Realist, Legal, and Philosophical Foundations of Geopolitics, Security, and Human Development

[1]Kerry Muhati., [2]Prof. Samuel Nyanchoga

[1]Postgraduate PhD Student Field of Peace and Security Sustainment

[2]Lecturer, School of Arts and Social Sciences Tangaza University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to address the persistent divide between geopolitics and state security, on the one hand, and human development on the other, by proposing an integrated analytical framework. The key objectives are to examine the theoretical separation between realist approaches to power and security and liberal-ethical perspectives on human dignity and development, and to develop a unified framework that connects these domains. The study adopts a conceptual and normative methodology, drawing on political theory, international law, and contemporary international relations scholarship. The findings reveal that while geopolitics and state security continue to be shaped by realist notions of power, their legitimacy and sustainability increasingly depend on international legal norms and ethical considerations of human development. The paper demonstrates that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive but are interdependent in shaping global governance. The paper concludes by proposing a triangular framework linking power, law, and ethics as essential and interconnected pillars of a stable and humane international order. This integrated approach has significant implications for international relations theory, public policy formulation, and the future direction of global governance.

Keywords: geopolitics, realism, international law, human security, human development, political philosophy, sovereignty, humanitarian intervention, capability approach, neopatrimonialism

INTRODUCTION

Background: From Classical Geopolitics to Human Security

For much of its modern history however, study of international relations has centred on one paramount concern: the security of the state. Foundational works in the field ranging from Thucydides account of the Peloponnesian War to Niccollo Machiavelli's writing on statecraft Carl von Clausewitz's theory on War and XXth century works by Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz mostly deal with searching for power, survival and competition between states. Geopolitics contributed to strengthen this orientation in that it emphasised the material and spatial dimensions of power, including geography, territory, natural resources, and state capacity. Classical geopolitical thinker saw the world as a finite strategic space where the political result was based upon geographical location, and as who owned which strategic resources.

After the Cold War, this state-centred understanding of security was increasingly criticized. Traditional approaches to human security appeared inadequate to address the major causes of human suffering such as poverty, diseases, political repression, environmental degradation and communal violence. Scholars and policymakers accordingly came to think hard about what is security and whose security it is supposed to provide. A vitriol turning point to this reorientation was the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program of 1994. That report gave the concept of human security definite institutional shape, by arguing that security must focus not on states but on individuals, and that true security meant not just freedom from fear but also from want. In the process, the human security framework challenged the underlying assumptions of realist security thinking, and supported greater dialogue between the security studies and development theory fields (Alkire, 2023; Tadjbakhsh, 2022).

Despite the progress that this dialogue has produced, the initiative to integrate the realist, legal and philosophical perspectives into a coherent one-pot is not a done deal yet. Realist scholars still place the utmost importance on power and material capabilities and thus place secondary importance upon legal and ethical considerations. Development and human security academics do not pay sufficient attention to the structural pressures the absence of a central authority in this international system produce. International legal scholars, for their part, are confronted with the problem of reconciling the unity of formal law in the United Nations Charter to the fact of great-power competition. This article attempts to fill these gaps drawing all three traditions into closer and more conversation of increased productivity.

The Tension between Power Politics and Human Development

The tension between power politics and human development is not merely a theoretical problem but is a clear feature of today's international affairs. Over the past 10 years, strategic competition between the United States, China, and Russia has deteriorated, placing greater emphasis on military leverage, territorial power, and technical control over cooperation for the global public goods that allow for human development. China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and the intensifying competition between Washington and Beijing over semiconductor production and artificial intelligence is distracting resources and political attention from development assistance, action on climate change, and global health cooperation at a time when all three are desperately needed (Mearsheimer, 2021; Drezner, Farrell, and Newman, 2021).

These developments have had serious repercussions for vulnerable states and peoples. As defence budgets grow for both the major and the secondary powers there have been cases where there is less and less money left for international development assistance. Multilateral institutions including the World Trade Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations system generally have come under growing pressure as per a result of great power rivalry. In some cases, however, these bodies have been instrumental zed for the promotion of strategic interests rather than common global aims. The splitting of the world economy into competing blocs is also threatening to slow down or even reverse the decline in poverty and promotion of economic integration that has allowed improvements in the living standards of many people in recent decades (Milanovic, 2023).

At the same time, the relationship between security and development is not necessarily always negative. Research consistently shows sustained insecurity is one of the principal causes of poor development results. Countries affected by armed conflict, political instability and poor governance typically suffer from higher rates of poverty, lack of access to education and health service and higher exposure to preventable disease and malnutrition. Analysis made by the World Bank indicates that fragile and conflict affected states, are the least probable to materialise the sustainable development goals without sustained international assistance (World Bank, 2024). In this way, insecurity may create poverty, while poverty may feed insecurity a spiralling relationship that argues strongly for considering realist, legal, and philosophical approaches as complementary and not competing.

