



Global Power Transition: From Bipolar to Multipolar

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Abstract

Global politics is continually transformative. Multipolar, bipolar, and unipolar are magic terms in international politics. Bipolar politics had been prevalent before the termination of psychological war. In the aftermath of cold war, international politics has turned into unipolar viz. from bipolar to unipolar. The heyday of unipolarity under the leadership of America had been visible since G.W. Bush administration. Invasion of Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), Libya, Syria led by the USA has been the culminating output of unipolar manner. From Obama administration, unipolar politics has been waning. Political thinkers have opined that the present global order as new world order, multipolar politics and so on. Palmer, N. D., and Perkins, H. C. (2007) expatiated on transitioning global community in their resounding work 'International Relations: The World Community in Transition'. Visibly, multipolarity has floated in international arena. The termination of the US hegemony, rise of China and the emergence of the regional powers have paved the way for multipolar politics diminishing unipolar politics.

Keywords: *unipolar, multipolar, regionalism, military capacity, hard power, soft power.*

Introduction

Naturally, air vacuum on any place under the globe is unthinkable. In parallel, power vacuum in global politics is unimaginable. Dominant tribe, community, clan, state and so on has been extant from time immemorial. Echoing the views of Henry Kissinger, "In every century there seems to emerge a country with the power, the will, and the intellectual and moral impetus to shape the entire international system accordance with its own values (Kissinger, 1994)". International politics is a complex system combining economic, political, social, and military phenomena. Hegemony on international arena is measured through the hard power and soft power. Having collapsed of the USSR, bipolar politics altered its course turning to unipolar since G.W. Bush administration. Formation of AIIB, BRICS, Chinese silk route policy, India's new silk route and so forth have been the exposure of multipolarity. The volume of eastern economy has stepped up sharply.

Theoretical Concept

The terms unipolar, bipolar and multipolar are prevalent in the precinct of international politics denoting the scenario of the shifting of power. Unipolarity refers to the single-dominated global political system. Bipolar indicated the race between the two blocs-capitalist led by the USA

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&communist led by the erstwhile USSR. Multipolar denotes beyond bipolar system. M. Kaplan presented six models for international politics; of them two are real &four are abstract: two reals — “balance of power system” and “loose bipolar system” and four abstracts — “tight bipolar system”, “universal international system “of a federal type, “hierarchical system” with the dominance of one pole, multipolar system with the “veto” among nuclear powers (Kaplan, 2005). Kevin Bloor divided state power into three categories-

Great powers, Super powers, Emerging powers (Kevin, 2022). A. Organski emphasized the hierarchical nature of the international system, with superpower at the top, followed by several “great powers”, then “middle powers”, finally small countries and colonies (Organski, 1958).

Defense Industry

The budget for military expenditure has gone up sweepingly. Relations between power and military are reciprocal. Enhancement of military indicates strength of dominance globally. A fortiori, states have augmented the disbursement on military steadily. The United States of America holds first for the outlay of military expenditure; China holds second; Saudi Arabia holds third; India holds fourth; the United Kingdom holds fifth and so forth. The comparison of investment behind the defense is shown as bellows-

Table 1
Defense Investments by Country (2018 vs. 2020; in Billion USD)

Country	2020	2018
United States	750	649
China	237	250
Saudi Arabia	67.6	67.6
India	61	66.5
United Kingdom	55.1	50
Germany	50	49.5
Japan	49	46.6
Russia	48	61.4
South Korea	44	43.1
France	41.5	63.8
Brazil	27.8	27.8
Australia	26.3	26.7
Canada	22.5	21.6
Israel	20	15.9
Iran	19.6	13.2
Turkey	19	19
Pakistan	11.4	11

Source: Global Fire Power (2020) and SIPRI Fact Sheet (April 2019).

Propensity towards the formation of alignment and regional forums

In cold war period, three types of states were visible under the globe viz. capitalist bloc led by the United States of America; socialist bloc led by the ex-USSR; non-aligned states except two blocs. After the fall of Soviet Union, non-aligned states stripped the non-alignment policy; therefore, they were involved various organizations. At present, regional organizations have a clout bargaining on

international table. Centering on collective security and other interests, regionalism has drawn attention to the small and big states. By the way, ASEAN has been established in 1996 and its motto is “One Vision, One Identity, and One Community”. The economy of ASEAN is the third largest in the Indo-Pacific and fifth largest in the world. The region’s trade volume is \$2.8 trillion. As jugular veins for global trade, over \$3.4 trillion in global trade transits through the ASEAN region each year. The European Union is one of the 3rd largest global players-USA and China- in international trade. EU is a supranational organization and it is the largest economy in the world.

The largest organization has worn the dress of the state. BRICS is the group of five emerging economies-Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa-sharing 23% of GDP, 30% of the territory and 18% of the global trade. It has established two significant institutions-the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement following World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The immense economic actions by new emerging actors in international politics e.g., China, Russia, Japan, Brazil, India have stimulated the most conservationist sponsors of the argument transition of world order from Unipolarity to Multipolarity (Mustafa and Yaseen, 2010). Owing to the regionalism, singular global equation has flown off at a tangent to plural international politics. ‘Regionalism refers to the political and cognitive idea of forming regions. It is usually associated with a formal program, and since the mid-1980s there has been a regional program on a global scale.

The broadening and deepening of the European Union (EU) is perhaps the most obvious example, but regionalism is also evident in the revitalization or expansion of many other regional projects around the world, such as the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and, more recently, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Today’s regionalism is closely linked with the shifting nature of global politics and the intensification of globalization (Fredrik Söderbaum, 2011).

