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Realism: Revisiting the Concept of Power in the Age of Information

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Abstract

This paper seeks to revisit the concept of power in the theoretical discourse of realism in the 21st century by taking in view the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on international relations. The main argument is that information and communication technology has dramatically shifted the concept of power as the possession of material capabilities. The paper argues that ICT has created a double paradox for materially and technologically powerful countries by creating vulnerabilities in the hard power and soft power domain. The paper also asserts that through cyber power exists in the virtual/cyber domain, it is able to get desired outcomes in the physical domain. ICT can be used as a soft as well as a hard power multiplier. Lastly, it argues that ICT has challenged the predominant position of material power capabilities to define world order and transformed the traditional power structure.

Key Words: Power, Security, Traditional Security, Globalization, Realism

Introduction

The Concept of Power at the Core of Realism

Despite the differences in their ontologies and levels of analysis, the concept of power is central to all strands of realism, i.e., classical, neorealism, or neoclassical realism. Morgenthau, one of the founding fathers of realism, writes in *Politics Among Nations*, "International Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power" [_\(Morgenthau, 1948, p. 26\)](#) and "domestic and international politics are but two different manifestations of the same phenomenon: the struggle for power." [\(Morgenthau, 1948\)](#) Morgenthau's second principle of political realism defines interests in terms of power. He asserts that the ultimate interests of states may differ, but immediate interest is always power. In international

politics, states always strive for power in order to achieve their national interests. He claims that it exists at all times at all levels, i.e., domestic, international, political, or economic. For instance, democracies encourage and legitimize the struggle for power through the electoral system; the struggle for economics is encouraged in capitalist and competitive economies; the policies of status quo and policies of imperialism are either for the preservation of power or the increase of power. Therefore, the struggle for power is perpetual and all-encompassing.

E.H. Carr, one of the main proponents of classical realism, writes in his book, *Twenty Years Crisis*, "International politics are always power politics." [_\(Edward H. Carr, 1946, p.](#)

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15) Similarly, the major proponent of neorealism, Waltz describes 'international politics' as politics of 'powerful'. (N, 1979), p. 131) He defines the international system in terms of distribution of capabilities/power (N, 1979), p. 129) Power is at the center of neoclassical realists' investigation as well. Neoclassical realism takes the relative power of states in an international system as its primary unit of analysis. (Gideon Rose, October 1998) Since the concept of power forms the core of realism, it is important to comprehend how realists define power.

The Perception of Power in Realism

Morgenthau defines power as the 'control' over the actions of others. Morgenthau states, "Power entails control over actions of others through influence over their minds," elaborating that A has political power over B if A certain control actions of B through influence over B's mind. (Morgenthau, 1948) Morgenthau categorizes power into political, economic, and military power. Political power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. He asserts that power does not necessarily mean violence or the use of force and threats. When force or threat of force is used to control the actions of others, it becomes part of military power. Use of force means abdication of political power in favor of military power. He further deliberates that political power may be exercised through coercive means such as orders and threats, persuasive means which rely on attraction and incentives, or a combination of both.

E.H. Carr divides political power into military power, economic power, and power over opinion. Political power means influence which is acquired through these three components of power. However, he asserts that one form of power cannot exist in separation from other forms. All elements of power are interdependent, and power is an "indivisible whole." (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 106) Carr contends that power over opinion means the 'art of persuasion (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 132). The art of persuasion is the ability to shape and mold opinion using propaganda techniques employed through various tools. Carr highlights that the system of national education is the

biggest tool to shape public opinion in modern states.

Power means influence – influence over the minds and actions of others. It is the capability to get the desired outcomes. Collectively, it means the capability to get the desired outcomes from others through influence over their minds and actions. Both classical realists, Carr and Morgenthau, acknowledge the existence of control over the minds, opinions, and actions of others as a form of power; the former termed it as 'power over opinion' while later the termed it as 'political power'. Neorealists and neoclassical realists-are structural realists. Both define power objectively in terms of capabilities or resources that constitute power. The major question is what the constituents of power are. How can one get the desired outcomes from the others?

