



THE 19TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

Navigating Geopolitics and Diplomacy in the Contemporary World: An Analysis of International Relations

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Abstract: This research paper endeavors to dissect the intricate dynamics of modern international relations, with a focus on geopolitics, diplomacy, and global governance. It seeks to elucidate the importance of these factors in achieving strategic interests and fostering global stability. **Prior Work:** This paper builds upon existing research on international relations, drawing from various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. It aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse by examining contemporary geopolitical shifts, evolving diplomatic strategies, and challenges in global governance. **Approach:** The research employs a comprehensive approach, integrating qualitative analysis of diplomatic negotiations, case studies of power dynamics, and scrutiny of theoretical frameworks. It leverages diverse methodologies to capture multifaceted perspectives on international relations in the 21st century. **Results:** The paper synthesizes key findings, emphasizing the impact of technology and globalization on geopolitical strategies, the evolution of diplomatic practices, and avenues for cooperation on global issues. It provides insights into the complexities of contemporary international relations. **Implications:** This study has implications for academics, policymakers, and administrators, offering valuable insights into navigating the complexities of modern international relations. It informs strategic decision-making and underscores the importance of proactive diplomatic engagement in addressing global challenges. **Value:** The paper makes a significant contribution to the field by offering a nuanced analysis of contemporary international relations, highlighting original insights and providing a thorough examination of key issues. It adds value through its comprehensive research approach and rigorous analysis, ensuring its relevance and high quality.

Keywords: Collaboration; governments; strategies; challenges; environmental sustainability

JEL Classification: O10; O31; O19; F20

1. The Evolution of Geopolitics in the Modern Era. From Historical Contexts to the Present Day

In the contemporary world, navigating the complex landscape of geopolitics and diplomacy is crucial for states to achieve their strategic interests and promote global stability. The international relations in the modern era through various lenses, including the evolution of geopolitics, major theoretical frameworks, diplomacy in the 21st century, power dynamics and conflict resolution, and challenges and opportunities in global governance. By exploring these themes, this paper seeks to answer important

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questions, such as how technology and globalization affect geopolitical strategies, how diplomatic negotiations have changed with advances in communication and technology, and what opportunities exist for cooperation and collaboration on global issues. The complexities of international relations and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for states and non-state actors alike. Geopolitics, from its , has been inextricably linked to the state’s pursuit of power within the geographical framework. Rudolf Kjellén, who coined the term “geopolitics” in the early 20th century, provided a foundation for understanding the complex interplay between political strategy and geographic considerations (Deudney, 2024). This relationship between geography and statecraft has evolved, particularly over the past century, with geopolitical thinking playing a significant part in shaping human history and international relations. Historically, geopolitical analysis was framed by the realist theory, which posits that states, as the central actors in international politics, seek to secure their domestic space against the chaotic nature of the international arena¹. This perspective further legitimizes the state’s efforts to impose order upon this anarchic space, there by reinforcing the state’s role as the primary security provider. Over time, geopolitics has shifted to encompass critical perspectives that challenge earlier assumptions about the natural order of international politics and the state’s role within it. This has led to a more nuanced understanding of geopolitics, one that recognizes the interplay between geography, political power, and a wider range of factors, including religious ideologies and their influence on geopolitical conflicts.

1.1. Objectives, Research and Questions

The analyze of intricate dynamics of modern international relations with a focus on geopolitics, diplomacy, and global governance. The importance of geopolitical strategies, diplomatic practices, and global governance frameworks in achieving strategic interests and fostering global stability. *To explore* avenues for cooperation among governments and other stakeholders on global issues, particularly environmental sustainability. *To offer* valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and administrators on navigating the complexities of modern international relations and informing strategic decision-making.

1.2 Research Questions

What are the key factors influencing contemporary international relations, particularly in terms of geopolitics, diplomacy, and global governance? How do geopolitical shifts, such as emerging powers and changing alliances, impact diplomatic strategies and global stability? What are the main challenges facing global governance frameworks in addressing transnational issues such as climate change, terrorism, and economic inequality? How has technology and globalization transformed diplomatic practices and the conduct of international relations in the 21st century? What opportunities exist for collaboration among governments and other stakeholders to address global challenges, with a focus on environmental sustainability? What are the implications of the findings for academics, policymakers, and administrators in navigating the complexities of modern international relations and promoting global cooperation?

¹ “Geopolitics - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics,” 2024:37:19, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/geopolitics>.