Realist Foundations of Geopolitics and Security

Classical Realism: Power, National Interest, and Survival

Classical realism as an intellectual tradition emerged during the first half of the twentieth century in direct reaction to what the classical school viewed as the fantastic overoptimistic political doctrine of liberal internationalism - as embodied most aptly in the works of Woodrow Wilson and the establishing of the League of Nation. Liberal thinkers believed that international law and collective security and the spread of democracy could have a significant impact on relations among states for the better. Classical realists rejected this view and held instead: that interstate relations are not determined so much by legal rules or moral ideals and more so by power and the imperative of survival.

This tradition was founded on the work of earlier thinkers such as Thucydides, Niccolaus Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Carl von Clausewitz. In the twentieth century their insights were developed into a systematic academic system. Among those who influences this development Hans Morgenthau was instrumental. In Politics

Among Nations (1948), Morgenthau defined international politics as a perpetual struggle for power, and argued that states defined their national interest in power terms first of all, and the survival and security of the state had to be secured first of all by the state's leaders. Moral considerations do have some relevance, but they cannot trump the fundamental need for protection of the state. Contemporary scholars of realism, such as Mearsheimer (2021) and Wohlforth (2020) apply these arguments to contemporary international politics and argue that the renewed great-power competition testifies to the analytical power of realism, at least in the measurement of expectations that institutions alone can maintain cooperation.

An important realist concept is the security dilemma, which was first discovered by John Herz and developed by Robert Jervis. The security dilemma results from the fact that it is extremely difficult to distinguish between defensive military preparations and offensive preparations in an international system where there is no central authority. When one state develops greater military capacity for protective purposes, others may see this as threatening and respond by developing their own forces leading to tension and arms races even where there is no aggressive intent. This dynamic has direct consequences to human development: resources that are spent for military competition are unavailable for education, healthcare and infrastructure.

Structural Neorealism: Anarchy, Balance of Power, and Systemic Constraints

A major development within the field of thought in realism came at the work of Kenneth Waltz and his book Theory of International Politics (1979). Waltz shifted the analysis from the nature of human being and individual state behaviour to the structure of international system as a whole. He argued that it cannot be explained in terms of the motivations or domestic politics of individual states to sustain recurring patterns of competition and conflictrators, rather they are the product of the structure within which all states must operate.

For Waltz, what characterises the international system is anarchy namely the lack of any authority above the level of states. Because no global authority is available to guarantee security, various states have to depend primarily on their own capacities. Survival is based on a state's relative power and strategic decisions. This structural situation encourages characteristic behaviours: balancing against powerful rivals, keeping up deterrent military capacity, and avoiding dangerous dependence on others for critical security needs. The distribution of capabilities among states defines the overall nature of the system and limits the options among all states in the system.

Contemporary neorealist scholars use Waltz's framework as a way to describe contemporary power shifts, particularly the rise of China and the developing relationship between Beijing and Washington that is widely perceived as the defining geopolitical contest of our time. Power transition theorists, including Tammen and Kugler (2021), are concerned with questions regarding whether these power transitions give rise to conflict or peaceful accommodation. From a neorealist perspective, as China's power approaches the US, structural pressures for tension may escalate regardless of declared intentions on either side. This rivalry would have grave consequences for the development of mankind: major conflict between leading powers would disturb the development finance, climate cooperation and the global health efforts, seriously undermine the provision of international public goods.

Geopolitical Thought: Territory, Strategic Space, and the Return of Geography

Geopolitics looks at the relationship between geography, territory, natural resources and political power. Early geopolitical thinkers like Halford Mackinder, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and Nicholas Spykman wrote at the turn of the twentieth century, and their thoughts have been given new attention in recent years, as scholars advance the idea that geography still influences world politics as a result of globalisation and technological change (Kaplan, 2019; Grygiel, 2022). Control over the sea routes, energy resources, and strategically important locations is still an important determinant of political and economic influence.

Contemporary geopolitics involves new competitive arenas. The rivalry between the United States and China is now expanding across the area of artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, quantum computing and the infrastructure for telecommunications systems - a contest that many analysts refer to as a key strategic struggle of the twenty-first century (Drezner, Farrell, and Newman, 2021). Control of key technologies provides

military, economic, and political advantages comparable to those associated with controlled territory in previous times. Climate change has provided another layer of geopolitical competition: disputes over water resources, fertile land, and Arctic sea routes opened by melting ice, in combination with the prospect of large-scale climate-induced migration, are increasingly at the centre of security debates (Dalby, 2023).

Geopolitical competition often puts adverse pressure on human development. States who are locked in strategic competition generally favour defence spending and strategic spending to social investment, at home and abroad. Development assistance is also open to being diverted to strategic rather than human welfare. China's Belt and Road Initiative, United States security assistance programmes, aspects of European neighbourhood policy, all present instances of development finance being used for geopolitical gain, and thus may be less effective in bettering conditions in the recipient countries (Dreher, Fuchs, Parks, Strange, and Tierney, 2022).