Constituents of Power: Material Capabilities

Both classical realists link power with the material capabilities of the state exercising it. Carr, for instance, states, "The mass production of opinion is the corollary of mass production of goods." (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 133) Carr asserts that the success of propaganda depends upon military and economic capabilities. (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 137) He further highlights that material capabilities – economic and military – do not only constitute but complement power over opinion. Without the employment of military and economic power alongside power over opinion, propaganda techniques cannot be successful. He highlights that the propaganda of Bolsheviks would have been unsuccessful if not supplemented by the Red Army – the element of military power. (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 138) Similarly, the ideas of the French Revolution dominated opinions throughout Europe because of the military power of Napoleon. On the contrary, Trotskyism remained uninfluential without the support of state power. He thus concludes that power over opinion is ineffective unless linked with military and economic power (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 139)

Morgenthau lists tangible and intangible elements of national power, including geography, natural resources, industrial

capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, and the quality of diplomacy. (Morgenthau, 1948, pp. 80-105). However, he asserts that military power capabilities constitute the most important material element of political power. (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 14) It implies that the state which has strong military capabilities is most likely to get the desired outcomes in international politics. Similarly, Carr gives supreme importance to military power asserting that all great civilizations had superiority of military power over others in their era. (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 109) Economic power is the foundation that sustains political power. Carr states, "war potential has become another name for economic power." (Edward H. Carr, 1946, p. 116) Paul Kennedy pointed in *the Rise and Fall of Great Powers* that countries which have bigger military budgets at a lower percentage of GDP are likely to become superpowers. (Paul Kennedy, 1989, p. 358) The more the state's economic resources are, the more it can spend on building military power without compromising development goals.

Neorealists and neoclassical realists define power in terms of capabilities. Waltz's emphasis is on the measurement of relative capabilities of states to know the poles and structure of world order. Waltz talks about the capabilities of the state as a whole. He asserts that various forms of power/capabilities cannot be exercised in isolation from each other. In fact, each component of power reinforces the other component. A state is said to be powerful if its overall score is high on material as well as institutional capabilities (which are measurable through the development of objective indicators). (N, 1979), p. 358) Ripsman and other neoclassical realists, in their book *'Neoclassical Realist Theory'*, refer to power as 'material capabilities' of state. (Norris M Ripsman, 2016, pp. 5, 26, 33, 44, 63.) Material capabilities include economic capabilities, military capabilities as well as tangible resources which contribute to economic and military capabilities. (Norris M Ripsman, 2016, pp. 6, 68, 82.) Wohlforth asserts 'power' refers to a state's "capabilities or resources" through which it tries to 'influence' others. (William Curti Wohlforth, 1993, p. 317) Neoclassical realists contend that as material power capabilities comprise various

components, a shift in just one component of relative power, e.g., economic power, may trigger a shift in a state's foreign policy. As Lobell contends, the states do not merely react to shifts in 'aggregate' power capabilities in the system; they respond to the relative shifts in the 'components' of material power capabilities. (Norris M Ripsman, 2016, pp. 54, 55.) The study of the concept of power in realism depicts that realists predominantly define power in terms of 'material capabilities' that enable states to control the minds and actions of others in order to get their desired outcomes. The more the state's material capabilities, the more powerful it is.

Joseph Nye's Critique on Realists' Emphasis on Material Capabilities of Power

Joseph Nye defines the coercive and persuasive tools of political power in terms of hard and soft power. Joseph Nye contested realists' emphasis on material capabilities of power, terming them as 'hard power' capabilities and gave the concept of 'soft power'. What is soft power? Nye defines, "It is the ability to get what you want through 'attraction' rather than coercion or payments". (Jr, 2009) Soft power rests on the ability to 'shape the preferences of others' rather than getting others to do what they won't do otherwise. (Jr, 2009, p. 19) It is different from a persuasive tool of political power. Instead of persuading others to do what one wants, soft power attracts, making the other wanting to do what one wants. The difference between 'persuasive power of Morgenthau' or 'Carr's power over opinion' and soft power lies in the constituents of power. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. (Jr, 2009, p. 11) On the other hand, realists assert that coercive and persuasive power comes from tangible material capabilities. Military power is the greatest contributor to political power. In the age of information, information is power. Nye asserts that realists' field of explanation focuses on one dimension of power i.e. hard power, and ignores the other dimension i.e. soft power, thus leaving the explanatory vacuum in the analysis of power.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Age of Information

It is difficult to define information and communication technology (ICT) because of its rapidly changing nature. The umbrella word 'ICT' refers to a variety of technologies, including computer and communication technologies, that are increasingly convergent. IT refers to everything related to computers, including networking, hardware, software, and the Internet. Telecommunications-based technologies that provide access to information are referred to as ICT. It is similar to Information Technologies (IT), but it focuses more on communication technology. In its broadest sense, all communications, information, and related technologies, PCs, desktops, laptops, handheld devices, the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other wireless and cable-connected communication mediums and equipment are all examples of ICTs.