1.3 Research Methodology

Literature Review: Begin by conducting a thorough literature review on existing research in the field of international relations, focusing on geopolitical theories, diplomatic strategies, and global governance frameworks. *Theoretical Framework:* Develop a theoretical framework that integrates various theoretical perspectives on international relations, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, or other relevant theories. *Data Collection:* Utilizing a combination of qualitative methods, including diplomatic negotiation analysis and case studies of power dynamics in international relations. *Analysis:* Examining how geopolitical shifts, evolving diplomatic strategies, and global governance challenges interact in the contemporary world.

2. Key Drivers of Contemporary Geopolitical Shifts

As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, a myriad of factors are driving the changes we observe in the 21st century. The “lines of force,” which dictate the balance of power among nations, are undergoing a significant shift, altering the strategic priorities and alliances that have long been in place¹. This transition is not merely a repositioning of existing powers but a reflection of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of geopolitics itself, where the relative importance of political, economic, and military factors are in constant flux. It is this very volatility that makes the field so complex and ensures that no single geopolitical perspective can adequately capture the multitude of forces at play. Analysts and policymakers must grapple with the political consequences of these shifts, which serve as a permanent object of analysis and concern². The 21st century is marked by the rapid development of new powers and the erosion of the once-dominant Western hegemony, as evidenced by the rise of China and the assertive policies of Russia, which seek to redefine their spheres of influence and challenge the status quo. The geopolitical landscape is thus characterized by a continuous and intricate power play, where the struggle for influence and the contest over the democratic character of the international system are paramount.

2.1. The Impact of Technology and Globalization on Geopolitical Strategies

The ramifications of technological advancements and globalization on geopolitical strategies are profound, as they shape the character, number, and location of viable security units within the global international system. For instance, the emergence of new industrial capabilities, particularly in transportation, communication, and destruction, has rendered the balance of power system, which maintained order in 19th-century Europe, obsolete. This shift is emblematic of the broader transformation where the United States and Russia, by virtue of their size and strategic location, are poised to better weather the challenges posed by this new era. Concurrently, the forces of technology and globalization are not merely altering the military and political landscape but are also driving economic change, as evidenced by the lowering of trade barriers which in turn spurs further technological and global integration³. This integration, however, has had a double-edged impact on societies, particularly in the West, where the dislocation of middle-class livelihoods due to these forces

¹ “Geopolitics: A Methodological Introduction - Groupe d'études géopolitiques: <https://geopolitique.eu>,” 2024:35:21, <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2022/12/05/geopolitics-a-methodological-introduction/>.

² “Groupe d'études géopolitiques le think tank de l'échelle pertinente: <https://geopolitique.eu>,” 2024:34:18, <https://geopolitique.eu/>.

³ “Democracy & Disorder: The struggle for influence in the new geopolitics: Brookings,” 2024:33:46, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/democracy-disorder-the-struggle-for-influence-in-the-new-geopolitics/>.

has led to significant political tensions. Thus, while technology and globalization have collectively contributed to a rise in global GDP, they have also precipitated a reevaluation of geopolitical strategies that now must account for the interplay between economic, political, and social dimensions in an increasingly interconnected world¹.

3. Major Theoretical Frameworks in International Relations

Understanding the varied theoretical frameworks in international relations is essential for comprehending the complexities of global politics. Realism, with its emphasis on power and competition, suggests that states operate in a self-interested manner where military and economic might dictate international engagements. This perspective is often contrasted with liberalism, which posits that states can achieve mutual benefits through cooperation and interdependence, suggesting a more optimistic view of international diplomacy and organizations. Constructivism, on the other hand, diverges from these materialistic viewpoints by highlighting how shared ideas, culture, and norms shape state behavior and the international system itself². Each theory provides a lens through which international relations professionals can interpret past events and forecast future trends, shaping not only academic discourse but also the practical strategies of nations on the global stage. These theories, with their distinct emphases and analytical tools, underscore the multifaceted nature of global interactions and the importance of understanding the underlying principles that govern international relations³.

