

A World Order without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism

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Abstract: There are several writings explaining the stability of world's distribution of influence and supremacy. The world order includes various stakeholders such as independent states and international organizations. While some writers look at the traditional concept of the world order, which follows a neorealist theory of power domination to single states, Barry Buzan, in his article provides different perspectives on the superiority of the United States in the system. This review article looks into the ideas of his work, *A World Order Without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism*. The article provides a summary of the two perspectives of Buzan's arguments. The first scenario indicates that the writer views the United States as a long-term super power. The second scenario argues that the world system has no specific country that is a superpower except various great powers, whose differences may lead the world into chaos. The summary provides a profound explanation of the writer's ideas on the instability of US as a super power and the existence of other regional powers such as China. The second part of this article critiques his notions. This article bases its review on the format, purpose, and source of Buzan's work amongst other factors. The review confirms that the article is informing as it offers an alternative thinking to the neo-realist ideas. Despite the typographical errors observed, the article remains a reliable, legible and forthright.

Keywords: World System, Superpower, the US, Great powers, China.

1. INTRODUCTION

A World Order without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism, is an article written by Barry, Buzan is amongst articles that address the discourses about superiority in the world system. While the idea of superiority has been common since the age of World War Two, the distribution of power amongst various blocs has been a new perspective in global politics. The world order refers to the global distribution of influence and supremacy amongst various stakeholders in the global system (Kissinger, 2014). Independent global states and international organizations are some of the key players in the global arena. Traditionally, the neorealist theory viewed the International as a domination of economic and military power to a single state (Kissinger, 2014). Buzan challenges this neorealist approach, arguing that international superiority is a traditional phenomenon, which emerged as a result of inequality between the West and other states in the world. The Western bloc was initially regarded as the powerful region with the United States standing as a superpower in the global platform. However, with the rising global competition, economic predicaments, security threats, nuclear proliferations, and several other economic, social, and political crises, authors have conceptualized the fall of the United States as a superpower and the possible emergence of other powerful blocs. On the contrary, Buzan argues that the failure of the US may only lead to decentred globalism without the existence of a state that stands as the most powerful. Using social and material examples to defend his arguments, Buzan explains that world superiority will be more of a regional concept than a national concept. This article review intends to explain Buzan's concept and offer subjective but positive criticism, agreeing to the author's position on regional superiority.

2. SUMMARY

Barry Buzan in his article entitled *A World Order Without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism*, focuses on the much debated issue as to the continuity of the US supremacy as the lone superpower in the world. This has been a very much disputed topic by academia and those interested in research within that same field.

Buzan goes on in the first part of this article to state his prior position which was based on two scenarios. First being that he did not see an end to US supremacy. That the US was going to remain the lone superpower accompanied by what he called 'great powers.' The second scenario held that the world would consist of no superpowers, but only great powers with the difference that such a situation could plunge the world into chaos.

He goes on to strike the difference between his position and that of the neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz. Unlike Waltz's polarity concept, Buzan's article differs from Waltz's in that he goes on to first establish the difference between a superpower and a great power in the most vivid way. He says and I quote 'by *superpower* I mean a polity whose political, military, cultural and economic reach extends across the whole international system; by *great power* I mean one whose reach extends only across more than one region.'

Barry Buzan goes on in his second position to reject the neo-realist idea that present superpowers will fall back into competition with upcoming ones. He is of the idea that this will not be the case because the world will rather see the rise of regional powers which will create a subtle coexistence within the international system.

Buzan goes on to establish why he thought after the fall of US influence from the peak of supremacy, there would be no other superpowers despite the likely chance of China or the European Union (EU), Buzan insists on its impossibility. In this section, he goes on to brush away the idea of countries such as Brazil, Japan, Russia, India, to name but these, stating that their influences remain regional and are perceived as just potential great powers rather than potential superpowers.

Dwelling on the superpower status of the US, Buzan posits that although the military and economic might remains second to no other, it's superpower status remains hinged to its social domestic policy as a material capacity state which has the possibility for every and anyone to succeed.

On China, the author holds that should the US not have the necessary aura to keep its sole superpower position, there is therefore no need for China not to fill in the gap created by the US. China according to the author is one of the only states which are well rounded when it comes to those ardent elements which permit it to thrive to the position of superpower. It has a growing modern economy; it is making relative advancement when it comes to its technological prowess.

Nevertheless, the author goes on to analyze China, critically stating that just like the US, China is locked in the talk of the "rise of the rest" which the US finds itself, consequently, making it difficult for China to sit its power within the region and the world at large. Buzan goes on to establish that to him, should China envisage becoming a superpower, just like the US, it shall be trailed back by social issues rather than material. According to Buzan, while the US is losing those social elements which supported its superpower status, China is yet to acquire them and from available evidence, it is far from acquiring it.

The above paragraph therefore goes to support the author's position established from the very beginning of this article stating that there shall no longer be superpowers but rather great powers which be seen as regional powers. According to him, this shall be possible as a result of the increasing number of states acquiring some of those necessary or ardent elements to arrive at great power status within their distinguished regions, such is the case of China.

3. CRITIQUE

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge the time and effort put into this piece by Barry Buzan, however, there are several issues noticed within this work which allow us to either praise or criticize the article. This shall consequently be done from several angle namely; based on its format, purpose of the article, sources and beyond to name but these.

On the purpose of this paper which was originally to determine the possibility of other superpower states after the US or during the US's life span as superpower. The author was going to do this through analyzing a cross section of states which people have perceived to be in such a position to be considered as either superpowers or even great powers. The author is said to have done an excellent job striking the difference between a superpower and a great power in just a few statement defining a superpower to be a states whose power stretches beyond its region into all the other regions, while he went on to define a great power to be one with a regional influence or command.

Buzan in this paper is seen to be not only informative as he dives into all the necessary issues which plague states in the rise, but also goes on to add more knowledge to the subject matter when he takes Kenneth Waltz's concept of polarity to another level. This makes him stand out and contributes to theorizing in International Relations.

Also, at the level of the formatting, Buzan was not very much focused on any particular style. He rather focused on the content rather than the quality of the art of writing. He, Buzan, however made sure his piece was an easy read, attractive and simple so it could easily catch the reader's attention for as long as the article was. This definitely made him stand apart from several different authors who burry the readers with plenty of technical words.

More so, even at the level of his referencing, one could notice that the author's focus was on passing his information and knowledge. Consequently, we can see several typographical errors within the article and formatting mistakes which should not be existent for an author of his caliber.

Furthermore, Buzan made use of a very wide repertoire of authors such as Adam Watson, Joseph Nye, Samuel Huntington to name but these. These are all very prominent authors and leaders within the subject matter by right. This goes to show the extent to which his work is very reliable and rich in content and researchable sources to proof his premise. He goes on to make reference to over thirty different documents on the subject matter.

In conclusion, the author goes ahead to make a number of suggestions and recommendations, precisely five in number. First among all of them was that the US did not need to fight off potential rivals to its superpower status because there were not any and that the position was indefensible. He also went on to call for a freedom of expression of each other's ideology, that is, the US with economic liberalism, Europe with social liberalism and finally China and Russia authoritarian capitalism to say the least.

Thus, from the paragraphs above, one can conclusively acknowledge the intellectual prowess of Barry Buzan on the subject matter and his perspective which is basically new and adds to the global knowledge and history, giving a new breeze to many young academicians and interested parties when it comes to the matter.

REFERENCES

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