The widely accepted definition of ICT defines ICT as "The application of science to the processing of data according to programmed instructions in order to derive results. The term Information Technology (IT) is used in a narrower sense, typically excluding telecommunications (voice) technology while including data networks (although almost all networks today are digital), as a reference to the systems that support information processing"._(Zuppo, August 2012) Zhang, Aikman and Sun define ICTs as "technologies used by people and organizations for their information processing and communication purposes."

The invention of information technology set the intellectual foundation for what came to be called as the 'age of information'._(Zuppo, August 2012, p. 16)The origin of this discourse lies in the 1960s, when writings about the coming of a new era based on computer and communication technology began. The narrative was popularized during the 'dot.com' boom of the 1990s. Weiner, as quoted by Kline, asserted in his writings that 'information is information, nor matter, nor energy.' He asserted that information was related to a choice among messages rather than the

material basis or energy involved in its communication. When comparing the human brain to a digital computer, he stated that the computer used much more energy, but the energy spent on each calculation was very small. Weiner highlighted the importance of information by drawing a comparison with the biological system. Weiner argued that any organism is held by the possession of means for the acquisition, use, retention, and transmission of information. He highlighted while 19th century revolution was based on transmission and transformation of energy, the 20th-century revolution is based on the transformation and transmission of information. It concludes that in the 21st century, the matter is not the only power; information is power. In fact, as is argued below, information technology has increased the vulnerabilities of materially powerful.

Implications of ICT on the Concept of Power

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology is fundamentally altering the rules of international relations. In international politics, information and communication technology is redefining power in ways that classic strands of realism have yet to really explore. The powerful have become more vulnerable as a result of information technology. Cyber-attacks by militarily weak states and non-state entities are a threat to militarily dominant states. ICT has posed a challenge to traditional definitions of hard and soft power, resulting in significant shifts in hard and soft power conceptions and calculations. The main point is that, in both hard and soft power arenas, information technology has created a double paradox for materially powerful and technologically sophisticated regimes.

The Paradox of Material Power: The More is Less

The ICT has created a double paradox for materially powerful states. On the one hand, materially powerful states are vulnerable to attacks from materially weak states as well as non-state actors due to their access to information and communication technology. On the other hand, technological advancement and informational integration of materially

powerful states have increased their vulnerability to mass-scale attacks at minimal costs but causing maximum damage. Therefore, in military power and warfare capabilities, technology has two contradictory consequences.

Implications on the Military Arena

The military is possibly the best example of global communication's many ramifications. Military technology has become increasingly dependent on information and communication. Most communication technologies have historically profited greatly from military funding throughout their research and development phases, but their debut has frequently resulted in swiftly dispersed civilian applications. All adversaries have rapidly embraced them as well. The world's political systems and communication systems are inextricably linked. Power centres cannot efficiently manage their peripheries without dependable command, communication, and control. Every communication system, however, also empowers the periphery. The "double sword" aspect of communication technology in the military has resulted in the paradox of "more is less": more security can sometimes equal less security. Satellite-based remote sensing has resulted in the creation of a global surveillance system.

Satellite-based remote sensing has provided superpowers with a global surveillance system. However, when such information becomes more commercialized, it will become available to those adversaries who can pay it. The notion that accumulating weapons of mass destruction will provide those who hold them with correspondingly higher levels of protection is thus proving problematic. Permanent insecurity appears to have become more pervasive at the centres as well as the peripheries of power as military technology has enhanced precision capabilities and communication technologies have improved surveillance capabilities.

