers, Multipolar system.

I. INTRODUCTION

Theorising in the field of international relations seeks to explain events and phenomena at the global level, by employing a series of theoretical frameworks and approaches. Thinkers and scholars in this field have developed numerous theories, such as realism, which is built upon several key concepts aimed at understanding the reality of interactions between states in order to prevent wars and establish international peace and security. Examples include the balance of power, and related issues such as international alliances, power, armament, the security dilemma, anarchy, and others.

Nevertheless, the adoption of classical realism among academics and scholars in the field of international relations as a theoretical framework for understanding international political interactions and global power balances did not prevent the emergence of other streams within the realist perspective, with a view to adapting to the complex geopolitical transformations that the international system has undergone, both in the period prior to the end of the Cold War and in the stages that followed. This era began with the emergence of American hegemony after the end of the ideological conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs, followed by U.S. military interventions internationally, the war on terror, the wave of democratic transition in the Middle East and the rise of asymmetric security threats such as terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. It also encompasses foreign military interventions in many countries such as Iraq, Libya and Syria, as well as Russia's war on Ukraine, among other international events.

These pivotal events in the history of international relations, during certain periods, all share the common feature of the significant role played by rising powers, or the so-called forces of change, in managing these international crises in an effort to reshape and alter the current global balance of power in favour of establishing a multipolar international system in which each party preserves its national security interests.

Significance of the study:

The importance of this study stems from the rapid and interconnected international events taking place in the global environment and their implications for the future of international stability and security. The growing rivalry between what has been labelled the hegemonic power – the United States of America – and other powers seeking to alter the current international balance of power with the aim of establishing a multipolar international system, contributing to the management of international political affairs and playing roles commensurate with their current strengths, may reinforce the possibility of conflict between them, either indirectly, through proxy confrontations, or directly, through military engagement in the event of diplomatic failure. Accordingly, and based on a realist perspective, this study attempts to examine these issues, particularly the question of the possibility of a change in the current international balance of power.

Research problem:

In light of the current international transformations that may carry within them the possibility of altering the existing balance in international politics, how has the realist school, with its most prominent theoretical streams, interpreted the phenomenon of change in the international balance of power?

Based on the research problem outlined above, a set of sub-questions arises, which can be summarised in the following points:

- What is meant by the international balance of power?
- What are the theoretical foundations of the realist school in explaining the phenomenon of the balance of power and the change in the balance of power in international relations?
- Have the **new strands within realist school** succeeded in overcoming the criticisms directed at classical realism, particularly regarding its theoretical adaptability to international transformations and its ability to explain changes in the current international balance of power?

Research hypothesis:

In an effort to analyse the various points mentioned above, this study adopts the following central hypothesis:

The more states continue to pursue the enhancement of their status and security within the inherently anarchic international system, the more this will lead to ongoing shifts in the distribution of power — resulting in changes in the international balance of power.

Research Methodology:

The study is based on the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the realist school with its various intellectual strands, with the aim of tracing the evolution of the levels of analysis and concepts adopted by its pioneers and theorists in order to understand the international balances that characterise the field of international relations. In addition, this study relies on a systemic approach to explain the conflictual and competitive interactions that occur at the level of the international system.

Structure of the study:

In order to test the validity of the central hypothesis and to address the research problem outlined above, the study will analyse the following axes:

I. An Overview of the Concept of Balance of Power in International Relations.
II. Current International Transformations between the Imperatives of Preserving the Status Quo of the Balance of Power and the Ambitions of the Powers of Change.
III. The Realist School as a Theoretical Framework for Explaining the Phenomenon of Change in the International Balance of Power.
IV. The advanced theoretical contributions within the Realist School to Explain the Phenomenon of Change in the International Balance of Power.

I. The Conceptual Definition of Balance of Power in International Relations:

1. Balance of Power and the Challenge of a Precise Definition

The theoretical framework for studying any phenomenon or concept in international relations is an important step towards understanding the policies of states in a realistic and practical sense. This latter remains somewhat ambiguous, largely due to the extensive debates evolving around it and the variety of approaches used to define it, which has led to a number of difficulties in attemptting to narrow down its meaning, as it is one of the most widespread .and frequently used concepts in the field

The balance of power is considered one of the theoretical starting points in the study of international relations. It was also known as an ancient practice dating back to ancient India one of the and Greece, without having a clear theoretical basis. Moreover, it remains important approaches that are continuously employed by scholars and researchers in the field of international politics. This concept that is often considered ambiguous has been the subject of numerous definitions, in an attempt to capture and explain this distinctive role in

.international relations

When delving into the essence of this concept, one encounters difficulty, as Michael Sheehan has noted. This difficulty does not lie in our inability to discover its meaning, but rather, as Inis Claude has pointed out, in the multiplicity of its meanings. In essence, the balance of power appears to be a simple concept that the average person can understand. The problem arises, however, from the frequent and unrestricted use of the term by both its advocates and its critics. Furthermore, analysing countless references to this concept has [i].yielded not greater clarity, but rather an even greater ambiguity surrounding its true meaning (Sheehan, 1996 ,p.9)

In the same context, Robert L.Pfaltzgraff.Jr and James E Dougherty stated in their book, Contending Theories in International Relations", that the concept of balance of power carries " multiple meanings. It may mean an equal distribution of power among members of the international community, or a strong and equal distribution among a specific group of states, or an equal distribution among international alliances or coalitions, or an unequal distribution in favour of a particular state. On the other hand, the balance of power is sometimes regarded as a goal to be pursued, or as a hope that is difficult to achieve. Yet even when it is attained, the parties may not realise that the balance has been achieved, and very soon it changes once again, due to the inherent difficulty of accurately assessing or perceiving the true power of the [ii].competing parties (L.Pfaltzgraff & E Dougherty, 1995, pp. 29–30)

Among the definitions that must be mentioned when discussing the challenge of precisely defining the concept of the balance of power is the definition provided by the pioneer of realist theory, Hans J. Morgenthau. In his book "Politics Among Nations", more precisely in the chapter entitled Balance of Power, he defined it as "an actual state of affairs in which ".power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality

In the concept of balance of power four distinct meaning meet : it is, first, a description of a world situation in which power is distributed in such a way that no one state is in position to dominate all others, second, a policy aimed at maintaining such a distribution, third, a process inherent in the struggle for power among states, and fourth, a certain assurance of the survival [iii].of the state system (.Morgenthau, 1948, pp 160-163)

