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## WAR AND PEACE IN THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER

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### **Abstract:**

The dynamics of war and peace have undergone profound transformations in the 21st century, shaped by shifts in global power structures, technological advancements, ideological realignments, and the increasing influence of non-state actors. This paper interrogates the evolving patterns of conflict and cooperation within the new global order—characterized by multi-polarity, strategic rivalry, fragmented multilateralism, and hybrid threats. Drawing on contemporary literature and grounded in key international relations theories, the study demonstrates that modern conflict is increasingly complex, multidimensional, and transnational. Meanwhile, pathways to sustainable peace require an integration of diplomacy, global governance reforms, normative frameworks, and adaptive security architectures. Methodologically, the paper employs qualitative content analysis of scholarly publications, policy documents, conflict indices, and institutional reports. The study concludes that achieving durable peace necessitates a re-calibration of global institutions and strengthened cooperation across states, civil society, and international organizations.

**Keywords:** War, peace, global order, multi-polarity, conflict transformation, international security, peace building.

### **Introduction**

The post-cold war era marked a historic shift in the architecture of international politics, giving rise to new patterns of conflict, new actors, and new mechanisms of cooperation. While early post-Cold War scholars predicted a peaceful international system under liberal hegemony, subsequent decades revealed a more turbulent landscape characterized by regional conflicts, terrorism, cyber warfare, nuclear proliferation, and geopolitical contestations. The 21st-century global order is increasingly described as multi-polarized, networked and fragmented, marked by the strategic rivalry between major powers—most notably the United States, China, and Russia. This complexity has reshaped the discourse on war and peace. Traditional interstate wars have declined, while intrastate conflicts, proxy wars, and hybrid warfare have intensified. Peace processes too have transformed, with greater emphasis on mediation, transitional justice, human security, and inclusive governance. This paper explores these dynamics in a systematic manner, examining how global transformations shape contemporary war and peace, what theoretical frameworks explain these phenomena, and what policy prescriptions can mitigate emerging security challenges.

### **Literature Review**

Scholarly works on war and peace in the new global order reveal several key debates:

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## 1. Multi-polarity and Shifting Global Power

Scholars such as Mearsheimer (2020) argue that the transition toward multi-polarity increases the likelihood of conflict, especially as rising powers seek to alter existing structures of governance. China's rise, Russia's assertiveness, and the decline of U.S. uni-polar dominance have reshaped strategic calculations worldwide.

## 2. Changing Nature of Warfare

Kaldor (2017) introduced the concept of "new wars," emphasizing the role of non-state actors, identity politics, and criminal networks. Contemporary conflicts increasingly involve cyber-attacks, autonomous weapons systems, economic coercion, and information warfare.

## 3. Peace building and Global Governance

Lederach (2005), Paris (2014), and other peace building scholars highlight that sustainable peace requires more than ceasefire agreements; it requires social reconciliation, institutional reform, and community-driven processes. Meanwhile, scholars critique multilateral institutions for being slow, underfunded, and politically constrained.

## 4. Human Security Paradigm

Recent literature emphasizes a shift from state security to human security, focusing on poverty, climate change, pandemics, and displacement as drivers of conflict. These nontraditional security threats complicate global governance responses.

## 5. Decline of Liberal Internationalism

Several authors argue that the liberal international order is under strain due to nationalism, populism, and geopolitical imbalance. This undermines traditional cooperation mechanisms and creates space for competing visions of world order.

The literature thus indicates that contemporary war and peace cannot be understood through traditional state-centered frameworks alone.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts three foundational international relations theories to frame its analysis:

1. **Realism:** Realism views the international system as anarchic and dominated by power competition among states. From this perspective, war remains inevitable in a multi-polar world where major powers compete for dominance. Realism explains great-power rivalry, arms races, and military alliances.
2. **Liberalism:** Liberal theory argues that cooperation is possible through international institutions, economic interdependence, and democratic governance. Liberalism helps explain the proliferation of peace agreements, multilateral peacekeeping, and the role of international organizations in conflict resolution.