The More Technological Advancement: The Increased Vulnerability

Information technology has brought a revolution in military affairs (RMA). Hanlon in

his book, *Technological Change and the Future of Warfare*, stressed upon increased 'vulnerability' of powerful nations due to advancements in information technology. (O'Hanlon, 2000) He contends that as the cost of information technology drops and weapons based on such technology get cheaper, they will fall within reach of a greater number of agents, including governments and terrorist groups. Moreover, as the lethality of these weapons increases, the vulnerability of large, expensive assets that can only be developed by wealthy countries increases. It is paradoxical that western predominance in military spending and technology also means that information technology might leak to adversaries who will threaten the higher value assets of greater powers.

The greater dependence of advanced countries on information technology will make their militaries peculiarly vulnerable to systemic attacks that can be unreliable such as computer and communication networks. Because sophisticated countries are more reliant on information technology, their forces will be particularly vulnerable to systematic strikes targeting unreliable systems like computer and communication networks. Despite the fact that information and communications technology (ICT) has drastically increased the importance of the "system of systems" network infrastructure, which integrates all branches of the military services, the RMA concept puts the entire military force in danger. Chapman (2003); Chapman The highly complicated mix of forces in a joint command might be jeopardized or perhaps thrown into disorder if communication cables are cut or military systems are successfully targeted. Not only information saved on ICT, but also all components of national infrastructure that rely on information technology could be at risk.

Existence in Virtual Domain: Implications in Physical Domain

The fusion of technology has blurred the line between physical and digital spheres. The US and Israel were able to damage Iran's nuclear reactors without physically attacking Iran's nuclear plant with even a single weapon. In collaboration with Israel, the US launched a

cyber-attack through a virus named Stuxnet on Iran's nuclear program. Stuxnet damaged almost 1000 of Iran's 6000 centrifuges. The recent hacking of HBL computer networks is another example in this regard. Around 579 customers lost Rs 10 million in the cyber-attack (Ellen Nakashima, 2017). This is the example of cyber power changing the concept of military power, which is no longer entirely dependent on the possession of material power. However, while existing in the virtual domain, cyber power can cause damage in the physical domain. Cyber power has drastically increased the ability of materially smaller actors to exert power over materially strong actors, which is unthinkable in traditional/physical domains of power.

While ICT has improved the command and control necessary for traditional force projection, it has also allowed weaker opponents to execute cyber-attacks entirely within cyberspace. It has decreased the high 'entry' cost of developing material strategic weapons in conventional combat. They can be carried out in the privacy of one's own home without the dangers of physical surgeries. It means that minor actors like North Korea or ISIS (the group suspected of being behind the Warsaw attack) could have a disproportionately large online impact in comparison to their resources..

Maximum Damage at Minimum Cost

The cost of producing information technology is quite low. According to Nye, computing power doubled every 18 months and cost one-thousandth of what it did in the 1970s at the beginning of the twenty-first century. (2010, S) Denning, an information security expert, stated that while the expense of launching a cyber-attack may be "negligible," the cost to the victim may be "immeasurable." (Mazanec, 2015) In comparison, a physical weapon to attain similar effects against the Iranian nuclear programme would have cost billions of dollars e.g., producing a single B2 bomber costs over \$2 billion. (Mazanec, 2015) However, it is a double-edged sword with consequences for materially powerful states. Although the US was able to destroy Iranian nuclear without firing a single shot, the launch of cyber weapons gave other adversaries cheap

access to it. Once developed, these IT weapons can be replicated and modified with ease t is accessible at a low cost. These IT weapons can be easily duplicated and modified once they've been developed. The Chinese military stole the schematics for the highly advanced F-35 Joint Strike Fighter from the United States, allowing Beijing to produce the J-31(Shinkma, 2016). It means that although the US spent millions in developing stuxnet, its adversary can get access to its coding with relative ease and replicate it for its own use.

Global Power Projection

ICT weapons can provide global power projection because of their "borderless" domain. The global power projection allows a materially weaker power with expeditionary capabilities to conduct global expeditionary operations through computer networks. Prior to ICT, Few countries have the financial means to build the large and capable armed forces needed to overcome global logistical constraints and project power beyond their region.