States Disdainful Attitude towards War

Man is always peace broker or seeker. Most of the people are always against the war. But the leaders of the hegemonic states have imperial nature. In unipolar world, war-large scale or small scale-happens often as one state contains the supreme power. Multipolarity is hailed by people ensuring balance of power bringing peace and stability in the world. Unipolarity is the most conflict prone of all the systems, according to at least two important criteria: the percentage of years that great powers spend at war and the incidence of war involving great powers.

Table 2

Interstate Wars Involving Great Powers since 1816 by Polarity Period

	Multipolarity	Bipolarity	Unipolarity
Great power years at war	143	14	13
Great power years	791	88	22
Percentage of great power years at war	18	16	59
Wars involving great powers	33	34	—
Incidence of war per great power year	4.2	3.4	18.2

Source: Monteiro, N. P. (2014).

In multipolarity, 18 percent of great power years were spent at war. In bipolarity, the ratio is 16 percent. In unipolarity, however, a remarkable 59 percent of great power years until now were spent

at war. This is by far the highest percentage in all three systems. According to, Alida and Tomja (2014) the category of great powers can be divided into three periods from 1816 to 1990:

Table 3
Historical Periods of Great Power Structures (1816–Present)

Period	Years	Power Structure
First Period	1816–1945	Multipolarity
Second Period	1946–1989	Bipolarity
Third Period	1990–2010	Unipolarity
Fourth Period	2010–present	Multipolarity

Source: Tomja, A. (2014)

Multipolar politics has kicked off in post- G.W. Bush administration. Floating of strengthened regional organizations, rising of Asian economic tigers, aggressive nature of the USA has nosedived the unilateral standing of the US in the international system. Political scientist S.P. Huntington expatiated on his book named “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order” the thriving period and the waning era of the West. He expounded to it qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Table 4
Indicators of Western Dominance: 1920s ("Heyday") vs. 2020s ("Decay Era")

Indicator	1920s (%)	2020s (%)
Territorial domination	49	24
Control over world population	48	10
World economic product	70	30
Manufacturing output	84	10
Global military power	45	10

Source: Serfaty, S. (2008).

Growing Importance of Marine Routes

Vital marine routes have been passing through among and between the countries or in the vicinity of any state. Globally, the wave of nationalist movement has been prevailing since post-cold war. Nationalists are always against the imperialist states. To protect their identities, they make liaison with some states interacting or connecting regional states. Regionalism is the extension of nationalism. Regional states are now vocal against the domineering use of oceanic routes of others' states or regions by the hegemonic state viz. the USA. Water communication is cheaper than others' way, the transportation charge is cost-effective. Therefore, trade through the water line has been on the increase radically. 'Maritime transport remains the backbone of globalized trade and the manufacturing supply chain, as more than four fifths of world merchandise trade by volume is carried by sea (Review of Maritime Transport, 2019). Maritime trade is the part of Blue Economy. The term 'Blue Economy' was coined by Professor Gunter Pauli in 1994. By the way, the Strait of Hormuz lays between the Arabian Gulf and the Persian Gulf. The route is crucially significant wheeling the global economy. Some 80% oil traversed the channel utilized by the world. Fastest global economy hinges on the oil and oil related ingredients. The route is lifeline for driving the world economy. Iran and other adjoining states are the claimer of the strait. Iran often threatens the USA not plying on its marine transport carrying products.

We can mention the geopolitical and economic role of the South China Sea under the globe. 'Trade ways of the South China Sea carried a total of one third of the global shipping. This shipping traffic and the merchandise on it carried about \$3.4 trillion worth of value in capital. What's most

interesting about these numbers is that out of these 3.4 trillion dollars' worth of shipping items there included nearly 40% China's total trade. Similarly, United States of America also conducts a total of 6% of its global trade through the maritime trade line of the South China Sea. Moreover, 90% of petroleum imported by major countries like China, Japan and South Korea pass through this area. All these aspects highlight the strategic indispensability of the South China Sea for global trade routes (World Geostrategic Insights, 2020). Regional states and countries vicinity to the marine routes have showed their curbing stand. Accordingly, global politics drifts towards multipolarity.

Vying for Economic Sovereignty

Nexus between politics and economy is integral or incorporate. There is a contention that which is in apogee or pinnacle –politics or economy? Some say in favor of politics and others notion for economy. Objectively, politics gets the first priority than economy. Political stability is sine qua non for economic advancement. Absence of political stability is a bottleneck to the way of economic progress. Betterment cannot be carried out without political stability. States have been categorized as First world, Second world and Third world on the basis of economic growth. If any country holds political order or the ambience of placid politics, economic mobility is fast in this country. At present, most of the states-democratic or undemocratic- have been trying to make the states politically stable for attaining higher economic growth.

According to S.P. Huntington, "The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government. The differences between democracy and dictatorship are less than the differences between those countries whose politics embodies consensus, community, legitimacy, organization, effectiveness, stability and those countries whose politics is deficient in these qualities (Huntington, 1969). Aspirations for economic hegemony are visible in international politics. Leading countries as well as most states have intensely concentrated on economic phenomena which are steadily turning global politics into multipolar.

Conclusion

The emerging or nascent states have been trying their best to rein the superiority of the USA in global politics. Regional connectivity, sigma bond relationship-economic, political and social-between and among the states, seamless movement within states and so forth have gradually supplanted the unipolar milieu. At present, every state in the world has an aspiration to attain the hard power and soft power. 'Since the end of the Cold War, the world power structure has been presenting as Unipolar and is dominated as a sole hegemonic power. The progress in framework of international system is again revolving the pin of the power structure clockwise rapidly from Unipolar to Multipolar. This shift in world's structure is done due to neo-conservative and imperialistic policies which are shaping the "Multipolar World Order (Muzaffar & Yaseen, 2010).

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