The Limits of Realism: Neglect of Legitimacy and Human Development

Although realism does offer some important information about power as well as interstate competition, realism has some important limitations. One primary weakness is not paying sufficient attention to legitimacy. Realist theory often treats legitimacy as referring to an instrument that states use in abdication of their often competing interests as opposed to legitimacy as a power independent of political systems. Yet the evidence from the past and present knows that legitimacy can be a factor shaping political outcomes in and of itself. When a political system or political policy is widely perceived to be just and suitable, it has a tendency to be more stable and durable.

This point can be well illustrated by the breakdown of European colonial empires in the mid-twentieth century. European powers had large army strength even when colonialism lost its moral ground. Nevertheless, anti-colonial movements, the international propagation of the principle of self-determination and support for human rights increasingly undercut the legitimacy of empire and made colonial rule politically unsustainable. Research on post-conflict peacebuilding shows similar phenomena: political arrangements deemed to be legitimate are likely to be the more stable arrangements than those perpetuated only by coercion (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, 2022).

A second limitation of realism is this narrow conception of security. By focusing on state survival, realism gives low analytical value to the issue of individual well-being. Issues such as poverty reduction, access to education and health care, political freedom and protection of human dignity have a marginal place in a strictly realist framework. This emphasis has helped shape policy decisions and has often resulted in an emphasis on military competition, to the detriment of social and economic investment. And yet face is painfully apparent from the long-term evidence that progress in human development makes immense contributions to durable peace and stability.

Legal Foundations: International Law and Institutional Constraint

Sovereignty and the Westphalian Order

The modern international legal order is often traced in time to the Peace of Westphalia that concluded the Thirty Years War in Europe in 1648. These agreements helped to consolidate principles that still guide international law and relations: state sovereignty, the legal equality of states, and non-intervention in domestic affairs. The settlement affirmed the supremacy of each state on its own territory and non-interference of outside powers with matters internal to each state on grounds of religion, ideology or political preference. In this sense, Westphalian sovereignty was used to describe the organisation of political authority in early modern Europe, and formed a normative framework for relations between states.

Under this model, different political and religious systems of states could coexist -- an important achievement in a time marked by violent confessional conflict. However, the framework was limited in scope: it referred to the rights of governments, and not the rights of individuals, and provided no rights for individuals who suffered under oppressive government within their own states. Over time, international law filled this gap with rules and

institutions which were meant to strengthen the protection of human dignity and rights and to hold states responsible for violations.

Recent scholarship has given new attention to the idea of sovereignty in the face of these developments. Scholars, such as d'Aspremont (2021) and Peters (2022), have held that sovereignty nowadays should not be understood as power without limits, but authority exercised within a legal framework, that comes with explicit duties and constraints in international law. From this perspective, sovereignty and human rights are not opposed as such, the legitimate exercise of state authority requires respect for basic human rights norms. This interpretation has a function in linking the traditional Westphalian framework with the more recent legal and philosophical approaches which give a greater weight in human dignity and development.

The United Nations Framework: Collective Security, Human Rights, and the Use of Force

The United Nations was created after two world wars in 1945. It had been the most ambitious effort yet made towards the creation of an international order with rules and not just force. The United Nations Charter prohibits threats or actual uses of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. It recognises at the same time the right of states to take individual or collective self defence and it gave the Security Council authority under chapter VII to take collective action to restore international peace and security. In the principle framework, in the use of the armed force impose limitations of the law and make a link with the institutionalisation of the power as it works and not simply with the power of the state and of the national calculations.

Accompanying its security provisions was the creation of a whole structure of human rights by the United Nations. The Universal declaration of Human rights adopted in nineteen forties set minimum standards in the treatment of people. These standards were then made binding, or so made by treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. For the first time in the history of international law, states were formally recognised to have obligations to individuals in their own borders, under international monitoring and accountability.

The human rights framework is based on the principle that human beings are all endowed with inherent dignity and equal rights which are not exclusively dependent on state recognition, but stem from the fact that they are human beings. This principle reflects the influence of moral and philosophical traditions stressing the universality of human value and the corresponding duties of political institutions.

Tension has however continued to exist between the Charter's emphasis on state sovereignty as well as its commitment to human rights. The aims of preventing interstate war and protecting the sovereignty of states may be in conflict with attempts on the part of the state to protect the individual against abuses committed within the borders of the nation. This tension was brought to the foreground in the 1990s, in crises in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The failure to prevent the 1994 genocide in Rwanda in which approximately 800,000 people were killed within a matter of weeks Starkly exposed the limitations of the existing system. Like Donovan noted, "while the governments were held debating the questions of sovereignty and legal authority, massive swathes of civilians went unprotected." This tragedy forced sustained reflection into how international law might better balance respect for state sovereignty and the need to uphold human life.