Anonymity

The feature of anonymity in cyberspace has undermined the fear of retribution, giving the incentive to non-state actors to excessively exercise cyber power. Mazaneo highlights that cyber weapons are attractive to weaker powers and non-state actors. (Ellen Nakashima, 2017) This attraction is based on the cyber characteristic of anonymity and plausible deniability. It is tremendously difficult to conclusively locate the origin of the cyber attacker because cyberspace is truly global, and nearly all actions pass through multiple networks in multiple countries. Although the US is claiming (Mazanec, 2015) it has credible evidence of Russian interference in the US presidential elections, Russia has denied any charges. The US could not take proportionate retaliatory action because it can conclusively determine that the attack was launched from Russia, which would have been the case if material weapons were used.

New Domain of Exercising Power: Challenges the Concept of Hegemonic Power

Cyber power has introduced an entirely new domain of exercising control or influence i.e., cyberspace which is virtual and infinite. The striking feature of cyberspace is that its dominance by one hegemonic power is highly unlikely. The US became a superpower by achieving absolute dominance in the naval and air power domain. However, it is vulnerable in the cyber domain despite the fact that Silicon Valley, the core of cyber technology, is located in the US. By its very nature, the predominant control of cyberspace is very difficult because of its easy and cheap access. Another feature of cyber power is that the dissemination of information is very fast and cannot be entirely constrained through trade barriers.

Implications on Soft Power/Persuasive Power/Power Over Opinion

Information and Communication Technology has states, non-state actors as well as individuals to mould and shape opinions through image projection and manipulation of information. Information warfare has become the newest tool to get the desired outcomes at a minimal material cost. Garisomov, the Russian author, has explained information warfare in the following words. "The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy," Gerasimov writes. [\(Mckew, 2017\)](#) Chapman highlights that the proliferation of inexpensive information technology has changed the dimension of information warfare. [\(Chapman, 2003, pp. 12-13\)](#) Chapman highlights the "inevitable" leakage of high-tech weapons to adversaries. The argument is that due to the US superiority in conventional military weapons, the states and other adversaries resort to asymmetric warfare, including information warfare which can disrupt the societies/nation from inside. [\(Chapman, 2003, p. 18\).](#)

Weaker states and Information Warfare

The most recent example of implications of ICT on power over opinion is the alleged Russian interference in the US elections. In terms of military capabilities, the US is far ahead of

Russia but Russia was apparently able to influence the US political system with little cost or fear of retribution. Russia may not have hacked American voting machines, but it certainly won a critical battle without most Americans realizing it by selectively amplifying targeted disinformation and misinformation on social media and creating de facto information alliances with some groups in the United States. Russia has challenged the legitimacy of the U.S. electoral system without firing a physical shot.

Russia has grown quite effective at using strategic communications to mold political narratives in many nations. Outlets like "Russia Today" and "Sputnik News," according to testimony before the US Senate, are among the most well-known actors in Russian information operations, but Russia also employs a big number of Internet trolls, bots, and fake news factories. According to Chivvis, Russia has access to a growing cadre of cyber warriors who can hack into Western computer networks and steal vital data. Outside of Russia, the material is then utilized to sway elections and other political results. 2017 [\(Christopher S. Chivvis\)](#) The US claims that Russia employs digital mercenaries and uses online tools to modify the information or digital propaganda to affect others' ideas.

Non-State Actors and Information Warfare

The most popular example of a non-state actor conducting successful information warfare against materially much more powerful adversary is the Hezbollah-Israel war of 2006. Hezbollah cells shot down Israeli helicopters, damaged Merkava IV tanks, communicated with encrypted cell phones, and used night vision and thermal imaging gadgets to track Israeli army movements. Hezbollah used mass communication to dominate the perception fight throughout the conflict, sharing battlefield photos and videos almost instantaneously. Israel did not lose the war on the battlefield, but it did lose the information war, as the general consensus at the time was that Israel had been defeated. Moreover, terrorist organizations are conducting virtual diplomacy to influence the public globally

while being stationed at one geographical region.

The Power of Whistle-Blowers and Cyber Warriors

Laurent Alexandre, in his recent book, *The War of Intelligences*, stressing the negative consequences of artificial intelligence, laments that in the future, the people who will rule the world are those who have a better grip on computer and electronic devices rather than people with higher intelligence. (Laurent Alexandre, January 13, 2018) The power of cyber warriors and whistleblowers can have global implications, although they might have literally meager material power resources.

