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The Use of Military Instruments, War and International Relations

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Abstract

In International Relations (IR), one of the peculiarity of our world that is always a centre of contention among theoretical traditions is whether the use of military instruments is an important feature of the contemporary world. Although there has been an inclination towards believing in peace after the end of the Cold War, the exertion of military instruments, this article argues, continue to prevail even in the norms of international institutions itself. This worldview, nevertheless, is not uniformly applicable to the whole world since its foundation has deep root within the West – the Westphalian synthesis. What has occurred in the rest of the world is different since non-Western states generally do not follow traditional concepts, particularly the monopolized use of military instruments, due to the immaturity of state formation deriving from forced modernization and unstable decolonization. Thus, the rest of the world has become 'prismatic societies' in which it cannot succeed at reaching the West model, and prismatic phenomenon, the article argues, has repeatedly happened to what is recently called 'new war'. From this regard, the rest of the world, the article contends, has become a bloodier world in which the use of force is still common but different from traditional wars in the sense that they are decentralized and democratized into non-state actors. At the end, this article concludes that the exertion of military instruments is the particular feature of our world – hence, our sanguineous world.

Keywords: the use of military instruments; International Relations theory; war; new war; immature states; prismatic society

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การใช้เครื่องมือทางทหาร สงคราม กับ ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศ

ภูวิน บุณยะเวชชีวิน

บทคัดย่อ

ในวิชาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศ หนึ่งในลักษณะของโลกซึ่งเป็นข้อถกเถียงระหว่างขนบทางทฤษฎีต่าง ๆ คือ คำถามที่ว่าการใช้เครื่องมือทางทหารเป็นลักษณะสำคัญของโลกร่วมสมัยหรือไม่ ถึงแม้ว่าภายหลังสงครามเย็นจะมีแนวโน้มไปสู่ความเชื่อในสันติภาพ แต่บทความนี้เสนอว่าการใช้เครื่องมือทางทหารยังคงเป็นสิ่งที่มีอยู่ทั่วไปแม้แต่ในบรรทัดฐานของสถาบันระหว่างประเทศเอง อย่างไรก็ตามโลกทัศน์เช่นนี้ไม่อาจนำไปใช้ได้กับโลกทั้งหมดในรูปแบบเดียวกัน เนื่องจากพื้นฐานของโลกทัศน์ฝังรากลึกอยู่ในโลกตะวันตก คือ ภาวะสังเคราะห์เวสต์ฟาเลีย ทว่าสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นในส่วนที่เหลือของโลกกลับแตกต่างออกไป เพราะรัฐที่มิใช่ตะวันตกโดยทั่วไปแล้วไม่ได้เป็นไปตามขนบคิดตะวันตก โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการผูกขาดการใช้เครื่องมือทางทหาร ซึ่งเกิดจากความไม่สมบูรณ์ของการสร้างรัฐ โดยความไม่สมบูรณ์ดังกล่าวเป็นผลของการบังคับทำให้ทันสมัยและการปลดปล่อยอาณานิคมที่ไม่มีเสถียรภาพ ดังนั้นส่วนที่เหลือของโลกจึงเป็น ‘สังคมปริซึม’ ซึ่งไม่อาจไปถึงตัวแบบของตะวันตก ปรากฏการณ์ปริซึมนี้เองที่ทำให้เกิดสิ่งที่ปัจจุบันเรียกว่า ‘สงครามใหม่’ดังนั้นส่วนที่เหลือของโลกจึงเป็นโลกที่มีความรุนแรงมากขึ้น เพราะการใช้กำลังยังคงมีอยู่ทั่วไปแต่โดยรูปแบบที่แตกต่างจากสงครามดั้งเดิม ในแง่ที่ว่าการใช้กำลังดังกล่าวถูกกระจายอำนาจและทำให้เป็นประชาธิปไตยแก่ตัวแสดงที่ไม่ใช่รัฐ ในตอนท้ายบทความนี้สรุปว่าการใช้เครื่องมือทางทหารเป็นลักษณะเฉพาะของโลก ดั้งนั้นโลกของเราจึงเป็นโลกแห่งการนองเลือด

คำสำคัญ:การใช้เครื่องมือทางทหาร; ทฤษฎีความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศ; สงคราม; สงครามใหม่; รัฐที่ไม่สมบูรณ์; สังคมปริซึม

Introduction: Whose World?