International Humanitarian Law and the Responsibility to Protect

International humanitarian law is a set of rules of war. These rules are codified (written down in law) principally in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols of 1977. They seek to regulate the toxic effects of war and the innocent who do not engage in the hostilities. Key principles include the duty to make distinctions between combatants and non-combatants, the duty to apply military action in proportion to the risk of humanitarian costs, the prohibition of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering, and the protection of prisoners of war and the wounded. These rules involve a continual attempt to put moral limits on warfare without mechanisms for enforcement as strong as are found with domestic law.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine supported at the World Summit held in 2005 was meant to help resolve the unsolved conundrum between sovereignty and human rights. According to this doctrine, each individual state has the primacy responsibility to protect its population against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. When a state fails to discharge that responsibility or actively commits such crimes the international community takes on the responsibility to respond - ranging from diplomatic and economic measures to, in extreme circumstances, authorised military action. By reconceptualizing sovereignty as a conditional responsibility and not an unconditional right the doctrine sought to represent a balancing of state authority and international accountability for serious abuses.

In practise implementation of R2P has been highly contested. The 2011 intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Libya carried out under the authority of the Security Council was then criticised by China, Russia and some Global South states claiming the intervention went beyond its mandate to protect civilians and instead became an instrument of regime change. These fears informed subsequent debates about Syria where disagreements between major powers limited the possibility of collective action to a great extent (Welsh, 2019). Because the doctrine depends upon the concurrence of states with different interests, the doctrine is at the times when protection is most desperately needed that the doctrine is least easy to apply. This constant difference between principle and practise reflects the difficulty of supporting justice in an international system that is as much determined by political power as by legal norms.

Law as Mediator between Power and Morality

One way to think of international law is that it is an intermediary institution between power and moral principle. It is not the expression of the interests of dominant states and it is not an independent phenomenon from political realities. It works in the field between power and values, attempting to lead and contain the behaviour of the states in ways reflective of any common standards. Legal institutionalist scholars, including Ginsburg and Versteeg (2022), suggest that legal rules influence state behaviour even where one does not have a centralised authority to enforce it by providing common expectations, carrying reputational costs to violation and triggering domestic constituencies in favour of compliance. Through these mechanisms, international law may have an impact on behaviour over years in ways that go beyond window-dressing.

At the same time, there is tension between the legal needs of the international and the claims for sovereignty of the powerful states. The United States has been criticised for the selective adherence to international law and its support for international law in certain contexts in the United States and disregard of international law in other contexts (Deudney and Meiser, 2022). China has at times used the principle of non-intervention to try and justify its own actions, but have resorted to economic and legal action to gain influence over weaker states. These examples are representative about the difficulty to get consistent compliance with international law. Meeting that challenge requires not only stronger enforcement mechanisms but greater common commitment to the moral principles including human dignity and justice upon which the legal order is based.

Philosophical Foundations of Security and Human Development

Social Contract Traditions: Hobbes, Locke, and the Political Foundations of Security

The social contract tradition of political philosophy has thrown light on the relation between security of individual, political power and obligation of the government. Thomas Hobbes presented one of the most influential accounts of this relationship in the aftermath of the English Civil War. He identified the state of nature as one without common authority as a state of constant fear, competition and insecurity, in which no settled course of human goods is possible. To escape from such condition, people consent to a social contract, giving away some of their freedom and transferring their power to a sovereign authority, the Leviathan, whose major role is to maintain peace and security.

Hobbes's argument has important features in common with the realistic approaches to international relations. Both take security as the original political worth though and both in turn argue that order requires effective authority. The critical difference is that Hobbes believed that the problem of insecurity is soluble within a state by the creation of a sovereign government, whereas the scholars of realism believe that no analogous solution is

available at the international level, where no world government is available. The international system therefore resembles the state of nature in which Hobbes considered states to be, with individuals in a state of nature having to ultimately be able to depend on their own capabilities to survive (Pashakhanlou, 2022).

John Locke had an opposing storey. He explained the state of nature as one of relative freedom and equality which was governed by natural law. For Locke man is already free-with the right of life, liberty and property before government is established. Political authority is invented, not to avoid endless warfare as such, but as a better way to conserve pre-existing rights. Authority is therefore inherently constrained If a government cannot secure these rights or actually violates them it loses its legitimacy and is entitled to replacement.'

Locke's ideas have had an evaporating effect of liberal political thought, international human rights law and modern theories of human development. This tradition is manifested in the idea that individuals have certain fundamental rights and freedoms, to which governments are bound to respect and take positive measures to ensure their enjoyment. Contemporary human development theory is based directly on the Lockean concept of rights, legitimacy and the purpose of political authority.

Kantian Cosmopolitanism: Perpetual Peace and Moral Universalism

Immanuel Kant provides a good basis of philosophy for cosmopolitan approaches to international order. These approaches take as basic to international norms in questions of justice not the consent and power of the state but the moral status of all human beings as rational agents. In his 1795 essay Perpetual Peace, Kant outlined a vision of international order built on a federation of republican states, free commerce and universal hospitality (the right of all persons to be treated as guests, rather than enemies, when under foreign soil). This vision is based on the moral philosophy of Kant, and in particular on that concept known as the categorical imperative which espouses the notion of treating every individual as an end in themselves, and never as mere means to the purposes of another.

