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Article:	The Environment of ‘Multipolarity’ and Foreign Policy of Pakistan: An Appraisal
Author(s):	Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Sargana Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Pakistan
	Dr. Mujahid Hussain Sargana Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan
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Author(s) Note:	Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Sargana is serving as Assistant Professor at Department of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Pakistan Email: tauqeer.hussain@iiu.edu.pk
	Dr. Mujahid Hussain Sargana is serving as Assistant Professor at Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to analyze the emerging international environment and assess the Foreign Policy of Pakistan to determine what it needs to focus on since the world has entered into new dynamics of international politics. The study makes the point that contestation of international politics had allowed transformation of political actors from one to another and reveals that the political dynamics of Cold War, post-Cold War with that of post 9/11 world order have accommodated the transformation from bipolarity to unipolarity, and onward to multipolarity as the contemporary phase of political order. Answers are surrounded with a question, how and why the above factions of politics undermined geopolitical relevance of Pakistan as leading state in the region while making it a client state to global competition. The appraisal is carried out by analyzing the emerging trends and drivers of the international environment, which is followed by Pakistan's policies since the end of the cold war, the challenges it faces in the light of the emerging international environment, and suggested policy options. The study is deductive in nature and premises neoliberal 'complex interdependence' of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1977) to contest the very philosophical fabric of bipolarity, unipolarity and multipolarity.

Key Words: Foreign Policy, Pakistan, Neoliberalism, Multipolarity, Middle East, United States,

China, Geo-economics, Geo-politics, CPEC, OBOR, Russia, Kashmir, GWOT

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War was followed by a “moment” of Unipolarity, which emerged due to unpredicted and unprecedented resignation of the Soviet Union from power matrix of bipolar world (Krauthammer, 1990). This given impetus to the rise of United States as the sole super power. Though referred to glorious success of the ‘liberal world order’ as cherished by Francis Fukuyama in his famous article “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1989), the destiny of unipolarity was soon predicted under the premise of “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington, 1993). The dawn of civilizational contest showed-up with the sunrise of 21st century and presented the never ending cleavage of disorientation in the international politics. It was not other than the incident of 9/11 that erupt the volcano of global dissent and fueled the fault lines of ideological differences.

Middle East had to tackle the new reality as Iraq being the epicenter of Arab politics got impetus towards anarchy. The so-called ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ did not ended well and the urge to democracy failed to seek greater acceptance. What hailed was the new episode of post Al-Qaeda resistance which had no boundaries. The forces to protect the Islamic emblem started to disjoint the ideological strings that made the very strength of Jihad not only controversial but less likely to be appreciated by the greater scholarship of Muslims. This was in fact seen with suspicions within Muslim nations as the tactics of so-called Al-Qaeda and their offshoot, the ISIS, were not only brutal but operating in contradiction to Islamic rulings of Jihad. It is important to point out that the author considers forces like ISIS ‘the biggest strength of anarchy in the Muslim world’ rather justifying the response of global Islam based on Jihad. The post ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ increased instability in the country and fueled cross-border terrorism in the region.

2. International Environment

A. Soviet Collapse and the End of the Cold War

Disintegration of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War. The US along with the West could claim victory and capitalism triumphed over communist ideology. As a result, countries across the world embraced the western economic system. Furthermore, conventional wisdom held that it was the Soviet economy that was stagnant and could not sustain the rising expenditure of the civil-military bureaucracy.

It was in this setting that the Uruguay round on the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) was concluded in the late nineties that led to a quantum shift in liberalization of global trade and establishment of WTO. This period also saw the strengthening of regional organizations like EU, ASEAN and Mercosur. NAFTA entered into force in 1994.

While the world was positioning itself to take advantage of the opportunities provided by trade liberalization and globalization, Pakistan has been enmeshed in Afghanistan- dealing with the hasty US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the US sanctions due to its nuclear program. Though, by 2020 a new episode of Taliban-US dialogue got inked into an agreement but it is just a beginning to new dynamics of Afghanistan where Pakistan would still need to exercise full power of its foreign policy.