As for Ernest Haas, the concept of balance of power raises a number of challenges in terms [iv] :of its definition, as he points to eight meanings (.Dougherty, Pfaltzgraff ,op.cit, p. 29)

a. Balance or the process of balancing (the pursuit of balance)
b. Hegemony or the pursuit of dominance
c. Stability and peace based on power
d. Instability and war
e. Power politics in general
f. The general law of history
g. Order and guidance for policymakers... The problem is not that the balance of power has .no specific definition, but rather that it has multiple definitions

One of the main variables that further complicates the search for a precise definition of the balance of power is the ambiguity of the concept of power itself, as it is regarded as a central and controversial concept in international relations. This concept has also undergone significant evolution as a result of the multidimensional transformations that have taken place .within the international system

[v].Karl Deutsch defined power as: "the ability to prevail in conflict (Deutsch, 1983,p. 31), or

the ability of a state to control or at least to influence other states or the outcomes of certain events. In other words, it is the influence of state (A) on the behaviour of state (B) so that it acts in accordance with state (A)'s interests, achieving its specific objectives. To achieve all of these objectives, state (A) may employ various means of influence, ranging from persuasion Griffiths, & O'Callaghan,)[vi].to offering rewards and ultimately to threats and the use of force p.256) Similarly, according to Timothy Dunne, power is also: "the ability to control ,2008 outcomes, for instance the ability of state (A) to make state (B) act in a way that maximises (Baylis, 2004, p. 259)[vii] .the benefits for state (A)

It should be noted that the notions of power range from imposing one's will through coercion or force to exerting psychological pressure on others to compel them to act in a certain way that they would not otherwise choose to do. Power can be understood in terms of physical .coercion (military power) or psychological influence (political power)

It is also important to highlight that for long periods of history, a state's power was confined to military force in all its dimensions, as it was considered the decisive factor impacting the fate of the state. However, economic and political developments internationally have significantly influenced the building of states' internal and external power. Consequently, the elements of power are no longer expressed merely through abstract terms, but rather this concept is studied and analysed alongside notions such as geopolitics, geoculture and geoeconomics and geostrategy in order to identify the multidimensional factors that constitute a state's strength. These dimensions must not be treated as independent from one another but rather as dynamic, interrelated elements, each influencing and interacting with the others in .shaping the overall power of the state

From the above, we can deduce the main challenges facing scholars and researchers in the field of international relations in finding a precise and accurate definition of the concept of :balance of power

The multiplicity of theoretical frameworks belonging to different schools of thought: The balance of power is studied through various theoretical lenses, which leads to a multiplicity of .definitions and the absence of a unified conceptualization

The anarchic nature of the international system: the absence of a central authority or world government renders the international system anarchic, relying on the autonomous actions of states to achieve a relative balance of power to prevent hegemony, which complicates the .possibility of establishing a fixed definition of the concept

Dynamic nature of balance: The balance of power is not a fixed state but a constantly evolving process linked to shifting powers of states, making it difficult to formulate a .comprehensive and fixed definition

Multidimensionality of power: Power in international relations encompasses military, political, economic and cultural elements. This diversity in forms of power makes it .challenging to arrive at a single, comprehensive definition of balance of power

Diversity of goals and interests of states: states have different motives and strategies for achieving a balance between countering threats and securing their national interests, leading .to multiple definitions of the concept

Multiple levels of balance: the balance of power can manifest itself at both the regional and .international levels, adding a complex dimension to the formulation of a unified definition

Changing practical application: States' policies of balancing power vary across time, place and international context, influenced by shifting relationships and alliances. This variability

.complicates the effort to find a single, comprehensive definition of the concept

2. Some Conceptual Definitions of the Balance of Power in International Relations

In his book entitled "Balance of Power: History and Theory", Michael Sheehan presented several definitions of the concept of balance of power based on a study by Dina A. Zinnes. [viii] :According to these selected definitions, the concept may be understood as follows (Sheehan, op.cit, p. 10)

An equal distribution of Power among the Princes of Europe as makes it impractical for the ' .'one to disturb the repose of the other

action by a state to keep its neighbours from becoming too strong… because the ' aggrandisement of one nation beyond a certain limit changes the general system of all the other neighbours…attention to the maintenance of a kind of equality and equilibrium between .'neighbouring states

The balance of power, however it be defined, that is, whatever the powers were between ' which it was necessary to maintain such equilibrium, that the weaker should not be crushed by the union of the stronger, is the principle which gives unity to the political plot of modern .'European history

History shows that the danger threatening the independence of this or that nation has ' generally arisen, at least in part, out of the momentary predominance of a neighbouring state at once militarily powerful, economically efficient, and ambitious to extend its frontiers or spread its influence, the danger being directly proportional to the degree of its power and efficiency, and to the spontaneity and "inevitableness" of its ambitions. The only check on the abuse of political predominance derived from such a position has always consisted in the opposition of an equally formidable rival, or of a combination of several countries forming leagues of defence. The equilibrium established by such a grouping of forces is technically .'known as the balance of power

an arrangement of affairs so that no state shall be in a position to have absolute mastery and ' .'dominate the others

the balance of power assumes that through shifting alliances and countervailing pressures no ' one power or combination of powers will be allowed to grow so strong as to threaten the .'security of the rest

The balance of power 'operates in a general way to keep the average calibre of states low in ' terms of every criterion for the measurement of political power…a state which threatens to increase its calibre above the prevailing average becomes subject, almost automatically to .'pressure from all the other states that are members of the same political constellation

The balance of power 'refers to an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed ' .'among several nations with approximate equality

when any state or bloc becomes, or threatens to become, inordinately powerful, other states ' should recognise this as a threat to their security and respond by taking equivalent measures, .'individually and jointly, to enhance their power

The balance's underlying principle…was that all the nth disengaged powers would tend to ' intervene on the side that seemed in danger of losing any ongoing war, to ensure that such a .'loser was not eliminated from the system and absorbed into an emerging colossus

In his book Strategy and International Politics, Dr Ismail Sabri Maqlad considers the balance of power to be one of the most important concepts in international politics. It is based

on the principle of a balanced distribution of power among the major powers, with the aim of preventing any one state from achieving absolute dominance and achieving international stability. This system rests on the idea that major powers maintain equilibrium by strengthening their relative capabilities so that they act as deterrent factors that prevent open conflicts and large-scale wars. It also serves as a mechanism for containing and preserving the (Maqlad, p. 265) [ix] .international system from anarchy and unilateral domination