We are imperfect beings in an imperfect world … a condition of perfect order and perfect justice – we have been warned on excellent authority not to look for that in this world.[2]

Michael Howard

Some students of InternationalRelations (IR) incline to the world view that the use of military instruments is outdated. This derives from neither the decline of the realist tradition after the collapse of the Soviet Union nor from the mushrooming of international regimes and institutions ranging from supranational organization through security community. However, I argue it stems from the Western foundation in general and, in particular, from Anglo-American centrism. This does not mean upholding anti-West sentiment – Anglo-American hysteria – among scholars, particularly in the Third World, since it manifests nothing different from an old television – black and white tone. The foundation of discipline becomes part of the mainstream world view of IR; therefore, blind spots are ignored since theory, as Booth points out, is 'not objective reactions to the world "out there", the so-called real world, but rather are from somewhere, for someone, and for some purpose.'[3] The foundation of discipline cannot be taken for granted as a universal concept, but rather it is a set of assumptions from a specific context. In this regard, we have to cautiously examine 'our world' from the perspective of

[2] Michael Howard, The Cause of Wars and Other Essays (Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 1983), 284.

[3] Ken Booth, Theory of World Security (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 150.

'whose world it is' as a prerequisite for subsequent scrutiny. In this context, I propose the world could be roughly divided into the world of the West – the world of states which is a unit of analysis in the mainstream IR theory – and the world of the rest which refers to blind sides disregarded by the Western world view. Nonetheless, this does not suggest that they are completely separate – on the contrary, they have a reciprocal influence. My thesis insists that the use of military instruments, which come in many forms, despite being intuitively perceived as aiming at producing physical violence, is a peculiarity in both worlds and, thus, reaffirms Howard's statement that there is no perfect world. To contend this argument, first, the world of the West will be examined by scrutinizing its dominant paradigm, realism, as well as demonstrating remarkable cases. Then, the dominant world view will be deconstructed broadening into the neglected world (developing states). Furthermore, another narrative, overlooked by the scope of IR, inside the box so-called 'states' will be emancipated.

The World of the West

The supreme importance of the military instrument lies in the fact that the *ultima ratio* of power in international relations is war. Every act of the state in its power aspect, is directed to war, not as a desirable weapon, but as a weapon which it may require in the last resort to use.[4]
E. H. Carr

[4] E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations (Basingstoke: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2001), 102.

The above statement by Carr highlights the most important relationship – states and the use of military instruments manifested as war – which has been a central debate since the establishment of IR as a discipline after the end of the First World War. This relationship has been taken for granted since there exists a polity of so-called 'states', even though the 19th century and the first-half of the 20th century, as Walby points out, were a heyday of 'empires' not 'nation-states'.[5] Nonetheless, it is comprehensible since the states as a polity were firmly settled down as part of the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War – the Westphalian synthesis. The new system, according to Hirst, is structured by the principle of *exclusion* in that 'all entities that are not coherently territorial and exclusively sovereign within are progressively delegitimated and expelled from the international system'.[6] Thus, states are the only legitimate form of political entities in international relations. In addition, the tragedy of two total wars nurtured the legitimation of states, thus practically legitimizing Weber's concept of states – 'the modern state is an institutional association of rule … which has successfully established the monopoly of physical violence as a means of rule within a territory'.[7] Hence, the interstates system has dominated the Western world view of international relations.

According to Duverger,the military instruments monopolized by the states are translated narrowly as 'weapons in the narrow sense of the term – military weapons' which are defined as producing physical

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[5] Sylvia Walby, "The Myth of the Nation-State: Theorizing Society and Polities in a Global Era," Sociology 37, no. 3 (2003): 533.

[6] Paul Hirst, War and Power in the 21st Century (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 54.

