



SIS

1955-2025

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

SEVEN DECADES OF EXCELLENCE



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
अंतरराष्ट्रीय अध्ययन संस्थान
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

IS 583 N: Great Powers in the International System

| | |
|--|---|
| Course: | M.A. (PISM) |
| Course No: | IS 583 |
| Course Title: | Great Powers in the International System |
| Course Type: | Optional |
| Semester: | Winter (4 th Semester) |
| Course Teacher & Contact Details: | Name: Dr. PRASANTA SAHOO Room No.: 309, SIS-II, JNU Email: prasantasahoo12@yahoo.ac.in Tel. No.: (O): 011-26704597 & 9818120220 |
| Credits: | 4 Credits |
| Contact Hours: | 4 (2+2) hours/week |
| Class Schedule & Room Number | Monday & Thursday—11 am-1 pm, SIS-I, RN-112 |
| Tutorial (for difficulties & discussion) | |

Course Description & Objectives

During the Cold War years, the two superpowers dominated the international system to the near-total exclusion of other power centres. The term 'great power' almost totally disappeared from the scholarly analysis of International Relations (IR) and international politics, despite the autonomous role of states such as China and France. If anything, the notion of 'great powers' was seen as archaic, dating back to the years of European dominance before the Second World War.

With the end of East-West bipolarity, in the decade of the 1990s, the great powers seemed to be re-emerging from under the shadow of the superpowers to reclaim a central place in the discipline of IR. However, in the decade of the 2000s, it became apparent that the international system was experiencing not multipolarity but hegemony (the so-called 'unipolarity'). While the hegemony of the United States (US) continues, the rise of China is posing a number of interesting questions. The most important of which is whether the system is evolving in the direction of bipolarity or multipolarity.

It is therefore important for students of IR to gain a theoretical and historical understanding of the position, role and attributes of great powers in the international system. The purpose of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to study great powers in some depth and detail. We will focus on the Great Power concept, the attributes of Great Powers, and the rise and fall of the Great Powers through history. The principal theoretical analyses and debates about Great Powers, in the various ways (war, alliances and trade) in which Great Powers interact with one another. Focusing on two specific Great Powers, France and China, one of which is in relative decline and the other

on the rise. Along the way, we will also seek to understand how Great Powers differ from cognate concepts like middle powers, world powers, regional powers, emerging powers, rising and declining powers, and empires.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. understand the basic concepts and theories of international relations (IR).
2. identify the main actors in world politics, including states, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and multinational corporations (MNCs).
3. analyse the causes of war and peace, and the role of diplomacy and conflict resolution.
4. evaluate the effects of globalisation, human rights, and international law on global governance.
5. apply IR theories to contemporary world events and challenges.
6. critically assess the global issues such as terrorism, environmental and cyber-security challenges.
7. broaden their analytical understanding of contemporary politics of the world and the debates.
8. make clear and concise arguments in written assignments and oral class participation.

Evaluation Methods

- **Mid-Semester Evaluation (50%)** (Compulsory)

- Mid-Term Examination

- **End-Semester Evaluation (50%)** (Compulsory)

- End-Semester Examination

- *The SIS Research Manual should be used as a guide for written assignments. Available at:*

- https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/SIS_Research_Manual_0.pdf.*

Students must maintain a high degree of academic integrity, which includes but is not limited to abstaining from copying and plagiarism. The reference must be given to the SIS Research Manual for details on plagiarism and research ethics.

Course Content

The following are ***eight*** course thematic subdivisions **Units**:

I. Introduction to Concepts: Cognates and Attributes

- Defining the Concept of Power
- Power in International Relations
- Defining the Concept of Great Power
- Differences among Great Powers, Super Powers, Middle Power, Regional Powers and World Powers
- Defining Great Powers by their Attributes: Economic Competitiveness; Social Cohesion; Cultural Attractiveness; Geographical Reach; and Policy Coherence.