From the above, the multiple implications of the concept of balance of power in :international relations can be summarised in the following points

The balance of power is a central theory in international relations based on the premise that stability in the international system is achieved when the major powers are balanced in such a way that prevents any single state or alliance from achieving absolute dominance, .thereby limiting conflicts and wars

The concept refers to a system in which power is distributed in a way that enables mutual deterrence, where each side has the capacity to counterbalance the military, economic or .political strength of the other, creating a state of equilibrium and controlled competition

Classical realists view the balance of power as a mechanism for survival that is based on the anarchic nature of the international system, which lacks a central authority. Therefore, states resort to strengthening their own capabilities and forming alliances to achieve equilibrium .with rival powers

The balance of power is a dynamic process, shifting with the rise and decline of states' capabilities and spheres of influence. This makes balance a continuous process that requires .constant monitoring and action

Strategies for maintaining balance include forming multilateral alliances, military deterrence, preserving national sovereignty, and strengthening economic and trade relations .that contribute to reducing conflicts

Despite the variety of definitions and theoretical differences, studies in the field of international relations agree that the balance of power remains a central tool for understanding how states formulate strategies to address security threats and maintain international stability .in the absence of a global governing authority

II. Current International Transformations between the Imperatives of Preserving the Status Quo of the Balance of Power and the Ambitions of the Rising .Powers for Change

Most scholars, academics and even practitioners specialising in international relations, when addressing the future of the international system, continue to emphasise the idea of commonly accepted international rules and standards, i.e. those values imposed by the major powers upon other state actors in international politics, putting an end to each other's .ambitions by creating a general balance of power

In this context, the American realist politician Henry Kissinger, in his book entitled “World Order: Reflections on the Characters of the Nations and the Course of History”, affirmed that this “rules-based” system now faces challenges from states and regions that originally played only minor roles in the formulation of these very rules. These states have begun to question the legitimacy and relevance of the current set of values governing the international system. In addition, these states have openly expressed their desire to amend this system, though without identifying their desired objectives, the approaches they would adopt, or even the (Kissinger, H. 2015, pp. 12–13) [x] .extent of the desired change

Building upon this definition, the study will address the major current international transformations that reflect the reality of the international system, characterised by the presence of a dominant but declining power that is striving to preserve its leadership role in the international balance of power. This is manifested through an approach that relies on the use of force in all its forms, neglecting the role of international organisations and international law in conflict resolution and international crisis management. Moreover, this period is marked by trade and economic rivalry between this hegemonic power and the rising revisionist powers seeking to reshape the existing international system. In light of these shifts, this research paper aims to analyse the ongoing geopolitical dynamics within the international environment by relying on the legacy of the realist school as a distinguished theoretical .framework in the field of international relations

1. The Decline of The Great Dominant Power and the Erosion of its physical and Moral Power

A number of studies and academic works on international relations have emerged agreeing on the decline of American hegemony and the erosion of its material and moral power. This decline is often framed as a critique of what has been termed the theory of the Hegemonic Stability Theory, which means that is the existence of a single pole imposing its logic on global balances would enhance international peace and security. However, the current global reality reveals the ambitions of powers with geopolitical projects seeking to bring a change to the international balance of power. Accordingly, the hegemonic power that emerged victorious from the Cold War has, as Kissinger described, oscillated between defending the Westphalian system on the one hand, and promoting its universal values in building a world system aligned with the American vision for the future of the international system on the other. Yet, this project has faced a crisis of legitimacy, i.e. the difficulty of achieving universal acceptance by all international actors of the power arrangements and institutional frameworks .that the United States has sought to extend globally

Following on from the theorisation of the phenomenon of hegemony that has been linked to the Hegemonic Stability Theory in international relations, Robert Keohane and Nye defined it as "a single state that is powerful enough to maintain the fundamental rules governing interstate relations and has the will to do so". It should also be noted that the vast majority of writings on international relations that have addressed the concept of hegemony share two distinctive features: coercion and control, or influence over the structure of the international system and the international behaviour of its units. Proponents of this theory assume that the stability of the system depends on the existence of a single dominant power that acts as a Habash, 2021, January, p.)[xi] .guarantor of economic and political stability at the global level (23

In the same context, writings have appeared by numerous American strategic thinkers, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, who stated in the introduction to his book entitled "The Choice: Global Dominance or Global Leadership" in his central statement on the role of the United States in the international system, he argued that American power has become the primary guarantor of global stability, as it has no equal in terms of its military reach on the global stage, the centrality of its economic activity to the stability of the world economy, and its (Brzezinski, 2012, pp. 11-12) [xii] .significant influence over the course of international politics Alternatively, as French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine stated, the United States has surpassed its status as a great power in the 21st century, extending its supremacy to the

economy, currency, military spheres, lifestyle, language and major cultural products that saturate the world, shape thought and even fascinate the adversaries of the United States with their magnetic appeal. This has resulted in a deep-rooted conviction among Americans that the international system is not based on a balance of power but revolves around American (Nye, 2002, pp25-26) [xiii].hegemony

However, examining the fate and consequences of the current American hegemony has given rise to two streams of thought. The first maintains that the United States remains a hegemonic power and advocates for the continuity of its position at the top of the international hierarchy. Prominent figures in this current include Robert Kagan, Joseph Nye, and William Wohlforth. The second school of thought, represented by Stephen Walt and Robert Gilpin, believes that the United States is experiencing a relative decline, gradually moving away from hegemony, as new international powers have emerged capable of changing (Habash, 2021, January, pp.22-23)[xiv] .the international order

According to the second school of thought, several powers have become dissatisfied with the status quo. For example, the unique position of the hegemonic power is challenged by the rapid economic rise of China, which has become a formidable economic rival to the United States. In addition, the Russian Federation is pursuing a geopolitical project following its return to the international arena after the end of Boris Yeltsin's era and Vladimir Putin's rise to power in a country that has long enjoyed an imperial logic in managing its affairs and seeking .a more prominent position in the international system

In the same context, Zbigniew Brzezinski continues to emphasise that the increasing political turbulence, accompanied by difficulties in controlling it, has highlighted a set of challenges related to the mechanisms of response of the hegemonic power and its allies to the changes occurring. Americans are well aware that a shift in the balance of hegemony by revisionist powers is possible, drawing on the historical experiences of ancient nations and civilisations throughout history, as affirmed by Paul Kennedy in his book “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000in which he considers change in the balance of power to be an inevitable phenomenon in international .(Kennedy, 2007, p.71) [xv]”relations