4. Differences in Theoretical Explanations of State Behavior and Diplomatic Decisions

The emergence of constructivism as a notable theory in international relations reflects a shift away from the traditional state-centric models of geopolitics that dominated the discourse during World War II and much of the twentieth century. Constructivism challenges the realist view that nation-states are the singular units of analysis and instead posits that non-state actors and international institutions play an increasingly significant role in shaping state behavior and diplomatic decisions. This is further elucidated by the argument that international organizations such as Amnesty International, OXFAM, and Greenpeace have become influential in the international arena, particularly in advocating for human rights, thereby setting international standards that countries strive to meet. While realist theories, like those espoused by neo-realism, prioritize the state as the chief actor, and view international politics as a system of competing national interests shaped by systemic pressures⁴, constructivist perspectives offer a more nuanced understanding of how the dynamics within international relations are not only influenced by power politics but also by ideational factors and social constructs. This divergence in theoretical approaches highlights the complexity of international politics and the multiple dimensions that need to be considered when analyzing state behavior and diplomatic decisions.

¹ Global economy contested: power and conflict across the international division of labor (London, New York: Routledge, 2008).

² Explain different theoretical approaches of international relations. Shoutmore (2023), <https://shoutmore.in/international-relations-theoretical-approaches/>.

³ “Key Theories of International Relations | Norwich University - Online,” 2024:28:08, <https://online.norwich.edu/key-theories-international-relations>.

⁴ International relations theory (Bristol, 2017).

4.1. The Role of Non-State Actors in Theoretical Frameworks of International Relations

As the geopolitical landscape evolves, the role of non-state actors has become more prominent, challenging the traditional dominance of sovereign states within the international system. Non-state actors, such as international organizations and multinational corporations, are not merely passive recipients of state policies but actively shape global politics and economics (Wikipedia, 2024). The rise of globalization has catalyzed this transformation, eroding the exclusive authority and decision-making power of nation-states and allowing for the proliferation of non-state actors who now compete with states on various fronts. This competition is not only evident in economic realms but also in the influence over international norms and policies, effectively making non-state actors indispensable elements in the theoretical frameworks of international relations¹. Theoretical paradigms that previously centered on the anarchical nature of the international system and the interactions between states are now being reexamined to incorporate the significant impact that non-state actors have on shaping the global agenda. Thus, the shifting “lines of force” in geopolitics today must account for the dynamic and multifaceted contributions of these actors, reflecting a more complex and interconnected international arena.

5. Diplomacy in the 21st Century

The advent of digital diplomacy has significantly transformed the way diplomats engage with the world, ushering in a new era of diplomatic engagement that is more immediate and transparent. By leveraging digital platforms, diplomats can communicate directly with global audiences, bypassing traditional gatekeepers and fostering a more inclusive dialogue with a wide array of stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, businesses, and civil society groups. Furthermore, the use of social media has not only provided a means for public diplomacy but has also given diplomats a direct line to the populace, allowing for real-time engagement and the shaping of public opinion. The implications of these changes are profound, as diplomacy has become more accessible to the general public, leading to greater scrutiny and a need for diplomats to be more responsive and adaptable to the fast-paced nature of digital communication (Forum, 2024). In the complex arena of contemporary international relations, states have had to adapt their diplomatic strategies to the shifting landscape of geopolitics, particularly in the wake of the technological and communicative advancements brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Central to these strategies is the reminder to other nations of the mutual benefits that arise from maintaining and strengthening bilateral ties. This is often achieved through steady, sustained, and personal engagement that underscores the significance of nurturing longstanding relationships, which can be instrumental in facilitating cooperation across a range of diplomatic initiatives. For instance, as part of their efforts to maintain supremacy in the realm of technology, US diplomats are encouraged to fortify ad hoc and less formal alliances with their counterparts, which serves not only to preserve their technological edge but also to promote democratic values in the governance of emerging technologies². Such efforts are indicative of a broader strategy that seeks to construct a unified transatlantic approach to the challenges and opportunities presented by novel technologies, thus fostering an environment conducive to overcoming barriers that may impede progress. This concerted push towards greater collaboration is not only a response to the challenges posed by globalization but

¹ “Study ship with Krati: Studyshipwithkrati,” 2024:23:12, <https://www.studyshipwithkrati.com>.

² “Atlantic Council - Shaping the global future together: Atlantic Council,” 2024:19:03, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/>.

also a proactive step towards ensuring that the benefits of technological innovation are disseminated widely while mitigating the risks associated with their misuse¹.

