

- **Thucydides Trap: Are the US and China Headed for War?**

- There is a possibility that the US and China could find themselves at war in the next decade.
  - Demanded sustained attention, week by week, at the highest level in both countries is needed to prevent the trap.
  - In 12 of 16 cases over the past 500 years, the result was war
  - When parties avoid war, painful adjustments in attitudes and actions on the part not just of the but also the challenged is required.
  - China's ascendance will have on the US-led international order
    - China has risen far and fast with several dimensions of power.
    - Reserves today are 28 times larger than America's
    - In 1980, China's economy was smaller than the Netherlands. Last year, the growth in China's GDP was estimated to be equal to the entire Dutch economy.
      - Didn't lose much money during the Great Recession in 2008, and sustained an average growth rate more than 8%
      - Nearly 40% of all growth in the global economy has occurred in China in 2008
      - The country has displaced the US as the world's largest economy in terms of the amount of goods and services a citizen can buy in his own country.
      - China believe they are the center of the universe
  - US has emerged into a dominant power due to the country interfering and violating sovereign states
    - US "liberating Cuba
    - Threatened Britain and Germany with war to force them to accept American positions on dispute involving Venezuela and Canada
    - Backed a rebel group that split Colombia and created a new state of Panama
    - Attempted to overthrow the government of Mexico
    - US military has intervened in 30 separate occasions to settle economic or territorial "disputes" that are favorable to the US
- When a rising power is threatening to displace a ruling power, standard crisis that would usually be contained, can initiate a cascade of reactions that produce outcomes none of the parties would have chosen
  - WWI
- Athens challenging Sparta in ancient Greece is an example of rising power rivals as a ruling.
  - It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta, that made the war inevitable.
    - This focuses on the inexorable, structural stress caused by a rapid shift in the balance of power between two rivals.
    - Two key drivers:



- A state's power may be measured through the total GDP but depends on the nonmaterial elements
  - Soft power
    - Only to the extent that political leaders can mobilize and reply these capabilities effectively and strategically.
    - The power of ideas is the ability to maximize the influence of capabilities through a psychological process
    - International influence can form the rules of behavior to change how others see that own national interests.
  - Relative power is the ratio of the power that two states can bring to bear against each other.
  - Long term power
    - GDP
    - Population
    - Territory
    - Geography
    - Natural Resources
    - Less tangible
      - Political culture
      - Patriotism
      - Education of the population
      - Strength of the scientific and technological bases
      - Morality
  - Short Term Power
    - Military
    - Bureaucracy
    - Support and legitimacy determines the extend of the power
  - Fungible power are ones that can be converted
  - The use of contributing to power using geographical advanced are called geopolitics
- Anarchy and sovereignty
  - **Anarchy** is when it is implied that not complete chaos of absence of structure and rules, but rather the lack of a central government that can enforce rules.
- **Power transition theory** says that wars often result from shifts in relative power distribution in the international system
- A **hegemony** is the predominance of one state in the international system and can help provide stability and peace in international relations, but with some drawbacks
- The **great power system** is made up of about half a dozen state (with membership changing over time as state power rises and falls)
- States form alliance to increase their effective power relative to another state or alliance
  - Alliances can shift rapidly, with major effects on power relations
  - The world's main alliances face uncertain roles in a changing world order
    - NATO and the US-Japanese alliance for example

- International affairs can be seen as a series of bargaining interactions in which states use their power capabilities as leverage to influence the outcomes.
  - Bargaining outcomes also depend on strategies and luck.
- Rational actor approaches treat states as though they were individuals acting to maximize their own interests. These simplifications are debatable but allow realists to develop concise and general models and explanations.
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  - **Game Theory** draws insights from simplified models of bargaining situations. Two or more players choose among alternative moves, once or repeatedly. However, each combination results in a set of payoffs to each character. The payoffs can be tangible or intangible.
    - This aims to deduce likely outcomes and possible moves open to them. They are sometimes called formal models.
    - The **Prisoner's Dilemma** game embodies another kind of collective goods problem.
      - The zero sum game is in which one player's gain is by definition equal to the other's loss, and non zero sum game is in which it is possible for both player to gain or lose
- Deterrence: Uses a threat to punish another actor if it takes a certain negative action.
  - Usually the effects are invisible and the success doesn't show that significantly.
- Arms race is a reciprocal process in which two or more states build up military capabilities in response to each other.
- National interest is the interest of the state itself.
  - Cost benefit analysis is calculating the costs incurred by a possible action and the benefits it is likely to bring.