In this vein, Brzezinski raises several questions in his search for the nature of the implications of the shift of global power from West to East, examining the causes behind America's decline, the symptoms of its internal and external decay, and the way in which the United States squandered the unique global opportunity afforded by the peaceful end of the Cold War. Conversely, he attempted to analyse how the hegemonic power in international Brzezinski, 2012, pp. 11-)[xvi].relations could address these challenges to America's global role (15

Nevertheless, Brzezinski, along with many strategic thinkers and theorists in international relations, is convinced that the balancing influence of American power is indispensable for maintaining global stability, even though many of them acknowledge that the US is experiencing a decline in favour of rising or re-emerging powers seeking to change the structure of the global balance of power in order to establish a multipolar international system. Meanwhile, the primary challenge to American power stems from within, as policymakers neglect the American values established by the founding fathers of the United .States

Despite possessing the technology empowered by the information revolution and globalisation, which has supported its ability to influence others through soft power, Joseph Nye has emphasises that technology diffuses over time to other nations and populations, (Nye, op.cit, p. 15) Furthermore, [xvii] .thereby eroding the United States' relative superiority while its reliance on smart power as a doctrine aimed at reducing burdens, minimising losses and achieving desired outcomes at the lowest possible cost, it still favours the logic of hard military power in dealing with numerous international issues in geostrategic regions of the world. This has led to a decline in the value (soft) power of American culture, politics and .values

2. The Rising Role of 'Revisionist' Powers in the International System and the Global Redistribution of Power

In her book entitled "The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers", Michelle Murray argues that unipolarity, or what is referred to in international relations literature as the "unipolar moment", has inevitably come to an end with the emergence of new great powers (foremost among them China) that challenge the existing international system. She argues that shifts in power inherently generate instability globally, as rising power seeks to gain greater political influence in line with its new capabilities, often showing a growing willingness to pursue its interests, even if it requires the use of force. Meanwhile, the status quo powers are driven by fear and suspicion of competition, working to contain the power and influence of others. Given their determination to defend the existing international order, conflict with revisionist rising powers becomes difficult to avoid, ultimately leading to security dilemmas that result in intense competition (Bounab, 2019, November, p. 172)[xviii] .reflected in fierce arms races

On the other hand, the rising "revisionist" powers rely in particular on Robert Gilpin's (Ibid, p. 172)[xix] :theoretical foundations, including

The source of international change lies in the disjunction between the existing social system .and the distribution of power towards actors who benefit most from the change in the system

Emphasis on the importance of social factors in shaping the dynamics of power shifts, which he referred to as 'status' or 'prestige', the latter being considered the daily currency of .international relations

A rising power seeks to obtain greater political influence commensurate with its newly .acquired capabilities

.The rising power shows a growing interest in protecting and pursuing its interests

Rising powers play a central role in shifting the international balance of power by demanding broader representation and institutional reforms within the international system, while avoiding involvement in major conflicts and wars. Their current success depends on their ability to form international alliances with like-minded states to adapt to the international reality while preserving their internal specificities. The goal is to secure a higher standing in the international system, thereby enhancing their international legitimacy and recognition and decision-making autonomy. This reinforces the tendency of such powers to build alternative institutions or make gradual reforms within existing ones as a way to strengthen their sovereignty and negotiating leverage. In doing so, they aim to reshape the legitimacy of representation in international institutions by redistributing power within them in a way that more accurately reflects the new global power structure. However, from the perspective of the

rising powers, revisionism is a gradual process; that is, they seek gradual amendments to international rules to increase their representation and influence, while avoiding a large-scale confrontation that would harm economic growth and capital flows, as a form of political .rationality in managing their affairs in the international system

3. **Decline of International Organizations and States' Excessive Reliance on Hard (Military) Power**

Among the defining features of the current international system is the decline in the application of international law principles, or the inconsistency in enforcing its rules across different regions of the world. This is accompanied by the erosion of state sovereignty and the diminished role of international organisations in resolving international conflicts and addressing international issues. Notably, the United Nations and other international bodies have been ineffective in addressing conflicts and wars, particularly in light of the growing tension among major powers. This situation may pave the way for a gradual collapse, or at least a decline, in the central role of these organisations in maintaining international peace and security. In addition, states have increasingly turned toward hard power in managing their affairs and preserving their national security interests, using methods that combine traditional weaponry with advanced technology, thereby reducing the effectiveness of diplomatic mechanisms and international bodies tasked with maintaining peace between states. These states tend to manage and settle conflicts due to their conflicting interests, which makes traditional mechanisms such as negotiation and mediation less capable of containing conflicts, especially major ones. Consequently, states are more inclined to adopt independent strategies for military intervention in sovereign states rather than relying on multilateral international .mechanisms, which often suffer from paralysis or conflict with the interests of these states

In addition to what has been mentioned above, international organisations are experiencing a crisis in financing their activities and action plans due to the withdrawal or threat of withdrawal by some major powers. This has led to a decline in their role in managing various international crises, whether political, economic or social, in many regions of the .world

Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that the effectiveness of international organisations in managing and resolving conflicts has declined due to conflicting interests among states, which makes traditional mechanisms such as negotiation and mediation less capable of containing conflicts. This has also resulted in international actors resorting to the use of force to protect their national security interests. Similarly, international organisations have lost their .ability to prevent wars

III. The Realist School as a Theoretical Framework for Explaining the Phenomenon of Change in the International Balance of Power

Based on the major international transformations that characterise the current international system, it is important to draw on one of the leading theoretical frameworks in the study of international relations to analyse and interpret these changes in order to understand the dynamics governing the current process of change in the international balance of power, namely realist theory, taking into account the debates and conceptual debates and developments that this school has undergone. Indeed, by tracing the evolution of this theoretical school within the field of international relations, one can identify the various levels of analysis developed by theorists. This reflects the theory's ability to keep pace with the various transformations and changes that have taken place in the international environment.

The goal is to interpret these developments, and to understand the mechanisms of change in the international system, as well as the quest of states to secure their place in the international balance of power and fulfil their national security imperatives.