[7] Max Weber, "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," in Weber: Political Writings, eds. P. Lassman and R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 316.

violence; however, military weapons, he adds, 'are the source of power and that power is ultimately dependent upon military might'.[8] To examine the states and their usage of military power, the goal sought through the use of military instruments and the instruments themselves, Holsti argues, must be differentiated since 'the role of weapons must be considered in a political rather than in a purely military context'.[9] Despite this, political and military contexts are hardly distinguished because a threat to the former can create a threat to the latter and vice versa. During the early Cold War, for example, the Soviet Union, as Kennedy-Pipe indicates, 'was never powerful, coherent of logical as Western policy-makers believed or said that they believed it was',[10] rather 'fear of the other in international relations led to an exaggeration of the threat actually posed by both the Soviet Union and its version of Communism'.[11] Notwithstanding the irrational behaviour of states due to the contextual linkage, anarchy, the nature of international system, to some extent I agree with realist assumption, creates what Booth and Wheeler called '*unresolvable uncertainty*'. This refers to the existential condition that 'governments (their decision-makers, military planners, foreign policy analysts) can never be 100 per cent certain about the current and future motives and intentions of those able to harm them in a military sense',[12] and they 'see it at the core of the predicaments that make up the *security*

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[8] Maurice Duverger, The Study of Politics, trans. R. Wagoner (Hong Kong: Nelson, 1972), 179–80.

[9] K. J. Holsti, International Politics: A Framework for Analysis, 6th ed. (London: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 230–31.

[10] Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, The Origins of the Cold War (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 28.

[11] Ibid., 155.

[12] Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Uncertainty," in Security Studies: An Introduction, ed. P. D. Williams (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 134.

dilemma' (italics mine). Security dilemma, according to Herz, the realist who first introduced the concept, is 'the basic dilemma which arises from the very fact of human competition for security, namely, the vicious circle of competition which never quite achieves full security, but which, in trying to do so, increases the necessity for accumulating power as a mean of attaining more security',[13] and the consequence is the *security paradox*, 'a situation in which two or more actors, seeking only to improve their own security, provoke through their words or actions an increase in mutual tension, resulting in less security all round'.[14] 'This *security paradox* upholds neo-realist arguments – 'military force has, however, served not only as the *ultimaratio* of international politics but indeed as the first and constant one. To reduce force to being the *ultima ratio* of politics implies, as Ortega y Gasset once noted, "the previous submission of force to methods of reason." Insufficient social cohesion exists among power to the status of simply the *ultima ratio*. Power cannot be separated from the purposes of those who posses it; in international politics power has appeared primarily as the power to do harm'.[15] To be precise, the states 'must assume the worst because the worst is possible';[16] therefore, Morgenthau suggested that military preparedness, including technological innovations and the quantity and quality of the armed forces, is the 'actual importance for the power of a nation'.[17] From these realist perspectives, the use of military instruments

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[13] John H. Herz, Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 24.

[14] Booth and Wheeler, "Uncertainty," 138.

[15] Kenneth N. Waltz, Realism and International Politics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 138.

[16] Cited in Booth and Wheeler, "Uncertainty," 138.

[17] Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 133.

is a particular characteristic of our world – the world of states – and, in the 21st century, has manifested through the *security paradox* to wars between states that are derived from the tragic anarchical nature of our world (of states).

Despite the fact that the state's exertion of military instruments caused by the anarchical system cannot be denied, to some extent technological determinism dynamically affects the behaviour of states in the modern world. This is supported by Hirst's argument; the modern world, according to him, 'has been shaped by two major military revolutions and by two significant changes in military technology that followed rapidly after the second transformative revolution'.[18] The first one was the discovery of gunpowder in the 16th century during the same period when the new sovereign polity was formed. The second one was the application of the industrial revolution to war which occurred in the 19th century,[19] and this revolution, he argues, 'led to the total wars that dominated the first half of the twentieth century and that have shaped to a considerable degree the institutions and the balance of power in the world we now inhabit',[20] and is what Morgenthau called '*the mechanization of weapons*'.[21] From this point of view, the devastating capabilities of military instruments were considerably intensified by the revolutions, hence the more risky world.

Nevertheless, neo-realists like Kenneth Waltz would disagree with the aforementioned. For Waltz, the invention of nuclear weapons had been a turning point that made the world of states safer since in

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[18] Hirst, War and Power in the 21st Century, 7.

[19] Ibid., 7–8.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Morgenthau, Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 385–87.

a nuclear world, according to him, 'a nation will be deterred from attacking even if it believes that there is only a possibility that its adversary will retaliate. Uncertainty of response, not certainty, is required for deterrence because, if retaliation occurs, one risks losing all';[22] therefore, notwithstanding that the possibility of war remains, he adds, 'the probability of a war involving states with nuclear weapons has been drastically reduced'.[23] The emerging controversy is whether there was really a peaceful world, despite the absence of direct wars between great powers.

