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Major Philippe Cote

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

**THE EVOLUTION OF POWER POLITICS AND REQUIREMENT FOR  
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

By Lieutenant-Commander Terence Cross

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# THE EVOLUTION OF POWER POLITICS AND REQUIREMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

## Introduction

Traditionally, power has been defined in military terms. States with more power stood a better chance of surviving than those with less. (Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, *Realism*, pg87). Collins Dictionary defines power politics as international political relations where each nation attempts to increase its own power and interests by using military or economic coercion.

Now, power is best defined in terms of actors and has evolved to refer to one actor's ability to prevail over another in a conflict of interests using a variety of instruments, including persuasion, inducement, manipulation, coercion, non-forceful sanctions, and force. (Kim Richard Nossal, *Power and World Politics*, pg89-90). In the modern world, power must be balanced to allow states to intelligently integrate hard and soft instruments into successful strategies to achieve preferred outcomes (Joseph Nye, *Smart Power*, pg207).

But how did power politics evolve? This essay will demonstrate that politics, the economy and culture have become intertwined. Furthermore, it will be shown that international cooperation is required to maintain security, advance agendas and achieve strategic objectives in an increasingly globalized world.

## Evolution of Power Politics

Historically, the first priority of state leaders was to ensure their nation's survival (Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, *Realism*, pg87). Empires and colonialism were common throughout the ages, but in the late nineteenth century, a new era of expansion different from the previous free-trading and competing colonial empires began to emerge. The state played a more active and important role which resulted in the intertwining of political and economic elements (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pg59). In this new imperialism, overseas economic

expansion and the exploitation of the colonies were crucial for success (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pg61). Hand in hand with the imperialist advance was the spread of Christianity. The church and secular left promoted the welfare and education of the colonies' converted inhabitants over imperial interests and advanced a movement dedicated to the liberal principles that all men are created equal and have rights (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*,pg71-72). The Age of Empire became an economic, political and cultural phenomenon (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pg78).

The creation of a single global economy linking developed and undeveloped countries (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*,pg62) resulted in competition between rival nations' as they sought out and safeguarded new markets to gain an advantage for national business (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*,pg66-67). This protectionism resulted in the First World War (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*,pg61) and the inequities imposed on the defeated nations in concert with the interwar years crash in the world economy gave rise to the conditions that led to the Second World War (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Total War*,pg35).

It was assumed the economy would operate in wartime as it had in peace as the technological innovations required by war drove the modern industrial economy (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Total War*,pg45-48). But the two wars were waged beyond the means of the European combatants, with lasting negative effects on their economies (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Total War*, pg46-48), demonstrating that politics and economics cannot be separated (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*, pg69).

Hopes for a peaceful return of the pre-war world economy under the League of Nations did not materialize. But lessons were learned and solutions that lasted for decades after the Second World War resulted in a golden economic age with the illusion of peace. The old

colonial powers vanished and the USA emerged as the leading world power, while the communist world seemed ready to compete in the economic race without having the superpowers come to blows (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Total War*, pg52-53).

### **The Requirement for International Cooperation**

In this new world order, the United Nations came into existence, founded on the key principles of sovereign equality of states, non-interference, nonaggression and the commitment to the promotion of human rights and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) being at the heart of the UN mandate (Mats Berdal, *The United Nations, Multilateralism and International Order*, Mats Berdal, pg180-182). International attitudes changed and countries could no longer engage in aggression or military operations without challenge or legitimacy from the international community as justification (Richard Jolly, Louis Emmerij and Thomas G. Weiss, *Peace and Security: From Preventing State Conflict to Protecting Individuals*, pg164). The UN encourages the use of regional arrangements and agencies, and actively engages with states, regional organizations, international institutions in resolving a wide area of complex tasks beyond traditional peacekeeping (Mats Berdal, *The United Nations, Multilateralism and International Order*, Mats Berdal, pg189-191). Global governance relies on formal and informal networks such as the G-20 for agenda-setting and consensus building. In order to be considered a great power, a nation needs a significant voice at the UN, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (*Smart Power*, Joseph Nye, pg217). But where do transnational organizations derive their authority?

Outside the boundaries of the state a condition of anarchy exists to emphasize the point that the international realm lacks an overarching central authority above the individual collection of sovereign states. (Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, *Realism*, pg87). States can choose to

disobey the orders of transnational organizations operating in the international sphere, yet even the most resistant state often submits to the transnational authority (Kim Richard Nossal, *Power and World Politics*, pg93) because the UN member states are committed and support the world body and the principles and values it enshrines despite acknowledged flaws (Mats Berdal, *The United Nations, Multilateralism and International Order*, Mats Berdal, pg179). Without this cooperation, international authority ceases to exist and other instruments of power must be used to secure compliance (Kim Richard Nossal, *Power and World Politics*, pg94).

## **Conclusion**

The colonial expansion during the Age of Empire linked politics and economics. The efforts of the church and secular left tied human rights, thus linking politics, economics and culture. The evolution of power politics has shown that no one nation can act unilaterally to maintain international peace and prosperity on its own. Success will mean maintaining alliances and developing networks that include emerging powers (*Smart Power*, Joseph Nye, pg231). IN order to achieve their own strategic goals, nations must engage intelligently in power politics to promote the international economy, mediate international disputes and develop international rules and institutions (*Smart Power*, Joseph Nye, pg233-234). International Politics, economics and culture are now inextricably intertwined in a world that promotes R2P and human rights.

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