5.1. How do International Organizations Influence Modern Diplomatic Relations?

The influence of international organizations on modern diplomatic relations extends beyond the mere facilitation of dialogue; they have become pivotal in shaping the policies and responses of states to global challenges. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, diplomats were not only representatives of their nations but also became deeply involved in public health matters, negotiating for medical support such as vaccines. This was a significant shift, as it placed diplomats at the forefront of the global health crisis, particularly those stationed at the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva and other missions abroad, who became the visible leaders in the fight against the pandemic. Moreover, the involvement of diplomats in these health issues underscored the necessity for them to acquire knowledge in public health at both domestic and international levels. Consequently, through bodies like the WHO, international organizations demonstrated their capacity to be more than neutral conveners; they actively shaped the conduct and focus of modern diplomacy during one of the most challenging global health crises in recent history. This integration of global health into diplomatic relations highlights the intricate ways in which international organizations influence the practice of statecraft in the contemporary era, where the lines between domestic policy and international cooperation are increasingly blurred.

5.2. Power Dynamics and Conflict Resolution

In the intricate realm of international relations, modern tools of power wielded by states are multifaceted, and their application can sway diplomatic engagements and shape global politics. One such tool is the strategic resolution of conflicts, where states employ their influence to mediate disputes in international affairs (Holley, 2024). Eris Conflict Resolution is an example of a mechanism that can be adapted to the international stage to resolve tensions that arise within or between states, including toxic workplace environments, sexual harassment, and discrimination allegations. The power dynamics inherent in such situations often see one party wielding more influence than the other², paralleling the geopolitical landscape where powerful states can dictate terms in a way that smaller states cannot. This strategic use of power is underscored by the notion that power in conflict is the currency that determines outcomes, whether it is the distribution of resources, enforcement of international laws, or brokering peace treaties (Nelson, 2003). The ability to influence others through power, whether to achieve objectives, resolve conflict, or build relationships, remains a central tenet of statecraft in the contemporary world, where influence is as critical as military might in the pursuit of national interests. Within the complex arena of contemporary geopolitical conflicts, resolution mechanisms are as varied as the disputes themselves (Consulting, 2022). Despite some parties' reluctance to relinquish control to external mediators, the role of conflict practitioners has become increasingly vital in the resolution process. They assist disputing entities by engaging in meticulous fact-finding and comprehensive data gathering, thus laying the groundwork for informed decision-making. This approach often involves a spectrum of decision-making

¹ of State, Committee on Science and Technology Capabilities at the Department et al., "A Rapidly Changing World," in *Diplomacy for the 21st Century: Embedding a Culture of Science and Technology Throughout the Department of State* (National Academies Press (US), 2015).

² Conflict Resolution Consulting Firm | Workplace Conflict Resolution & Management Consultant | Pollack Peacebuilding (2018), <https://pollackpeacebuilding.com/>.

services, including but not limited to advisory mediation, arbitration, and the hybrid ‘med-arb’, which combines elements of both to tailor the process to the specific needs of the conflict at hand. Meanwhile, the proactive strategies of alternative conflict resolution, such as dispute systems design and contractual provisions that aim to forestall conflicts, are gaining traction for their potential to not only resolve but also prevent disputes. In addition, a diverse range of approaches, including dialogue facilitation, youth camps, and truth commissions, are increasingly applied with the goal of fostering long-term reconciliation and addressing the deeper psychological and social dimensions of conflicts. This multifaceted approach to conflict resolution in the geopolitical sphere reflects an understanding that the roots of conflict are often deep-seated and that a variety of tools are necessary to navigate the intricate web of international relations.

5.3 The Impact of Emerging Powers on Global Conflict Dynamics

As emerging powers ascend the global stage, their ability to influence the dynamics of global conflicts becomes increasingly evident. Power, in the realm of international relations, can be defined as “the ability to get one’s needs met and to further one’s goals” (Mayer, 2016), a principle that is applicable in both interpersonal conflicts, such as those in the workplace, and broader geopolitical disputes. These emerging powers often possess the capacity to tilt the scales of conflict resolution, particularly when there is a significant disparity in the power dynamics between the disputing parties. For instance, an emerging power with growing economic and military capabilities can provide support to a lesser power, empowering it to negotiate from a position of increased strength, or conversely, can exert pressure to advance its own interests. Moreover, the strategic use of power by these nations can not only achieve specific objectives but also can be instrumental in resolving conflicts and fostering relationships, as power is essentially the currency with which nations influence each other. The recognition and understanding of these shifting power dynamics, underscored by the importance of observing verbal cues and changes in language (GGI, 2024), are crucial for analysts and policymakers engaged in the geopolitics of the 21st century, as they navigate the consequences of the shifting “lines of force” previously mentioned.