Kant's ideas are quite influential in the modern relations among nations. Democratic peace theory, first developed systematically by Michael Doyle in the 1980s, reveals that liberal democracies very rarely go to war with each other a finding that is widely seen to endorse Kant's argument that republican government encourages peaceful conflict resolution (Owen, 2020). Contemporary cosmopolitan philosophers like Thomas Pogge and Simon Caney have used Kantian principles to hold the rich countries and their citizens responsible for perpetuating an unfair global economic order. That order, they argue, serves to perpetuate poverty and failure in development, and they call for redistribution of resources and opportunities on a cross-border basis.

Pogge's concept of 'negative duties' is pertinent here, in particular. He says wealthy states don't simply fail to help the poor they actively harm them by benefiting from a global system that systematically disadvantages the world's poorest people and countries (Pogge, 2023). This argument turns global poverty from an issue of obligation of charity to an issue of justice. It has implications even for geopolitics and international law: competition between powerful states that distorts the international economic system and undermines multilateral institutions is not merely inefficient, but morally indefensible.

The Capabilities Approach: Sen, Nussbaum, and Human Flourishing

The capabilities approach, which was developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, is a popular approach to human development. Sen implies that development cannot be defined as economic growth or individual preference satisfaction. True development is about increasing people's real freedoms - their substantive ability to live lives that they have a reason to value. Freedom is both the first aim and the main tool of development: people are at one and the same time the agents and the benefactors of the building process. Policies which boost access to education, healthcare, political participation, and economic opportunity are therefore developmentally meaningful regardless of how they may affect aggregate levels of income.

Nussbaum grows upon this ground to be specific about a list of central human capabilities, which are life, bodily health, bodily integrity, exercise of senses and imagination, emotional development, practical reason, social affiliation, play, and political and material control over one's environment. She insists that these are the minimum

requirements of a life of human dignity and that any political arrangement which fails to guarantee them is wrong, no matter how much it produced economically. This provides a philosophically informed and practically useful criterion for evaluating political and security systems - one that goes far beyond the exclusive focus of realism on state power and survival (Nussbaum, 2023).

The capabilities approach also clarifies the relationship between security and human development. As Robeyns and Byskov (2020) argue, true security is security that is meant to increase human capabilities rather than primarily to maintain state power. Security policies should therefore be judged by whether they give people access to education, health care, political participation and economic opportunity to people, or whether they restrict these freedoms in the name of military strength. Applied to geopolitics, the concept of the capabilities approach highlights the human costs of favouring military over social investment in a particular country, while yielding a helpful instruction: Security arrangements are most effective and most just when they increase the real freedoms of all the individual people to whom they are applied.

The Human Security Paradigm: Development as Security

The human security paradigm was an important re-orientation in thinking about development and security that emerged in the 1990s. It draws from the disciplines of political philosophy, development theory and security studies and it focuses on the individual, rather than the state, as its centre of analysis. Its essential argument is that security consists in securing people against threats to their dignity, their freedom and their well-being threats which are not confined to armed conflict, but also to poverty, disease, environmental degradation and political oppression. This emphasis is a direct challenge to what is called the state centre of gravity in the security concept in the realm of the realists tradition.

The human security framework was articulated for the first time in the UNDP Human Development Report of 1994. It has since been developed through a combination of academic research and policy practise. Mary Kaldor (2022) has examined the link between forms of new warfare and the security on human, United Nations, European Union and some national governments absorbing these ideas into policy frameworks. The main learning is that development and security are not competing objectives and sustainable security implies human development and real development implies at least a minimum level of security. Passing with massive influence in policy discussion, implementation of the approach has been patchy.

The human security paradigm also reveals a fundamental tension that exists within realism as the presumption that state security is identical with the security of individuals. Human security tells us that such an equivalence does not exist. A government may improve its strategic position, but may be doing so while actively damaging the well-being of its population through repression, economic exploitation, or the systematic denial of basic rights and capabilities. A state might seem safe by the standards of realism but its people could be feel extremely insecure. Understanding this distinction is imperative in devising policies that genuinely address complex interorescent relations between geopolitics, state security, and human development.

Conceptual Integration: Power, Law, And Human Dignity

Three Foundational Logics

The analysis provided in the preceding sections identifies three different and no less interconnected logics that together make up the contemporary global governance. The first is the realistic logic of survival and power. This logic is based on the structural fact of international anarchy or absence of any authority above the level of states. To survive, states must develop capabilities, control threats, form alliances and compete. These structural pressures are independent of the intentions of any individual state or leader, and analysis which neglects them runs the risk of making recommendations which are politically unrealistic.

The second is the legal logic of the regulation and institutional order. This logic highlights the necessity of having rules, institutions and procedures governing and limiting the exercise of power, as well as those that facilitate cooperation and protect persons from violence and exploitation. International law is not merely a figment of power politics: it is an institutional power that influences state behaviour, unifies expectations, makes violations

more costly, and locks in normative commitments over time. Its effectiveness, however, depends on the political will of states and particularly of powerful states which is itself conditioned by the structural pressures which the realist logic identifies.