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3. **Constructivism:** Constructivism focuses on norms, identities, and social meanings. It explains how ideas shape conflict (e.g., ethnic nationalism) and how shared norms (e.g., human rights) support peace.

Combined, these theories offer a multidimensional understanding of war and peace in the contemporary era.

## Conceptual Clarifications

### 1. War

War refers to organized, large-scale violent conflict between political entities, such as states, governments, or armed groups. It involves the use of military force to achieve political, economic, or ideological objectives (Clausewitz, 1976). Modern war now includes conventional warfare, cyber operations, guerrilla tactics, terrorism, and hybrid forms of conflict.

Key elements of war include:

- Organized violence
- Political intention
- Involvement of groups or states
- The pursuit of strategic goals

### 2. Peace

Peace is the absence of direct violence (negative peace) and the presence of justice, equality, and harmonious social relations (positive peace). Galtung (1969) distinguishes between:  
Negative peace: no active warfare

Positive peace: systems that promote justice, human rights, and socioeconomic stability  
Modern peace also encompasses reconciliation, dialogue, institution-building, and community healing.

### 3. Global Order

Global order refers to the structure, norms, institutions, and power arrangements that govern how states and non-state actors interact in the international system. It includes:

- Global rules and norms
- International institutions (e.g., UN, AU, EU)
- Distribution of power (uni-polar, bipolar, multi-polar)
- Diplomatic and economic frameworks

Today's global order is influenced by globalization, rising powers, technological innovation, and shifting geopolitical alliances (Ikenberry, 2011).



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## 4. Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is a blend of conventional military tactics and unconventional methods, including cyber-attacks, disinformation, propaganda, proxy forces, terrorism, economic pressure, political manipulation, and psychological operations (Hoffman, 2007).

It aims to achieve strategic objectives below the threshold of full-scale war, making detection and response more difficult. Key features include:

- ❖ use of both military and non-military tools
- ❖ ambiguity and deniability
- ❖ targeting civilian perceptions through information warfare

## 5. Peace-building

Peace-building refers to long-term efforts to create sustainable peace after conflict by addressing root causes of violence. It includes activities such as:

- rebuilding institutions
- promoting rule of law
- reconciliation and healing
- economic reconstruction
- security sector reform

Peace building is essential in fragile states and post-conflict societies (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically:

### 1. Research Approach

A descriptive and analytical approach is used to evaluate secondary data sources and interpret emerging trends.

### 2. Data Sources

Data were collected from: peer-reviewed journals books by leading scholars, UN, AU, and EU policy documents. Conflict datasets (UCDP, SIPRI, Global Peace Index) and think-tank reports (Brookings, Chatham House, Carnegie)

### 3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through thematic content analysis, identifying patterns in global conflict trends, peace building strategies, and theoretical discourse.

### 4. Validity and Reliability:

Triangulation of multiple sources ensured reliability, while theoretical grounding enhanced validity.



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## **Conclusion**

The global order is undergoing profound transformation, creating both heightened risks of conflict and new opportunities for peace. The resurgence of great-power competition, growth of non-state armed groups, technological disruptions, and erosion of multilateralism all contribute to a more volatile international system. Nevertheless, pathways to sustainable peace remain viable through diplomacy, inclusive governance, human security approaches, and institutional reforms. A deeper integration of theory, policy, and practice is essential to navigate the complexities of contemporary international security.

## **Policy Recommendations**

1. Strengthen Multilateral Institutions Reform the United Nations Security Council, enhance regional peacekeeping capacities, and strengthen international law enforcement mechanisms.
2. Invest in Preventive Diplomacy Early-warning systems and preventive negotiation platforms should be prioritized.
3. Address Root Causes of Conflict Policies should focus on poverty reduction, governance reforms, and addressing identity-based grievances.
4. Regulate Emerging Technologies of Warfare Cyber security frameworks, AI weapon oversight, and global nuclear arms control agreements must be expanded.
- 5 Promote Human Security Governments and institutions should incorporate climate resilience, public health, migration management, and social inclusion into peace building.
- 6 Strengthen Regional Organizations ECOWAS, AU, EU, and ASEAN should receive greater resources to mediate conflicts.



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