6. Challenges and Opportunities in Global Governance

One of the most pressing challenges facing global governance today is the increasing complexity and fragmentation of the international system, which undermines the ability to address global issues effectively. The current global governance framework is characterized by a multitude of actors from different sectors, including states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities (Jang, McSparren & Rashchupkina, 2016). These actors bring diverse perspectives to the table and partake in decision-making processes, which can be both a strength and a weakness. While such diversity can foster innovative solutions and broader participation, it also leads to a lack of coherence and coordination, as there is no single, unified authority to steer global policy effectively. The voluntary nature of global governance arrangements often prioritizes flexibility over the establishment of binding rules, which can result in a piecemeal approach to solving complex, interdependent challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and nuclear proliferation (Fischer, et al., 2023). This flexibility may allow for tailored responses but also creates gaps in enforcement and accountability, thereby reducing the overall efficacy of global governance initiatives. Moreover, the principle of sovereignty remains a significant barrier to the full realization of human rights and human security at an international level, as it often limits the capacity of governance actors to intervene in

states' internal affairs, even when mass atrocities or severe human rights violations occur. Consequently, the challenge for global governance in the current era is not only to manage the multitude of actors and their interactions but also to find ways to enhance collective action and enforce compliance in the face of pressing global concerns¹.

6.1. How are International Laws and Norms Adapting to New Geopolitical Realities?

In response to the evolving geopolitical landscape, international laws and norms are undergoing significant adaptation, influenced by the complex interplay of globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the influence of non-state actors. The traditional concept of sovereignty is being reevaluated as human struggles for power and equity increasingly shape international relations and governance. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of global governance is characterized by a preference for flexible arrangements, voluntary measures, and collaborative partnerships, suggesting a departure from rigid frameworks and unilateral approaches. This shift is palpable in areas such as trade and investment, where transnational forces consequentially impact health, indicating the interconnectedness of global rules and norms across different sectors. However, despite these changes, international laws and norms are facing criticism for not adequately adapting to the development imbalances that persist both between and within states (Zhang, 2021). The resistance of capable states to dedicate political capital and economic resources to improve health conditions beyond their borders exemplifies the challenges of international cooperation in the realm of public health. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that, while the International Health Regulations of 2005 (IHR2005) urge member countries to enhance domestic health systems, many developing nations continue to struggle with the implementation of effective public health infrastructures. Without a concerted effort to adapt international laws and norms to the new realities of geopolitics, there is a risk of perpetuating colonialist tendencies and unintentionally causing harm through practices that fail to consider local capacities, knowledge, and traditions².

7. Conclusion

As we navigate the evolving geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, the imperative for global cooperation and collaboration, especially in the domains of diplomacy and geopolitics, becomes increasingly evident. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a powerful reminder of the urgent need for a united international front to effectively address global health crises. This necessitates countries to transcend traditional boundaries and work collectively towards shared solutions. The recent G20 Extraordinary Leader's Summit, convened in response to the pandemic, stands as a testament to the emerging consensus on this necessity, showcasing how leadership from heads of state can drive the integration of global public health issues into national and international policy agendas through diplomatic channels. Moreover, globalization has not only made cooperation essential for achieving national public health objectives but has also highlighted that public health is a universal concern transcending political and social boundaries. This realization underscores the need for a synergistic approach to governance, wherein nations, international organizations, and various other stakeholders coordinate efforts to enhance the collective response to health emergencies. This new era in global health

¹ Global governance: Global Challenges Foundation. <https://globalchallenges.org/global-governance/>.

² Homepage | Blavatnik School of Government. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/>.

governance, characterized by economic interdependence and intensified global communication, calls for the development of innovative mechanisms for global decision-making and increased multilateralism. Such measures would provide small developing states with the platform to contribute meaningfully to the global governance system, promoting diplomacy and cooperation at an international level. The research paper delves into the complex interplay between geopolitical analysis, international relations, and the evolving political landscape of the 21st century, emphasizing the significance of understanding varied theoretical frameworks in international relations. It underscores the multifaceted nature of global interactions and the importance of adapting international laws and norms to the new realities of geopolitics. Furthermore, the study identifies the growing prominence of non-state actors in the evolving geopolitical landscape, challenging the traditional dominance of sovereign states within the international system. In conclusion, the research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolving geopolitical landscape, highlighting the crucial role of diplomacy and geopolitics in shaping human history and global politics. It emphasizes the importance of global cooperation and collaboration, particularly in the realm of public health, as essential components of effective governance in an interconnected world. Through diplomatic channels and concerted efforts, nations can navigate the complexities of the 21st-century geopolitical landscape and work towards shared solutions for global challenges.

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