1. The State, Power and National Interest as Frameworks for Explaining Change in the International Balance of Power according to Classical Realists

Classical realism, which emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War, is considered the oldest and most widely used theoretical approach for explaining events in the field of international relations. Its intellectual roots date back 2,500 years, beginning with the writings of Thucydides, through Thomas Hobbes and Carl Clausewitz, up to Edward H. Carr, Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau.[xx] (Le Bo, 2016, p.170)

The roots of realist thinking regarding the study of power and the balance of power can be traced back to the contributions of the Greek historian Thucydides, whose research revolved around the following question: Why do wars occur repeatedly? Accordingly, he offered both direct and indirect explanations for what he considered the primary cause of war, placing events in multiple contexts and levels (between states, within states, and among individuals). In his explanation of the cause of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and the clash of interests between Athens and Sparta, Thucydides asserts that the true cause that made war inevitable was the growth of Athens' power and the fear it generated in Sparta, as well as the shift in the balance of power. Sparta feared losing its superior position in the Hellenic world, and Athens' pursuit of power placed it in conflict with other city-states that feared its strength and sought alliances among themselves to counter it. This led to a constant state of conflict between Athens and its neighbours. Moreover, it accused Sparta's allies of halting Athenian expansion and allowing the balance of power to shift in Athens' favour (Ibid, p.178)[xxi]

It is also necessary to highlight a crucial factor in international politics, which, although unknown to the Greek city-states, was nevertheless a defining feature of their relations: the anarchic nature of the international system. This factor would later be given considerable attention in international relations theory. In an anarchic system, the actions of one state to increase its security may lead to a decrease in the security of other states, resulting in both states seeking to strengthen their power and enhance their security, which in turn generates a mutual sense of insecurity, or what is known in realist literature as the security dilemma.

Classical realists believe that the best way to maintain peace and stability in the international system is to establish a sort of balance among the parties in order to curb aggression between them. This stems from their fundamental assumption that conflict constitutes the essential feature of the international system, which leads to instability due to the inevitable competition between international actors. Consequently, the pursuit of a balance of power between competitors is regarded as the most effective mechanism for deterring hostile tendencies toward one another. Accordingly, the principle of balance of power and its preservation represent both the starting point and the ultimate objective that together form the central foundation of this theory.

On the basis of the principle of balance of power, classical realism builds its theoretical framework around six interrelated principles, namely.[xxii](Lynn-Jones & Miller, 1995, p. ix)

That states are the main pillars of the international system and the primary actors in international politics.

That anarchy is the prevailing feature of international life and politics.

That states constantly seek to maximise their power and ensure their security.

That, in seeking to secure their interests and achieve their objectives, states always acts according to rational calculations.

That states tend to rely on self-help and make use of military power to consolidate their position and achieve their goals.

That the distribution of power among states is the fundamental determinant of the foreign policy patterns and of international politics in the international system.

The analysis of the classical realism perspective on the change in the international balance of power is linked to the idea that world politics is characterised by competition among great powers. Arnold Toynbee assumed that there is a strong possibility that this historical pattern is associated with the theory of long cycles, which provides a framework for explaining the evolution of competition among great powers. According to this theory, shifts in world leadership unfold through a series of distinct phases in which periods marked by the outbreak of world wars are followed by the establishment of a set of international rules and the building of institutions. These cyclical transformations have occurred alongside changes in the relative power of major states and the evolution of their relationships with one another. Over the past five centuries, each world war has led to the emergence of a hegemonic power that has reshaped the rules and institutions of the international system to preserve its dominant position.

As for Morgenthau, continuing Toynbee's historical vision, he portrayed the balance of power as "a natural and constant growth of the struggle for power", considering it a global and historical phenomenon. He started from the premise that politicians have always been aware of the basis of their own power and that of their neighbours, Yet he emphasised the need for decision-makers to recognise the difficulty of measuring power, given that it is a combination of material factors, such as the number of troops and weapons a state possesses, and non-material factors, such as the morale of soldiers, national spirit, and the government's efficiency and diplomacy. Thus, any attempt to estimate the balance of power involves 'a series of guesses whose accuracy can only be verified later.' As a solution to this dilemma, Morgenthau suggested that statesmen should strive to maximise their power as much as possible - a view later espoused by offensive realists such as John Mearsheimer, who argued that great powers aim to maximise their capabilities.[xxiii] (Little, 2009, pp. 118)

Since "states often claim to seek balance merely to conceal their true interests in achieving dominance", Morgenthau believed that the universality of the human drive for power means that the balance of power is "a general social phenomenon found at all levels of social interaction."(Ibid., p. 150) Individuals, groups and states inevitably unite to protect [xxiv] themselves against aggressors. This has led many scholars to explore the contradictory implications of the balance of power at the international level with regard to the preservation of international security and peace.

Morgenthau devoted particular attention to the issue of change in the international balance of power in his book Politics among Nations. He began with an important observation that "the specific moment in history which serves as a reference point for the policy of the status quo is most often the end of a war and the organisation of power distribution in a peace treaty". He was also concerned with the continuous changes that characterise international politics and their implications for the relationship between a consensual balance of power and a conflict-based balance of power.[xxv] (Ibid., p. 121-300)

Accordingly, Morgenthau asserted that multipolarity is more stable than bipolarity. In his view, a balance of power can deter war if the powers of the status quo outweigh those of their imperialist challengers and if they demonstrate their determination to go to war in defence of the existing order. However, the balance may also intensify tensions and increase the likelihood of war, due to the impossibility of fully assessing the motives, capabilities and intentions of other states with certainty. Leaders often act to secure additional power, and

when several states or rival alliances do so simultaneously, international tensions escalate. In such circumstances, the powers of the status quo may even resort to preventive wars against rising challengers. Morgenthau argued that even when the balance of power fails to prevent war, it can still limit its consequences and preserve the existence of states, large or small, that make up the political system. He credited the balance of power with having served these ends for most of the 18th and 19th centuries.[xxvi] (Morgenthau, pp.155-159)

Morgenthau also assumed that the idea of the success of the balance of power in different historical periods was not merely the result of the distribution of capabilities and resources, but rather the result of the existence of the international community, and the strength of that community, which bound together the major actors within the system. When that community collapsed - as it did following the first partition of Poland during the Napoleonic Wars - the balance of power ceased to perform its function of maintaining peace or preserving the existence of the members of the system. The international community grew even weaker in the 20th century, and its decline was one of the primary causes of both World Wars. Morgenthau feared that the continued absence of an international community in the immediate post-war era would remove all restraints that limit rivalry among the great powers. By the 1970s, Morgenthau had grown more optimistic about the prospects for peace. The détente in international relations, the clear recognition of the regional status quo in Europe, the corresponding decline in ideological confrontation, the emergence of Japan, China, and West Germany as potential third powers, along with the impact of Vietnam on American power, made both superpowers more cautious and more willing to coexist within the status quo. Perhaps most importantly, however, their daily contacts, negotiations, and occasional agreements have in some ways led to a normalisation of relations, laying the groundwork for a renewed sense of international community.166)-(Ibid, pp.160[xxvii]

According to Morgenthau, the change in the international balance of power is due to the loss of its flexibility and its restraining effect on the power ambitions of key leaders on the international stage. This is primarily due to the absence of the balancing factor, itself a consequence of human nature's uncharitable character, the conflict-driven nature of international politics, and the dynamic nature of the balance of power in keeping with national interests that drive states to strive to bring about changes in the existing balance in ways that serve their interests. Moreover, the factors of power among political units are not constant and cannot be measured.