Wikileaks, Snowden leaks, Panama leaks and paradise leaks are examples demonstrating the power of whistleblowers. Wikileaks Since its founding in 2006 by Australian activist Julian Assange, has leaked over 10 million sensitive papers, solidifying its reputation as a safe harbour for whistleblowers and a nightmare for governments. WikiLeaks revealed airstrike footage and more than 700,000 classified papers related to US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, NATO, and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) in 2010. (RT International, "10 Years of WikiLeaks: 5 of the Whistleblower Group's Most Influential Releases,")

The whistleblower, Edward Snowden, leaked classified The US National Security Agency allegedly listened in on the phone conversations of 35 international leaders, according to papers. (Ball, 2013) (As a result of the revelations, diplomatic tensions between the US and its partners have risen. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, has accused the United States of tapping her phone. Following the Merkel spat, the US came under increasing international criticism, with some claiming that any intelligence gain from spying on friendly nations is significantly exceeded by the possible diplomatic damage.

The 115 million documents in the Panama Papers revealed how a global industry of law firms and huge banks provided financial secrecy to politicians, fraudsters, and drug traffickers, as well as billionaires, celebrities, and sports stars. ("Giant Leak of Offshore Financial Records Exposes Global Array of

Crime and Corruption, 2016) It sent ripples across world. Government officials in four countries resigned or were abdicated including Icelandic Prime Minister Pakistani prime minister respectively. In 79 countries throughout the world, at least 150 inquiries, audits, or investigations into the Panama Papers discoveries have been announced. The value of approximately 400 companies was knocked out by an estimated \$135 billion. Governments are investigating over 6,500 individuals and businesses, and have recovered at least \$110 million in unpaid taxes and asset seizures thus far. Mossack Fonseca's offices around the world been closed, and the legal business has been fined nearly half a million dollars. ("10 Years of WikiLeaks: 5 of the Whistleblower Group's Most Influential Releases," RT International,)

The 14TB Paradise Papers sent wave Details of how the UK's tax havens have been exploited by leaders including the Queen, Donald Trump's commerce secretary, Wilbur Ross, and the closest political associates of the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, sparked outrage in Washington, Westminster, and Brussels. The global impact of whistleblowers depict their immense power without them having immense material capabilities. (Osborne, 2017)

The biggest example of the power of hackers is their alleged information warfare against the Clinton campaign. Clinton's political collapse cannot be totally attributed to information and communication technology. However, the influence of hackers and whistleblowers on this campaign was unprecedented in a US election, forcing the Clinton team to spend many hours on the defensive during the campaign trail. The campaign was consumed by WikiLeaks' barrage of nearly 60,000 stolen emails from Clinton's campaign chair John Podesta every day for a month leading up to Election Day. Digital Shadows, an online security firm, recently released a report, highlighting that cybercriminals have latched onto the notion of "fake news" and turned it into a profitable business model. (AFP, 2017) Social media tools like Facebook and Twitter are an important tool to conduct information warfare because of their widespread and easy access. One in five adults, worldwide, use Facebook. (Arvanitakis, ,

August 10, 2017) It's worth noting that the order of postings in the Facebook news feed is determined by a proprietary Facebook algorithm and thus is beyond the producers' and owners' control. People's political leanings are being studied and potentially controlled thanks to algorithm innovation. The openness of Twitter, as well as its real-time features such as the trending algorithm, create structural flaws that allow manipulative automation to thrive. The combination of anonymity and low cost has greatly aided materially weak actors without putting them at risk of retaliation.

Implications on International Power Order: Power Transition to Power Diffusion

ICT has changed the concept of power transition to power diffusion. The emerging international power order is fluid, multilateral,

and diffused. It has impacted the balance of power and possession of power capabilities by states in multiple ways. World Order can no longer be simply defined in terms of a number of great powers because power is no longer the prerequisite of great powers. In fact, in the age of information, the distribution of power and therefore the shape of international order is not limited to states. States, though primary actors, are not the only actors shaping the international order. The weaker states, non-state actors (violent as well as non-violent) can exert power globally with minimal or negligible material resources. Anyone having access to a small information technology device can cause damage to the most powerful state with potentially no cost. The whistleblowers such as WikiLeaks, Panama leaks, paradise papers sent ripples across the globe toppling the governments of powerful states at virtually no or minimal cost.

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