II. & III. Histories: Rise and Fall

- Great Powers in World History
- Rise and Fall of the Great Powers
- The Early European Maritime Powers: Spain, Portugal, Holland
- Classical European Balance of Power: Britain, France, Russia, Austria, Prussia
- Global Conflicts and the Rivalry among Great Powers
- Global Conflicts and the Fall of Great Powers
- Superpower bipolarity and the Cold War: USA and USSR

IV. Hegemony and Great Powers

- After the thaw: American Hegemony
- After Hegemony: Power Transition or System Transformation?
- After Hegemony: Bipolarity or Multipolarity?

V. Theories: Polarity, Hegemony and Stability

- Hegemonic Stability Theory
- The Polarity-Stability Debate
- Power Transition Theory
- Long Cycles

VI. Relations: War, Alliance and Trade

- War between Great Powers
- Alliances between Great Powers
- Trade between Great Powers
- Geographies: Locations and Settings of Power
- Geography and Information
- Continental and Maritime Power
- Regional Power

VII. Cases: France and China

- France: A Great Power in Decline
- China: A Great Power on the Rise

VIII. Futures: Aspirations and Possibilities

- Future Great Powers in the Asia-Pacific
- Future Great Powers in the Southern Hemisphere

Essential Literature Readings

Unit I.

Introduction to Concepts: Cognates and Attributes (Week 1-2)

Robert A. Dahl, The Concept of Power, *Behavioural Science*, Vol. 2, No. 3, July 1957, pp. 201-215.

K. J. Holsti, The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations, *Background*, Vol. 7, No. 4, February 1964, pp. 179-194.

Jack S. Levy, Historical Trends in Great Power War, 1495-1975, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2, June 1982, pp. 278-300.

Hans J. Morgenthau, From Great Powers to Superpowers. In. Brian Porter (ed.), *International Politics 1919-1969* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Robert Gilpin, & J. M. Gilpin, Introduction & The Nature of Political Economy. In. *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 1987). pp. 8-24.

Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein (eds.), Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy. In. *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Joseph S. Nye, The Changing Nature of Power. In. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (eds.), Why GeoPolitics?. In. *Geopolitics: Geography and Strategy* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999).

Unit II. & III.

Histories: Rise and Fall of Great Powers (Week 3-6)

Robert A. Pastor (ed.), The Great Powers in the Twentieth Century: from Dawn to Dusk. In. *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

Paul Kennedy, The Rise of the Western World. In. *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

John J. Mearsheimer; Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order. *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2019, pp. 7-50.

K.M. Panikkar, Introduction. In. *Asia and Western Dominance: A Study of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).

C.J. Bartlett, From a European to the Global Balance of Power. In. *The Global Conflict, 1880-1970: The International Rivalry of the Great Powers* (London: Longman, 1984).

Edward Hallett Carr, The Beginnings of a Science. In. *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1962).

Raymond Aron, Introduction & Assigning the Guilt: The Origin of the Cold War. In. *The Imperial Republic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).

Christopher Layne, 'The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise', *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Spring 1993, pp. 5-51.

Mikael J Mazarr, The Once and Future Order: What Comes after Hegemony, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 1, Jan-Feb, 2017, pp 25-32.

David Wilkinson, Unipolarity Without Hegemony, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 141-172.

R.N. Rosecrance, Bipolarity, multipolarity, and the future, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1966, pp. 314-327.

S. G. Brooks, & W. C. Wohlforth, The Myth of Multipolarity American Powers Staying Power, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 102, No. 3, May-June 2023, pp. 76-91.

Unit IV.

Hegemony and Great Powers (Week 7-8)

Robert Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium*, Vol 12, 1983, pp. 162-175.

Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer, 'Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability', *World Politics*, Vol. 16, April 1964: 390-406.

Michael Haas, 'International Subsystems: Stability and Polarity', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 1, March 1970, pp. 98-123.

Randall L. Schweller, 'Tripolarity and the Second World War', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1993, pp. 73- 103.

George Modelski, *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987).

Unit V.

