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Q1(d)

Bipolar structure of the world is more stable than the multipolar one. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics: Nature and major approaches; political economy and political sociology perspectives; limitations of the comparative method.

Core demand of the question

- Bipolar structure of the world is more stable than the multipolar one. Comment
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Waltz held that two poles watch each other more safely than many poles.

Cold War NATO-Warsaw pairing is the exhibit of central stability.

1914 illustrates multipolar chain-ganging.

Proxy wars show that bipolar peace was not global peace.

Deutsch and Singer, and later interdependence, qualify the law-like claim.

Introduction

Kenneth Waltz argued that a bipolar world is clearer and more stable than a multipolar one. The claim is structural. It is not a moral praise of the Cold War.

Body**Waltz's case for bipolarity**

- In Theory of International Politics, two superpowers can watch each other without the shifting alliances of 1914.
- Deterrence is simpler. Miscounting friends is less likely than in a five-power Europe.
- The Cold War nuclear pair, NATO facing the Warsaw Pact, produced a long peace among the poles even as proxy wars ran in the periphery.

The multipolar contrast

- Waltz held that multipolarity multiplies dyads, misperception, and chain-ganging, as before the First World War.
- John Mearsheimer later feared instability in a Europe or Asia with several great powers after the Soviet collapse.

Limits of the claim

- Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer had argued that multipolarity can spread risk and interaction opportunities.

- Bipolarity exported war to Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. Stability at the centre was not peace for the Third World.
- A unipolar moment after 1991, and today's China-United States rivalry inside a still messy rest, show that polarity is not a two-box story.
- Robert Keohane's complex interdependence adds that economic ties can dampen or complicate polarity logic.

Flow diagram

Waltz bipolarity -> Clear deterrence
Multipolarity -> Alliances misperception
Clear deterrence -> Stability at the poles
Alliances misperception -> 1914-type risk

Conclusion

Waltz's bipolarity is more stable at the great-power core because it simplifies deterrence and alliance arithmetic. It is not more just, and it was not peaceful for the periphery. Multipolarity is more accident-prone, not automatically more warlike in every decade.

Facts & figures

Waltz 1979

Bipolarity reduces uncertainty; each superpower balances the other without depending on allies to the same degree.

NATO and Warsaw Pact

The two Cold War alliances that organised the bipolar military map in Europe.

Deutsch and Singer

Argued that a larger number of poles can increase interaction and spread attention, a rival stability claim.

Mearsheimer

Offensive realism expects more danger when several great powers share a region, as in a post-Cold War Europe.