2. Structure of the International System and the Shift from Balance of Power to Balance of Threat as Explanatory Frameworks for the Change of International Power Balances among Defensive Realists

Through the contributions and ideas of Hans Morgenthau regarding the theoretical foundations of classical realism, Several critiques emerged from scholars of international relations concerning the fate of international stability and security, as these premises carry within them the seeds of instability in the international system. As a result – and in an effort to develop this theory – neorealism, in both its defensive and offensive variants, emerged as realist approaches that seek to adapt to the distinctive international reality of that historical period.

Holsti believes that neorealism differs from classical realism in the sense that it has contributed to an understanding of causation at the level of international relations, offered a different interpretation of power, and approached the level of units in a different manner. Whereas the primary unit of analysis in classical realism is the state, neorealism views the international system as the fundamental unit of analysis. With regard to causation in the interpretation of international relations, classical realism views it as emerging from the interaction of states, while neorealism views causation as bidirectional: The first direction

includes interactions among international units, while the second direction pertains to the structure of the system in which states interact.(Faraj, 2008, p. 363)[xxviii]

Accordingly, Kenneth Waltz, in his book Theory of International Politics, builds his approach in contrast to Morgenthau, who emphasised on human nature in his interpretation of international politics. Waltz grounds his analysis in the structure of the international system, focusing on the unit-level of the state in terms of its behaviour, decision-making processes, and power. Since the causal factors associated with the international system cannot be ignored. Waltz thus asks the question: "how can one account for similarities of outcome that persist or recur even as actors vary?" He asserts that "the enduring anarchic character" of international relations accounts for the striking similarities in the nature of international life over the millennia.(Waltz, 1979, p. 88)[xxix]

In his structural analysis of international politics, Kenneth Waltz affirms that the units, i.e. states, in the anarchic system are symmetrical. In other words, states are sovereign [xxx](Ibid, p. 95), they control and define the nature of the system in ways that international organisations, transnational movements and multinational corporations cannot. This is a claim about the function of units, not a claim that states are equal or consistent: states face similar tasks, even if they are not all able to perform them. At the same time, another fundamental factor in differentiating between units lies in their unequal capabilities – greater or lesser – to carry out similar tasks. Waltz examines how capabilities or relative power are distributed among states within an anarchic international system lacking a central authority. Political relations at this level revolve around the distribution of capabilities among states, which is why the balance of power model is considered the optimal political approach to international politics. [xxxi] (Ibid, p. 117)

With regard to Waltz's view of the causes behind changes in the international balance of power, they can be tied to his idea that states are compelled to compete with one another in order to achieve security and gain power. He also believed that states seek power solely to attain their security.

Waltz's neorealism represents a remarkable development in modern thinking on the balance of power in its contemporary sense, which defines the balance of power in terms of the number of existing poles in the balance, the latter being determined by the number of states capable of threatening one another's survival. Furthermore, the international system cannot be static or rigid, but rather is in constant motion because the power balances are constantly being formed within it. What drives states to persist in this motion is their fear of the intentions and actions of other competing states, which causes them to act defensively. They do not usually seek to maximise their power; instead, they aim to prevent other states from doing so, either by seeking to maximise their internal power, or what is known as internal balancing, or by aligning with other states in what is known as external balancing. Accordingly, entering alliances is not pursued to increase another state's power, but rather to curb or stop the growing power of another state. Thus, the foundation of the balance of power according to Waltz lies in preventing others from growing their power to a level that threatens international stability.

a. From Balance of Power to Balance of Threat in Stephen Walt's Theory

Following the end of the ideological conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs and the collapse of bipolarity, Stephen Walt provided an important theoretical contribution through which he sought to adapt to the international transformations that occurred during that historical period.

He moved from the concept of balance of power to that of balance of threat, and from this principle, he attempted to clarify the relationship between this concept and the formation of alliances in international relations. In this regard, he asserts that states, in their quest for

survival and in the face of feeling threatened within their international or regional environment, tend to build their military capabilities to balance the threat, or to seek alliances.

Stephen Walt reinforced Waltz's balance-of-power model with a theory he called the balance of threat, in which he put forward the thesis that states act to form alliances against the threat posed by a rising power. This threat is defined by four criteria: overall capabilities, geographical proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions.(Hamid, 2021, p. 15)xxxii

Accordingly, in answering the question regarding the motives behind the formation of alliances, Walt affirms the continued validity of realist explanations in international relations during the era of unipolarity. Through his works, he focused on the variable of threat as the basis for balancing among powers. In his book entitled The Origins of Alliances, Walt begins with the hypothesis that when states feel threatened, whether the threat is real or perceived, and develop impressions that other parties harbour hostile intentions, they will seek to protect their security and balance the threatening actor by maximising their own capabilities or by entering into a counter-alliance.xxxiii (Walt, 1987, p.21) In the same context, Walt argued that a hegemonic power must reduce its displays of hostility in order to enjoy more stable and reliable alliances, and should focus on building balance rather than pursuing unilateral military expansion.xxxiv (Ibid, pp.40-41)

b. Maximising Power and Achieving Hegemony as a Framework for Explaining Change in the International Balance of Power among Offensive Realists

John Mearsheimer presented his theory within the realist perspective and assumed, contrary to defensive realists, that no state is inherently aggressive. However, a state may act according to the logic of maximising power, as this is the most reliable strategy for ensuring its survival under anarchy. Power maximisation is a recurring pattern of state behaviour, and security competition is one of the defining features of international relations. Thus, revisionism becomes a reflection of the structure of the international system, which encourages the adoption of offensive tendencies in the conduct of state affairs.