Although the end of the Cold War had led to the decline of the realist tradition while the idealist tradition from the neo-liberal institutionalism to the English School became more convincing due to the emerging role of international regulatory regimes and institutions, assuming that these traditions were true, the use of military instrument by states has not been rejected. Conversely, as Calvert points out, 'worst of all, although its very existence is supposed to represent the rejection of force in the settlement of disputes between nations, the Charter does in fact specifically legitimate the use of force in "self-defense" (Article 51) as well as in pursuance of a decision made collectively, and so legitimizes a state in frustrating the purposes for which the organization was set up'.[24] Calvert's statement was verified by the first two wars of the 21st century led by the United States and its allies.

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[22] Waltz, Realism and International Politics, 64.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Peter Calvert, Terrorism, Civil War, and Revolution: Revolution and International Politics (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), 35.

Finally, according to Sarkees and Wayman's study, there were 95 interstate wars, including two world wars, over the past 192 years, from 1815 to 2007.[25] Furthermore, this was the world of states in which non-state actors were excluded from the use of military instruments in various forms. The exclusion of other actors is a blind spot of the realist world view, or the world of states, since the polity called 'states' is not monolithic. More importantly, so-called 'states' exported this concept through forced modernization into the world outside Europe where historical experiences and values were not shared; thus, a rootless concept, if not a bogus one, in the world of the rest.

The World of the Rest

> There are two kinds of violence used as weapon in political combat: violence by the state against the citizenry, and violence between groups of citizens or against the state.[26]
>
> Maurice Duverger

The aforementioned demonstrated the use of military instruments, defined in terms of physical violence perpetrated by the state actors towards other states in the world of states – the world view of mainstream IR, developed from the specific context of Europe. As mentioned, the states as the only legitimate form of political organ was maturely

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[25] Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank WhelonWayman, Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-State, and Non-State Wars, 1816-2007 (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), 188.

[26] Duverger, The Study of Politics, 180.

established, but in other parts of the world, the Horn of Africa, for example, the situation was the opposite. Rather, what had been going on outside Europe manifested the inadequacies of the mainstream IR theory in that sub-state actors were neglected. Mainstream theory takes states as a black box, despite the use of military instruments by these actors that has sometimes led to violent calamities, massacre, genocide, and civil war, for instance. Thus, the states must not be taken for granted since their monopoly of legitimacy is quite blurred. There are many sub-state actors perceived as more legitimate, and the clashes between them as well as counter-state endeavours always results in significant fatalities. In addition, perhaps more importantly, the use of military instruments by the states targets their own citizens rather than antagonist nations. To understand the world of the rest, as Duverger's statement suggests, the perpetrator of military instruments must be decentralized and forms of resultant violence have to be reconsidered. Then again, mainstream IR theory does not offer any insight on these issues due to its premise of the Westphalian system; however, it does not mean that neither critical theory nor post-structuralist theory are applicable because of their abstract episteme. Rather, the study of comparative politics including area studies offers more insightful explanations; hence, some aspects of this sub-discipline will be applied here.

In the world of the rest, immaturity of state formation is a prerequisite for analysing the motives of any actor perpetrating violence through the use of military weapons as well as the question of why weaponry accessibility is not rigid. As previously mentioned, modern states are part of a civilized package that came through a stream of colonialism which forced local rulers to bring Western organizational forms to modernize their nation in order to neutralize colonial threats.

For former colonies, the wave of decolonization left problematic legacies, especially failures of self-determination. Therefore, multi-ethnicities were forced to integrate within new boundaries, drawn by great powers whose political system and administration, which followed a Western model, were already installed. In consequence, what Riggs called 'prismatic society'[27] theory drew on 'an analogy of a fused white light passing through a prism and emerging diffracted as a series of different colours. Within the prism there is a point where the diffraction process starts but remains incomplete. Riggs is suggesting that developing societies are prismatic in that they contain elements both of the traditional, fused type of social organisation and elements of the structurally differentiated or "modern" societies. In prismatic societies therefore "traditional" and "modern" values and behaviour coexist in the same organisation'.[28] I argue that the immaturity of state formation that has happened in the world of the rest is no different from different colours diffracted from a prism, namely, an outcome of rootless and bogus modernization.