B. 9/11 and the Unipolar “Moment”

The dawn of the new millennium saw the United States as the sole super power, termed by the French as “hyper power”, and Francis Fukuyama in his book “End of History” argued that western liberal ideas and capitalism had triumphed, and that the rest of the world would only emulate and follow these developments (Fukuyama, 2006). The end of the ideological conflict

between communism and capitalism and adoption of western liberalism by the rest was in a sense an end of history.

Samuel P Huntington in his seminal work, “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order” argued against Fukuyama, and postulated that instead of “western liberalism” accepted as a given, “cultural and religious” identities was likely to be the major source of future conflicts after the end of the Cold war (Huntington & Jervis, 1997).

C. Multi-Polarity and the "Rise of the Rest"

The global financial crisis of 2008 and the ensuing recession jolted the global economic system and the underlying theories. The mantra that markets allocate resources most efficiently and therefore require minimum regulations was discredited. The crisis hit the developed world hard, especially the US and the EU. The fact that China and other South East Asia countries came out of the crisis relatively unscathed, and continue to grow at a high rate reinforced the notion that the US sole super power status was no longer tenable and the world was transitioning towards multi-polarity. The global center of gravity was shifting towards the East, away from the Europe. Fareed Zakaria called this the “rise of the rest”, and besides China, also includes ASEAN, Japan and the South Korea (Zakariya, 2008). Other centers include the African Union led by South Africa and Mercosur led by Brazil.

Therefore, the strategic competition between China and the US will remain a feature of the international system for some time to come. China as a rising power intends first to diminish US influence in the Asia-Pacific region, especially in the South China Sea. Russia, on the other hand is challenging the US in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

However, for now the near future, the focus of strategic competition between the US and China will remain on the South China Sea (SCS). China’s more assertive posture on SCS, now

defined as its “core interest” has caused alarm among ASEAN countries, in addition to Japan, South Korea and Australia (Campbell, Meick, Hsu, & Murray, 2013). The US responded by the “pivot to Asia” policy (Campbell & Andrews, 2013).

ASEAN have so far has dealt with the rise of China with greater economic and political integration, continuation of strengthening trade and economic relations with China, and at the same time, encouraging greater involvement of the US in regional security. No country in the region envisages its relations with China or the US as a zero-sum game.

D. Relative Decline of Europe

Europe was at the heart of Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. The eastward expansion of NATO and the EU considerably diminished the security concerns of Western Europe and the EU, till the Russian push-backed in Ukraine. However, it was the financial crisis of 2008 that really shook the foundations of the economic union, with Ireland, Greece, Italy and Spain facing the brunt. EU as a whole faced economic stagnation, fissionary tendencies also took hold. It became evident that the Euro made no sense without fiscal and monetary union.

Economic stagnation naturally led to political discontent, especially among those adversely affected by the neoliberal economic policies since the nineties. Add to that the immigrant crisis in Europe and the rise of the right wing movements in Europe make sense. Brexit is a serious blow to the EU project and the rise of right wing movements in France, Austria and Italy, as well as economic discontent in Spain, Ireland and Greece would remain a serious threat to the future of the European Union. Furthermore, economists are of the opinion that even if EU recovers, it will not be able to achieve the high growth rates as was the case before the financial crisis. Europe’s economy is caught in a low growth trajectory. COVID-19 is

considered to be the last nail in the economic coffin of western world. The mightiest of the mighty strength are getting back to the pavilion of mercantilism to hold their growth, which is another negation of liberal interdependence and the visible hand of market economy.

E. Emerging Global Agenda

Neoliberals and neorealist both agree that as a general rule, the international system is anarchic, i.e. a decentralized system composed of sovereign states. However, within this anarchic system some sort of hierarchy exists among many states-ranging from alliances to protectorates. These hierarchies are mostly voluntary based on national interest rather solely on power. It is therefore the dominant/ major powers within the anarchic system that determine the international agenda.