The third is the philosophical logic of legitimacy and human flourishing. This logic, which is well-informed in Kantian cosmopolitanism, the capabilities approach and human security theory, evaluates political and security arrangements based upon their degree of effectiveness in either promoting human dignity and well-being, as opposed to simple criteria of state power or compliance with legal frameworks. It is the view that political institutions including international ones should be ultimately for the flourishing of individuals. Arrangements that give up human rights, capabilities, or freedoms as the price of geopolitical gain or state sovereignty are on this account normatively deficient. This logic also offers positive guidance - making references to institutional designs and policies which may best further the development of humankind in different political and cultural contexts.

Points of Tension

These three logics are often in conflict and a comprehensive framework needs to work with these tensions, rather than paper over them. One tension dominates: that of sovereignty and intervention. The realist emphasis on the survival of states and the legal principle of non-intervention, also supports the case against interfering in the internal affairs of a state. Yet there are occasions when the philosophical logic of human dignity, buttressed by international human rights norms, requires that intervention be made, when governments commit atrocities against their own citizens, commit or allow them to do so. The Responsibility to Protect doctrine is one attempt to deal with this tension-and its record of contested application shows that no stable resolution has been resolved.

A second tension is between security and liberty. Realist imperatives of state security have often been used to justify surveillance programmes, restrictions on movement and political freedoms. These measures may run in direct contradiction with the philosophical logic of giving priority to individual rights, capabilities and freedoms. Post-September 11 counterterrorism policies in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere have brought home the impact that the imperatives of security can have on the erosion of civil liberties and human rights, with disproportionate consequences for minority and marginalized groups (Hussain, 2020).

A third tension, between power and justice, appeals to a more general tension between descriptive realism and normative evaluation. A world of pure power may have some form of strategic stability but in relation to the standards of human dignity and development it might be deeply unjust. Recognising and working with these tensions is crucial to building a global governance framework which is effective and ethically defensible.

Points of Convergence

In spite of the tensions between the three logics, there are important points of convergence between these three that form the basis for the integrated framework proposed here. One area of important convergence can be related to the relationship between security and human development. The realist logic states that security is a precondition in all the other political and social goods. The complementary argument made by the human security paradigm is that it is chronic insecurity that is the principal cause of failure to develop. States and regions of sustained conflict or political instability and exploitative government are reliably on the bottom of statistics measuring education, healthcare, reduction of poverty and other measures of human development. On the contrary, states that have good and effective governances are steadily [it becoming better] under these measures. Security, thus needed, but not enough security, in development, and the latter, in turn, reinforces, in a long run, the set of conditions which furnishes for its security.

Second, a convergence is a connexion of the legal and the realist logics. Effective international legal institutions - legislatures commanding broad respect and consistent compliance - help lower the costs of interstate co-operation, lower the risks posed by destructive competition and create some frameworks within which states can pursue their interests without resorting to prolonged conflict. Realists who deny the relevance of international law do not consider a considerable body of evidence that norms in international law influence state behaviour in areas such as trade, investment, arms control, environmental regulation and human rights. Weakening these

norms render all states, and not just weaker states, unstable and insecure. The philosophical logic, finally, also finds similarity with the realist and the legal school in emphasising that the flourishing of human beings is dependent of the availability of basic security, which is provided by good governance, and legal protections, which are enshrined in the international human rights instruments.

A Proposed Integrated Triangular Framework

The study proposes an integrated triangular framework that ties together geopolitical power, international law and human development as three mutually necessary foundations of a just and stable international order.

The framework has three elements. At the top of the pile is Geopolitics (Power), which encompasses a universe of interstate competition realities, distribution of capabilities and strategic competition. At the lower left is International Law (Constraint), which refers to the rules, institutions and procedures that control and limit the way in which states exercise power. At the lower right is Human Development (Normative Goal), the standard of human well-being and dignity against which political and security systems may be ultimately judged.

The three elements are not distinguished from each other. The interrelation between geopolitics and international law is an expression of the reality that power exercised by states creates and is created by legal rules. Law can restrain power but powerful states have influence on the making and interpreting of legal norms. The success of international legal institutions depends very much on the willingness of the powerful states to comply and uphold them.

The relationship between geopolitics and human development demonstrates the extent to which the struggle for strategic control establishes ramifications for the lives of the people. Interstate rivalry can be harmful to development as it diverts resources from social needs and leads to conflict which ruins development. On the other hand, stable security conditions and a good governance can provide the context in which sustained development is possible.

The relation between international law and human development reflects the role of legal rules in the protection and promotion of human development. Human rights law and international humanitarian law, development cooperation agreements and international economic rules all provide for the realisation of basic human needs and freedoms. In turn, there is evidence about the challenges in development that can be used to shape the evolution of legal norms and institutional arrangements as time goes by.

This integrated framework still preserves three key insights: we accept that global power structures exist and that they cannot be analytically discounted; we accept that legal rules and institutions have meaningful influence over state behaviour; and we still accept that as the ultimate measure of political and security systems whether they improve the lives of human beings rather than of our states, by whatever measure that is.