Structural imperfections are common characteristics of the immature formation of states that regularly manifest themselves through unsettled economic disparities, problems of ethno-cultural differences, and the lack of political cohesiveness as well as totalitarian rules; these always bring about the use of military instruments by the states vis-à-vis their dissenters complying while dissenting groups exert forces against the states and other groups. To some extent, the general patterns

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[27] See Fred W. Riggs, Administration in Developing Countries: the Theory of Prismatic Society (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1964).

[28] Clive Harber, "Prismatic Society Revisited: Theory and Educational Administration in Developing Countries," Oxford Review of Education 19, no. 4 (1993): 486–87.

of immaturity of state formation are similar to the general features of civil war, outlined by Bangert.[29] Thus, by adapting Bangert's proposition, the pattern can be generalized as follows:

1. The tension develops in that the states cannot peacefully solve the problems that arise from modernization.
2. The inability to resolve the problems delegitimizes the state, and leads to both implicit and explicit opposition, which appears in many forms from protest to riots.
3. While promoting social and economic campaigns in order to restore the state's legitimacy, military weaponry is exerted to subjugate dissenters.
4. The dissenting groups respond to the use of force by the same means, and then the tension may be expanded to forms of terrorism, insurgency, and civil war.

The particular context of the world of the rest itself also guaranteed the potential violence perpetrated by the militarization of any side in the form of military training, for example. As Calvert points out, military training is believed to be a tool for creating a disciplined population but the evidence tells the reverse story as, he adds, 'worst of all, some of these individuals will have gained, free of charge, something that they might otherwise have had to go far to find: sophisticated instruction in the use of modern weapons and an awareness of their tactical possibilities. Armies, therefore, are a traditional training ground not only for the practitioners

[29] Dieter Bangert, "Civil War," in International Military and Defense Encyclopedia, vol. 6, eds. T. N. Dupuy et al. (Washington and New York: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1993), 511–14.

of the military coups, but for those who take to the hills and become guerrillas, and for those who lead others to the barricades in urban insurrection'.

In addition, the external actors, particularly the great powers, are both direct and indirect stimulus to the use of force in the world of the rest. The great powers' *de jure* policy supporting totalitarian regimes in the Third World as well as the *de facto* policy on weaponry and financial assistance to sub-state actors during the Cold War offer an explicit example since the legacies were a diffusion of military instruments: hence, the democratization of military instruments and the decentralization of perpetrating armed violence.

From this point of view, the world of the rest can be seen as a bloodier world in which the use of military instruments has been both decentralized and democratized due to its characteristics: the immaturity of state formation and the role of external actors. The worst violent form has appeared as what Holsti called '*wars of the third kind*'[30] in reference to people's war if the parties are sub-state actors, or '*state terrorism*' if the perpetrator is the state and those suffering are civilians or sub-state actors. However, the justification is hard to determine as both sides use military instruments. Despite being neglected by mainstream IR theory, what has been going on in the world of the rest always affects international relations as a whole; hence, a broader study including this world is necessary.

[30] K. J. Holsti, The State, War, and the State of War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19–40.

Concluding Remarks: 'New War' but Old Pattern?

The recent debates on the use of military instruments in international relations came from Kaldor's thesis on what she called the '*new wars',*[31] which are the wars between cosmopolitanism – 'a growing global consciousness and sense of global responsibility among an array of governmental and non-governmental institutions as well as individuals'[32] – and particularism ('a response [by those who are excluded from global processes] to these global processes, as a form of political mobilization in the face of the growing impotence of the modern state'[33]) and the goals are 'the claim to power on the basis of seemingly traditional identities – nation, tribe, religion'.[34] She exemplifies the case of humanitarian intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an attempt to enforce cosmopolitan norms in bloody conflict, but, for her, it was an error since the context was complex and another stakeholder participated.[35] Nevertheless, to some extent, the new war introduced by Kaldor manifests the old pattern of the world of the rest – particularly the forced dissemination of Western concepts into the immature states – which history has showed often leads to tragedy from the use of military weapon by all sides. Thus, either in the world of the West or the world of the rest, this article concludes, the use of military instruments is a particular and unavoidable feature of our bloody world.

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[31] Mary Kaldor, New & Old War, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 72–94.

[32] Ibid., 73.

[33] Ibid., 79

[34] Ibid., 72.

[35] Hirst, War and Power in the 21st Century, 86.

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