International agenda has a better chance of enforcement and being accepted as a norm if there is consensus among the major powers. Therefore, those international issues and concerns that are shared by major powers are likely to remain important in the emerging global environment.

Foremost among them is the continuation of the international order along with institutions that were built after WWII. It is understood that the US and other Western powers including Japan and South Korea would like to maintain the status quo in international relations. However, questions are being raised about the emerging powers, especially China as a challenger to the established order. However, China is the main beneficiary of the so-called liberal world order and owes its phenomenal rise to the prevalent international system.

In the emerging international environment, China's focus is likely to remain on its economic development and would like to seek the continuation of the order rather than its disruption. OBOR, AIIB, BRICS bank as well as China's global investments and

internationalization of Renminbi are attempts to work within the system to change the balance of power in its favor, rather than to challenge it. Even in the SCS, China is unlikely to assert itself to an extent that it threatens trade and economic relations either with the US or with countries to the dispute.

Other issues, like Space warfare, security of cyberspace, and cyber and robotic warfare are likely to be added to the agenda in the near future as technology continues to develop. Health of the global economy as well as climate change will also figure prominently in the global agenda. COVID-19 like health epidemics are going to redefine the market economy in terrible times.

In terms of great power contestations, China and Russia will attempt to marginalize/diminish US influence in Asia. Maneuvers in the SCS, the ceasefire in Syria without consulting the US, and in response Washington's talks with Afghan Taliban under the patronage of Pakistan is a pointer in the direction of finding backyard for docking her interests. In Eastern Europe, Russia has already made a point in Ukraine by annexing Crimea. It is unlikely to go any further. However, commensurate with their status, all three are likely to continue cooperation on fighting terrorism and containing nuclear proliferation.

India will continue to pursue its interests by balancing its relations between the US and Russia, and at the same time attempt to catch up to China. Therefore, economic development would remain its primary focus in the emerging environment. India already is among the fastest growing economies in the world and all efforts would be directed to maintain that momentum. Through strategic convergence with the US, India would be able to gain access to technology to modernize its industry, services and defense capabilities. US support would also be crucial for UNSC and NSG membership.

India's membership of SCO has provided an opportunity for greater cooperation with Russia and China. China's interests would be best served in not letting India develop a strategic alliance with the US, and at a minimum keep India neutral in the Sino-US rivalry, especially as it relates to the SCS. Therefore, China is not likely to completely shut India out of the Asian economic structures like OBOR or the RCEP, and for the same reason would not completely shut doors on India's application for membership of the NSG.

3. Foreign Policy of Pakistan

The quest for security has been the primary driver of Pakistan's foreign policy since independence. As a homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent, relations with other Muslim countries were also a priority and finds reflection in Article 40 of the 1973 constitution.

Disputes with India over distribution of assets, water and the 1948 Kashmir war forced Pakistan to seek "external balancing", and it single mindedly pursued this with the US, joining the Western alliance as a member of CENTO and SEATO (Rajagopalan, 1998). This alliance somewhat bolstered Pakistan's defense capabilities but the misadventure in the form of "Operation Gibraltar" and the 1965 war not only frayed relations with India but also with the US over interpretation of the treaty (SI, 2011). Ill-conceived policies towards East Pakistan led to military intervention by India and Pakistan was dismembered six years later.

Zia ul Haq's military coup of 1977 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 changed the social fabric of Pakistan. Fundamentalism and extremism, the flood of refugees, and the associated "drugs and Kalashnikov culture" in Pakistan trace their roots in the above two events (Hussain, Hussain, Asad, & Khan, 2014). The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, and the ensuing Saudi- Iranian rivalry also played out in Pakistan in the form of sectarian clashes all over the country.

a) From Post-Cold War Till 9/11

Soon after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the grand coalition led by the US and supported by the so called “free world” moved on (Brands, 2016). Pakistan that had played the role of the frontline state was left to grapple with the civil war in Afghanistan and US sanctions due to its nuclear program. While the world was adjusting to the “unipolar moment” and the economic opportunities provided by liberalization of trade due to GATT, WTO and the internet revolution (Brands, 2016), Pakistan was fully invested in Afghanistan and was the first country to recognize the Taliban government in 1996, in what is known as the “strategic depth” policy (Ahmad, 2015). Despite return to democracy in the nineties, it was the military that called the shots in matters related to external relations.

The Nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 was followed by rapprochement between the two countries that culminated in Prime Minister Vajpayee’s bus trip to Lahore. The Lahore Declaration that followed the trip briefly raised hopes about the nuclearization bringing strategic stability and finally peace in the region. The Kargil misadventure soon after the Lahore visit dashed all hopes of a peaceful South Asia. It also provided India with the so called “space for war” under a nuclear overhang (Ladwig III, 2008).

b) From 9/11 to Return of Democracy

After 9/11, Pakistan once again became a frontline state in Afghanistan, again in alliance with the US, but this time against the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan and Taliban regime that was installed with Pakistan’s active support. The reversal of policy and the contradiction of fighting brother Muslims in Afghanistan became stark and divided Pakistani society down the middle. Since then, terrorism has wreaked havoc on the Pakistani state and society. Operation Zarb-e-Azb has restored some normalcy but the fight against extremism inflicted far from over.

Presently, Afghanistan remains instable and Daesh has entered the fray in a triangular fight. The Afghan government had been blaming Pakistan for continuously providing safe havens to the Afghan Taliban, especially the Haqqani network. The US government more or less shared the same view. Regarding of addressing massive military presence to suppress right of self determination, New Delhi had always blamed Pakistan for attacks in Kashmir and rest of India. Efforts to restart the dialogue process with India failed to deliver any fruits and received massive setback due to Indian abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A and imposing one of the longest military curfew in Occupied Kashmir (Dar, 2020).

It is therefore obvious that in the emerging international environment, Pakistan has serious issues with all its neighbors except China. Bilateral relations with the US are not strained to say the least. EU, Canada and Australia who earlier shared their concerns with Pakistan related to terrorism and human rights are now tilting their focus towards India. Pakistan's support of China on the SCS will adversely affect her relations with ASEAN, which could become a setback to become a full dialogue partner. Under the circumstances, it is obvious that Pakistan needs a serious reappraisal of its foreign policy to align its interests with the emerging environment and the ensuing global agenda. Only then will it be possible for Pakistan to realize its full potential and enjoy respect in the comity of nations.

4. Conclusion

It is rare that nations striving to achieve progress while defining the destiny of divinity which brings the very purpose of their existence, ends up into security gambling could surface as decisive actors of sovereignty and survival. Pakistan is that rare example which from the very beginning of its independence strived to ensure her national security with that of projecting progressive projectile of its birth in the comity of international relations. The Cold War politics

between the two powerful rivals had to offer only one option for Muslim nation against the odd realities emanating from her belligerent neighbor 'either you are with us or ends up into dealing with reality alone'. The unfair distribution of resources along with military assets provided vulnerable course of defense to the newly formed nation in 1947. Indian occupation of Kashmir and permanent belligerent posture towards Pakistan made no other choice for the then leadership other than seeking refuge under the ongoing Cold War cleavages. The alliance option either to end up into Soviet block or prefer US cluster marked the foreign policy with permanent setback. Starting from SEATO in 1954 to ending up into 'global war against terrorism' along with Non-NATO ally fixed the choices of Pakistan's foreign policy. Temporarily it delivered the defense results more than the desired expectations but over the period of time proved less fruitful and made Pakistan a client state in the global ambitions of the United States that time and again sought support on her own terms and conditions while paying little benefit to Islamabad. 'Marriage of inconvenience' is the code of almost 73 years of Pakistan when it comes to describe the marathon of her foreign policy formulated to achieve 'national interest'.