Implications For Contemporary Global Politics

Great Power Rivalry and Global Security

The new strategic competition of the United States, China and Russia is a serious challenge to the same integrated framework that has been promoted in this article. Great-power competition imposes enormous pressure on legal rules and ethical principles while states are preoccupied with power and survival. Military expenditure is growing among both the major powers as well as many secondary states. Multilateral institutions are being weak and politicised or going by the wayside. Development cooperation comes more and more under the hammer of strategic interests. At the same time, shared support for human rights, democratic governance and a rules-based international order has declined substantially since the end of the cold war.

The integrated framework holds that this trajectory is not only morally disturbing but harmful over the medium and long term. When the major powers violate international law, they remove the constraints that help bring about conflict reduction and institutional cooperation. Without clear rules and institutions, strategic rivalry becomes more dangerous and less predictable to all the players. When great-power competition crowds out

investment in human development, it contributes to the kind of poverty, inequality and political instability scenario that creates grievances and social pressures that can lead to security threats such as terrorism, organised crime, and epidemic disease. No major power can successfully cope with such threats through military means alone. Furthermore, when mighty states do not respect the principles of human dignity and justice, they are undermining their own international legitimacy. Over time, this loss of moral credibility undermines their capacity to exercise effective international leadership (Ikenberry, 2023).

Development in Fragile States

The promotion of human development in regular and conflict-affected States are examples of the tensions, and potential links, described in the integrated framework. Fragile states are characterised by weak institutions, low capacity and stable political turmoil. In such settings, the basic preconditions for the effectiveness of international law and of sustainable development are often lacking. Competition for survival and power is intense, especially in armed groups, among local power-holders, and external actors seeking influence and resources. Development strategies that are designed for stable and well-governed states do not translate well to these kinds of environments, and in part account for the lack of potency of international efforts to promote lasting development in fragile contexts.

The integrated framework offers another model. It recognises the security realities of fragile states but insists that legal order and development objectives are planes of durable peace not lateral issues to be dealt with - once security has been attained. Thus, security sector reform, transitional justice and state capacity building are not an add-on to development, but a necessary foundation of development. Development assistance that goes around the state institutions can have positive effects in the short term but can undermine the long-term process of state-building. Moreover, when external actors provide aid without too much concern for genuine development goals and so much more to achieve geopolitical interests, the results are often counter-productive in character: they may entrench corrupt elites, worsen conflict and prolong instability (Blattman and Ralston, 2024).

Climate Security and Global Justice

Climate change is a challenge where the political dimension is outside of old power balances and one that incorporates the three aspects of the integrated model. Geopolitical dimensions of it are increasing. These include competition over water resources and arable land, disputes over newly accessible Arctic sea routes, and the risk of large-scale environmentally-driven migration all of which have the potential to generate regional instability and humanitarian emergencies (Dalby, 2023).

International legal attempts (particularly the Paris Agreement of 2015) at reversing climate change through institutionalised cooperation and shared but differentiated responsibility. The agreement creates a flexibility on the states to establish their own mitigation targets, while at the same time creating a motivation for transparency, as well as progressive ambition. However, according to many scholars, these arrangements are not always adequate to the scale and the urgency of the problem "as climate impacts on vulnerable populations are so severe" (Voigt and Ferreira, 2022). Climate change also raises deep questions of justice, with those states and communities which did least to cause global greenhouse gas emissions often being hit the hardest by climate disruption a pattern that the philosophical logic of the integrated framework suggests is a serious normative failure demanding political response.

Reframing Security in the Global South

A particularly important implication of the integrated framework is the need to rethink and redefine security from the point of view of the States and societies of the Global South. The existing theories of geopolitics and security were designed by and for the powerful states in the West, and their assumptions are those of the provenance or interests and worlds of experience of these powerful states rather than the realities of everyday life for the majority of the world's population. For the majority of the people living in the Global South, the security threats they face most sharply are not wars fought between big nations but poverty, disease, food insecurity, political repression, the degradation of the environment, and the structural inequalities that are built into the structure of the global economic order.

Reframing security from this perspective is putting people and not states at the analytical centre. It agrees with the position, that not border protection and assurance of state power can make us really secure but the people's welfare and real possibilities. It has to be coupled with serious engagement with persistent inequalities in the global architecture, too. Scholars such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) and Zondi (2022) have claimed that current global governance mechanisms systematically disadvantage Global South countries, and this contributes to the patterns of underdevelopment and insecurity for Global South countries in reflection of underdevelopment theories and development patterns that are initially begun by injustice in the past and is further manifested by patterns of power imbalances in the present. The integrated framework supports this reorientation by the equal analytical weight that it gives to human dignity as well as to power and law and to a space for a more wide-ranging and inclusive conception of security one that takes seriously the experiences and priorities of the majority of humankind.