Accordingly, John Mearsheimer, the pioneer of offensive realism, presents his theory, "offensive realism", in his book The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. This theory posits that great powers are primarily concerned with preserving their survival in a world where there is no supreme international authority that protects one from another. Therefore, states understand that power is the foundation of their survival, and as a result, must increase it. He considers this to be the permanent goal of great powers – and of states in general – while maintaining the status quo is a concern that belongs to the hegemonic power.

Offensive realism also explains the behaviour of great powers, their constant competition for power and their struggle for hegemony, on the basis of five assumptions about the international system, which require states to act in an aggressive and competitive manner: 20)-(Mearsheimer, 2003, pp. 3xxxv

The international system is anarchic due to the absence of a central authority above states that compels them to respect international law and safeguards the rights of states, whether large or small.

Great powers naturally possess a degree of offensive military capability that enables them to inflict harm or even cause destruction to one another.

States can never be certain of the intentions of other states, nor can they be sure that other states will not use their offensive military capabilities against them.

Survival is the ultimate goal of great powers - specifically, states seek to preserve the integrity of their territory and the independence of their internal political system.

Great powers are rational actors, who recognise their external environment and plan strategically to survive within it.

Accordingly, Mearsheimer asserts that the structure of the international system provides strong incentives for states to seek opportunities to gain power at the expense of their competitors. The international system does not include status quo powers, with the exception of the current hegemonic state, which seeks to maintain its position against potential challengers. Great powers are never satisfied with the existing distribution of power; they are always driven to alter it in their favour. Their intentions are always revisionist, and they employ force to alter the balance of power whenever they believe they can do so at a reasonable cost. At times however, the costs and risks of attempting to change the balance of power are so high that great powers are compelled to wait and seize favourable circumstances. Yet the desire to increase power never disappears, unless a state achieves the ultimate objective: hegemony. And since it is unlikely that any state will achieve global hegemony, the fate of the world is perpetual competition among great powers.(Ibid, p.3)xxxvi

IV. The advanced theoretical contributions within the Realist School to Explain the Phenomenon of Change in the International Balance of Power.

The theoretical contributions previously reviewed focused primarily on variables related to the state and the anarchic nature of the international system. However, the study of factors related to internal transformations within states, whether in the perceptions of ruling elites regarding the costs of altering existing balances in order to seek a greater status commensurate with the new distribution of power, or the role of internal developmental factors across various sectors that support states' power and capabilities and their dissatisfaction with their hierarchical position in the international system and the redefinition of their national interests and objectives, has not been significantly integrated into the aforementioned studies. These factors can be described as expanded approaches to explaining changes in the international balance of power.

1. Costs and the Search for an International Status as Explanatory Frameworks for Change in the International Balance of Power According to Robert Gilpin

By examining the ideas presented by Robert Gilpin in his book “War and Change in World Politics”, a highly significant theoretical contribution, in which he coined what we refer to in this study as “change in the international balance of power”, the term “international political change”. The latter rests on the assumption that the international system remains stable - that is, in a state of equilibrium - when no major power (or coalition of powers) believes that altering the system would yield additional benefits commensurate with the expected costs of such change. Although every state and group within the system may benefit from certain forms of change, the costs involved tend to discourage attempts to change the system. Under these circumstances, where no actor has incentive to change the system, the status quo can be considered stable.xxxvii(Gilpin, 1981, p. 10)

What Gilpin proposes through the above mentioned assumption is that the international system exists in a state of dynamic equilibrium. It is not completely static, just as no system is; constant changes occur at the level of interaction among states. However, conflicts, alliances and diplomatic engagements among the actors in the system generally tend to preserve the defining characteristics of the system. If the interests and relative capabilities of the major states in a given international system remain constant over time, or if the relations between powers change in a way that maintains the same relative distribution of power, the system will remain in equilibrium indefinitely. However, internal and international developments gradually undermine the stability of the status quo, as shifts in internal coalitions may necessitate a redefinition of the ‘national interest.’ Among the most

destabilising factors is the tendency of states' power levels to change at uneven rates due to political, economic and technological developments. Over time, the uneven growth of the powers of different states in the system leads to a fundamental redistribution of power within it.xxxviii(Ibid, pp. 13-16)

In this context, Gilpin argues that increases in military or technological innovation, or other forms of change, can enhance the benefits of territorial expansion or of transforming the international order. At the same time, the uneven growth of power among states, when coupled with the persistence of the existing hierarchy of prestige, territorial divisions, and international division of labour – all of which continue to reflect the interests of the dominant powers and the distribution of capabilities established at the last systemic change – constitute clear indicators of disequilibrium. This will ultimately lead to a crisis in the international system. Although a peaceful solution may be possible, it is war that ultimately determines which state, or coalition of states, emerges dominant and rules the system, being the primary mechanism of change throughout history. It is through the mechanism of war that a hierarchical order of prestige among states is established. In international relations, prestige functions as the analogue of authority in domestic politics.[xxxix] (Ibid, pp. 32-33)

2. Power Transition Theory and its Perspective on the International Redistribution of Power as a Framework for Understanding the Change in International Balances

Building on the theoretical contributions within the realist school concerning the distribution of power within the international system, the Power Transition Model, developed by Kugler and Organski through their study entitled "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation".

This theory begins with the idea that there is a hierarchical sequence of power among states, whereby one state or a group of states dominate the international system. According to this theory, when the power of a rising state approaches that of the dominant state, or when parity is reached between the two sides, the likelihood of conflict increases sharply. This escalation is attributed to the clash of interests and the desire of rising states to reshape the international system in line with their own interests. Furthermore, the international system is disturbed when a new power emerges to challenge existing dominant states, particularly when these powers seek to redistribute influence at the international level, which may lead to major conflicts and ultimately a reconfiguration of the international system.xl (Kugler & Organski, 1983, pp.172-173)

The Power Transition Theory rests on the assumption that major shifts in the international balance of power, especially when a rising state approaches or reaches parity with the dominant power, constitute the phase in which the likelihood of major conflicts, as well as radical transformations in the nature and structure of the international system, is at its highest.

The authors' analysis highlights the idea that a balance of military and economic capabilities among major powers is the decisive factor determining either the stability or volatility of the international system. When two competing powers reach a state of equal strength, the probability of war for the sake of hegemony increases. In other words, instability becomes most likely during periods of relative parity between potential rivals. As a dissatisfied rising power closes the gap with the dominant state – growing in capabilities at a faster rate than the hegemon – the prospects for instability and conflict intensify. The narrowing power gap creates a set of concerns among leaders of the dominant state that the challenger will: xli (Ibid, pp.178-179)

Surpass the dominant state;

Become increasingly unwilling to accept its subordinate position within the international system;

Challenge the leadership and rules of the international system.