Theories: Polarity, Hegemony and Stability (Week 9-10)

Robert Gilpin, Introduction. In. *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Spring 1988, pp. 615-628.

Glenn W. Snyder, Alliances in a Multipolar International System. In. *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Hans Morgenthau, 'Alliances in Theory and Practice'. In. Arnold Wolfers (ed.), *Alliance Policy and the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959).

Susan Strange, 'The persistent myth of lost hegemony', *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 4, Autumn 1987, pp. 551-574.

Peter Katzenstein, 'Domestic Structures and Strategies of Foreign Economic Policies', *International Organisation*, Vol. 31, Autumn 1977, pp. 879-920.

Unit VI.

Relations: War, Alliance and Trade (Week 11-12)

Colin S. Gray, 'The Continued Primacy of Geography', *Orbis*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Spring 1996, pp. 247-259.

Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (eds.), *The New Regionalism in Security Affairs. Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

Varun Sahni, 'Regional Dynamics of Emerging Powers: Power/Control or Leadership/Consent?'. In. E. Sridharan (ed.), *International Relations Theory and South Asia: Security, Political Economy, Domestic Politics, Identities, and Images* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 56-107.

Unit VII.

Case Studies: France and China (Week 13-14)

Stanley Hoffmann, 'France: Two Obsessions for One Century'. In. Robert A. Pastor (ed.), *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 63-89.

Philippe Roger, Introduction. In. *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Michel Oksenberg, 'China: A Tortuous Path onto the World's Stage'. In. Robert A. Pastor (ed.), *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 291-331.

D. Edmund Clubb, Introduction: Chinese, Russians and Mongols. In. *China and Russia: The 'Great Game'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

Unit VIII.

Futures: Aspirations and Possibilities (Week 15-16)

David C. Kang, 'Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks', *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4, Spring 2003, pp. 57-85.

Stephen P. Cohen, 'Toward a Great State in Asia?' in Onkar Marwah and Jonathan D. Pollack (eds.), *Military Power and Policy in Asian States: China, India, Japan* (Boulder: Westview, 1980). Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Wayne A. Selcher (ed.), *Brazil in the International System: The Rise of a Middle Power* (Boulder: Westview, 1981).

Chris Landsberg, 'New Powers for Global Change? South Africa's Global Strategy and Status', *FES Briefing Paper 16* (Johannesburg: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, November 2006).

Pauline Baker, 'A Giant Staggers: Nigeria as an Emerging Regional Power'. In. Bruce E. Arlinghaus (ed.), *African Security Issues: Sovereignty, Stability, Solidarity* (Boulder: Westview, 1984).

Additional Readings

- Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).
- Robert W. Tucker, *The Inequality of Nations* (London: Martin Robertson, 1977).
- Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Competition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
- Alan Sked (ed.), *Europe's Balance of Power 1815-1848* (London: Macmillan, 1979).
- Martin Thomas, Bob Moore and L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empire: Decolonization and Europe's Imperial States, 1918-1975* (London: Hodder Education, 2008).
- W. DePorte, *Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
- Barry K. Gills, Hegemonic Transitions in the World System. In Gills, B., and A. GFrank, (Eds.). *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?*. Routledge, 1994.
- Corelli Barnett, The Audit of War. In. *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Methuen, 1972).
- Harvey W. Nelson, *Power and Insecurity: Beijing, Moscow, and Washington, 1949-1988* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner, 1989).
- K. Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall 1993, pp. 44-79.
- Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 1996).
- Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
- John Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 15, Summer 1990, pp. 5-56.
- Robert Gilpin, 'The Theory of Hegemonic War', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Spring 1988, pp. 591-613.
- Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (eds.), *Seapower and Strategy* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1989).
- Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).
- Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle Between China, India and Japan will Shape our Next Decade* (London: Allen Lane: 2008).
- Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Chris Landsberg, 'Promoting Democracy: The Mandela-Mbeki Doctrine', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2000, pp. 107-121.
- Nelson Mandela, 'South Africa's Future Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 5, November/December 1993, pp. 86-97.