Theoretical Contributions

Moving Beyond Realist and Liberal Dichotomies

The important theoretical contribution of this article is the break from the sharp dichotomy which has long structured the debate in international relations. For decades' discussion in the field has been presented as a choice between realism and liberal institutionalism a choice between power and moral principle, structural constraint and ethical aspiration, interstate competition and human dignity. This article proposes that this framing is misleading. By providing an integrated triangular framework, it illustrates that power, law and human development are or can and must be analysed in tandem with each other. The framework secures the actual understanding of each of the traditions, whilst recognising the tensions between them, giving a more complete, more balanced account of them than any of the approaches provides.

Recent scholarship has already begun to problematize hard and fast realist-liberal divide. Constructivist scholars like Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore and Christian Reus-Smit (2023) believe that, interests and identities of states are not only given but are produced via the social interaction and shared ideas as well as institutional practice. Their work displays the reality that international political establishments are not static they can change when norms and practices evolve The integrated framework expands on these ideas however is extra explicit and clear concerning the moral underpinnings of human development as a standard for political evaluation.

Bridging International Relations Theory and Political Philosophy

A second contribution of this article is in seeking to make a fruitful linkage between international relations theory and political philosophy. These disciplines focus on overlapping questions of power, justice and political order but have evolved in relative isolation from one another. International relations theory has had difficulties with ideas that were derived from the social contract theory and Kantian cosmopolitanism, often without serious philosophical engagement. Political philosophy, on the other hand, has at times provided accounts of global justice that are short on concrete attention to constraints of an anarchic international system.

The integrated framework is an attempt to close this divide. The capabilities approach; Kantian cosmopolitanism as sources of normative standards for evaluating political systems. Realist understandings of structural power as well as legal analysis of institutional constraints point to practical conditions under which those standards have to work. By combining the use of these traditions, it makes it possible for the framework to provide a more complete and applicable tool for understanding the relationship between geopolitics, security and human development.

Re-centring Human Development in Geopolitical Analysis

A third contribution of this article is that it calls for human development to be at the centre of geopolitical analysis. Traditional geopolitical studies focus on, for the most part, military might, economic strength, strategic interests, and the institutions through which states handle their relations. In these accounts, the well-being and freedoms of individuals tend to emerge as consequences or by-products of political arrangements, and not as things by which political arrangements should be judged.

This article proposes a different approach. It argues that human development must not be approached as the result of geopolitical systems, but as a test of geopolitical systems. If a global order causes widespread and avoidable human suffering, it is morally flawed even if it is working under the formal constraints of international law or in the strategic interests of dominant states. As Reus-Smit (2023) notes, the purpose of states, and of the international order at large, cannot be separated from the well-being of the people who they rule over. When political systems magically fail to protect and promote that well-being, then there are good moral and practical reasons for reform.

CONCLUSION

Restatement of the Central Argument

This Article has attempted to propose that geopolitics and security, although imbued with a strong realist's sense of power and competition, must be anchored in international law and in moral notions centred on human dignity and development. Power, legal order and human well-being should not be understood as rival frameworks from which analysts must pick. They are linked and interrelated dimensions of good sound analysis and sound policy. An integrated triangular framework advanced here is of Geopolitics (Power) - International Law (Constraint) - Human Development (Normative Goal). Bringing these three elements together, the framework offers a more complete and more practically useful tool for understanding and improving the international order than any individual approach can provide.

The Necessity of Normative Grounding in Geopolitics

This article demonstrates how it is impossible to do geopolitical analysis and undertaking without manifesting articulate moral frameworks. Security policies which subside human dignity and human development may be effective on the short term, but the tendency is to cause serious long term problems. When political systems do not address basic human needs, they breed frustration, inequality and declining faith in institutions. Over the longer period, these conditions destroy even the strongest states and they are less able undertaken order and safeguard their interests.

There are instructive examples drawn from history. The settlement of Western Europe in the wake of the Second World War construction of the European Union and the multilateral economic institutions that facilitated broad-based poverty reduction are all evidence of the value of combining power and legal rules with shared principles. These arrangements were able to generate broad legitimacy and support simply because these arrangements reflected common human interests and not just the preferences of the dominant states. They teach us that a stable peace and a sustainable development require the interplay of effective political authority, legal institutions and a moral purpose.

Directions for Future Research

The framework that has been advanced here suggests some fruitful directions of future research. First, empirical investigation is required, which examines the conditions on which power, law and human development reinforce rather than undermine each other. When are legal rules effective in restraining interstate competition? When do geopolitical competition destroy institutional frameworks? Second, assessing across regions and states could cross compare different contexts in which they are embedded: how do different contexts affect the relative importance of each of these 3 elements and can comparative research provide lessons for improvements in institution-building and development policy? Third, further work in political philosophy space can be done in order to explain how considerations coming from capabilities approach, cosmopolitan theory and the human security literature can be used as an operational variable for assessing security systems. Finally, the framework outlined in this study ought to be applied in future studies in order to examine more closely contemporary global issues such as great power rivalry, climate governance and security in the Global South in ways that force a more sustained collaboration between political theory, legal analysis and development studies.

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