This model argues that competition for hegemony within the international system begins when the dissatisfied party anticipates greater benefits and privileges in the event of a successful outcome to the conflict than in maintaining the existing status quo. At the same time, the dominant state, recognising the shift in the power relations, prepares to resist this alteration. This theory maintains its strong affinity with the classical realist perspective on international politics by reaffirming that power remains the decisive variable in the functioning of the international system. However, it links this concept to national development, which is no longer limited to military power, emphasising that national power must be viewed through the development of social, economic and political resources. In addition, the theory introduces an additional factor: the degree of satisfaction with the international distribution of this power, as not all states– particularly elites - are content with the existing distribution. This renders change potentially likely in international politics.

3. Balance of Interests and the Impact of the Domestic Environments of States as Frameworks for Explaining Change in the Balance of Power among Neoclassical Realists: Randall Schweller

Randall Schweller offers an advanced theoretical contribution within the realist school aimed at refining classical frameworks of balance of power, particularly those related to balance of threat. In his analysis of the main causes of change in international balances of power.

Schweller places central emphasis on the concept of balance of interests. Schweller's theory of the balance of interests, essentially a revision and elaboration of classical balance - of-power theories, reflects his rejection of realist assumptions that all states are exclusively motivated by the pursuit of security and survival. Instead, he asserts that states possess diverse interests ranging from a desire to preserve the status quo to an ambition to fundamentally change it. For Schweller, the interests of the state operate on two levels: at the level of the state as a unit, where it is understood in terms of the costs that the state is willing to incur to defend the values it holds versus the costs it is prepared to bear in order to expand those values. The second level is linked to the international system, where the interests of the state refer to the relative power between states defending the status quo and states seeking to change it. However, Schweller emphasises that the process by which states define their interests is shaped by their domestic priorities and capabilities.[xlii] (Schweller, 1994, Summer, pp. 82-83)

Schweller also criticised Walt's theory of balance of power, assuming that second-tier states may not necessarily seek to balance the power that threaten them, but rather tend to "bandwagon" with the dominant great power when doing so offers greater benefits or gains than confrontation. He further explains that balancing is not required in the international system, particularly in the absence of external threats. In this context, the domestic environment, including the quality of leaders and elites, the government, and internal political dynamics, plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy. Depending on these internal factors, a state may choose to adopt a strategy of bandwagoning rather than pursuing balance, especially when this course of action appears more likely to ensure its security.(Ibid, xliii pp105-106)

He further affirms that the alignment of weaker states with the stronger power constitutes a fundamental problem in international politics, as it carries profound implications for the stability of states and the prospects of either achieving peace or entering into new conflicts. States often find themselves faced with complex choices under systemic pressures, and thus make decisions based on rational calculations aimed at benefiting from ongoing

transformations. Therefore, the bandwagoning behaviour - the inclination of states to side with the stronger actor - is one of the most significant political interactions in the international system. It produces far-reaching effects on policies and alliances for multiple generations. Moreover, alignment is closely linked to the redistribution of major powers and the rise or fall of international systems, as states pursue it primarily to secure material gains.[xliv] (Scheweller, 2006, pp. 50-55)

As for the main causes behind the emerging desire among states to alter the existing balance of power, according to Schweller, they can be summarised as follows:

Economic and technological growth: Such growth enhances states' ambitions and expands their military capabilities, thereby contributing to the relative redistribution of capabilities. When one state's power increases relative to others, a transformation occurs in the structure of the international system.

Shifts in interests and objectives: When states reassess the value of the existing status quo in exchange for pursuing change, major shifts in alliances and foreign policy may occur, and powers with expansionist goals may emerge.

Conclusion and findings:

From the foregoing analysis, we conclude that the study of change in the international balance of power is not linked solely to external factors such as military strength or alliances. Rather, it involves important domestic variables, including economic policies, internal decision-making processes, and the capacity of states to adapt to international transformations. Understanding the ongoing dynamics at the international level and anticipating the potential reconfiguration of the international system requires acknowledging .that the factors governing it necessitate the interaction between internal and external factors

An analysis of the dynamics of the international balance of power according to the realist school– whose theorists have attempted to adjust to the various developments in order to render it a theoretical model capable of serving as the optimal and most effective framework for analysing and explaining international phenomena – reveals that change in the balance of power is highlighted through realist interpretations as a complex phenomenon shaped by the :interplay of several factors, such as

Power and redistribution of capabilities

Changes in the balance of power usually result from the transfer or accumulation of material capabilities (economic, military, and technological) among states, which leads to a desire among states to secure the status and prestige commensurate with their level of power. This requires them to adjust their policies to safeguard their interests or re-establish .equilibrium with other international actors

Temporary Instability

Change in the balance of power creates periods of instability, as states attempt to respond to this change by balancing power or by forming new alliances. During these moments, the international system enters a transitional phase marked by fluctuation until a new equilibrium .is reached

The Role of Rising Powers

The emergence of a new rising power can reshape the international system. Such powers may seek to move from defence to offence in order to secure a more advantageous position in the global balance of power, prompting existing powers to adopt counterbalancing measures .aimed at preventing systemic change

Impact of Internal Factors

Change is not driven solely by external forces or indicators. Internal factors such as internal politics, the state's economy and decision-making play a crucial role in determining .the state's ability to achieve a balance that serves its own interests

Transformations in the Form of Power -

The concept of power is no longer restricted to military power alone. It has expanded to encompass economic, technological and diplomatic instruments that collectively shape how .changes occur in the international system

State responses to systemic change -

How major and minor states respond to these changes largely determines the course of the new balance. Policies of "hard balancing", forming alliances, or even "bandwagoning" are .adopted based on calculations of opportunities and risks

In short, the shift in the balance of power constitutes a complex and dynamic process involving the interplay of material capabilities, domestic and foreign policies, and the strategies of states, all of which determine the stability or transformation of the international system. What this study demonstrates is that the realist school offers powerful analytical tools for understanding the logic of hegemony, strategic competition, and the ongoing struggle for influence among great and major powers. Indeed, current international transformations and the ongoing rivalry between the dominant power and other powers, whether allied with it or rising ones, underscore the importance of realist theoretical principles in understanding these .interactions However, despite the significant roles played by revisionist states within the international order, it remains unlikely that the current balance of power will be fundamentally altered. This is because the dominant power continues to actively seek additional strength to maintain its leading position on the global geopolitical stage.

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