It is time to conclude the history and made some observations for future outlook of Pakistan's foreign policy.

- i. Since, the world is multipolar today and mostly influenced by China with that of Russia, therefore the security politics of United States got less opportunities in Asia including the region of South Asia. This will allow Pakistan to focus more on economic fronts as its alliance with new actors of power like China deliberate towards regionalism. CPEC and OBOR like initiatives is the landmark projectile in this direction. Pakistan's inland transport potential that has strategic outreach to link regional routs with South Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia with that of crossing

- over Russia towards Eastern Europe makes the country epicenter of global economics. Foreign policy direction to project such an exceptional landscape would make Pakistan the primary player of 'economic epicenter' in the 21st century.
- ii. Due to United States security politics, one of the biggest headaches of Pakistan has been the turmoil in Afghanistan that due to massive Afghani migration and hostile Kabul regime created permanent marks over its national security. Since, multipolarity has surfaced as reality at the political spectrum, United States either had to end-up into Vietnam like situation in Afghanistan while proving the war the worst nightmare or finds a way to run-amok before China, Russia, and regional actors cast him out. Readers themselves can find out the reasons behind United States decision of 29 February 2020 to recognize the very force in Afghanistan with whom it signed a deal and indirectly messaged the world that 'it's time to move on with the global realities rather stuck behind with the false premises of being inevitable'. This underscore the importance of Pakistan and endorses her policy choices to stay reluctant to fully participate in the 'global war against terrorism' that almost took over the social, political, and economic fabric of more than 200 million people. The glory of the context is based on the very reality that the dominant forces of multipolarity are not only respective but inceptive of Pakistan's role in mitigating terrorism, extremism, and religious fundamentalism. This is even evident from the sacrifices of 220 million people who gave the bravest of the bravest souls to mitigate the menace of terrorism that was the by-product of global politics rather born out from the womb of domestic norms. More than 70 thousand lives and above \$320 billion lost is a remarkable contribution to bring peace in the world and no one could ever perform such an

- exceptional job but Pakistan. This remarkable image of Pakistan opens new horizons in the multipolar world and pays back the notion of 'Asian Tiger' if foreign policy priorities are not personality driven.
- iii. What irks Pakistan's national progress and national security is the belligerent India. Almost 73 years of Pakistan are casted with Indian notion of 'Hindutva' that has never accepted the birth of Muslim nation. It did all efforts to diminish the existence of Pakistan, which is reflective of 1948 illegal annexation of Kashmir and 1971 disintegration of East wing of Pakistan that is now Bangladesh. Indian leadership hurriedness to change the status quo of Kashmir in August 2019 with that of uprooting the Muslim nationhood in mainstream country is the realities of multipolarity. New Delhi is now losing its diplomatic leverage that it successfully secured due to bipolar and unipolar world order. Pakistan's consistency and not to comprise the fundamental commitment of her foreign policy towards Kashmir had taken Indian counterparts out of options. With increasing respect and acceptability of Pakistan's narrative with that of assertiveness of United Nations to stick to the original mandate of international peace and justice had disallowed the Indian policy makers to sustain their rigidity to international norms and legal premises. War is not an option which due to nuclear overhang brings 'mutual assured destruction' into context. The space for war through limited war doctrine also brought fruitless results for New Delhi since the landmark technological developments in Pakistan's armaments outcast Indian strategic pundits to go for any adventure. Therefore, the last of the least options against Pakistan were deemed necessary through 'surgical strike' phenomenon and what the world has witnessed on 27 February 2019 is a golden

chapter of punishment for Indians. Kashmir is still a hotspot and fully out of Indian mesmerization, therefore invites a backlash that the world has ever witnessed. What makes this backlash on the back step is the Indian declaration of curfew since August 2019. The day it turned off, Kashmir will come forward with full burst. The multipolarity has introduced retreat in Indian options, whereas gave much needed boost to the cause of Kashmir that Pakistan's foreign policy will have to reconnect with the global norms particularly with the forces of multipolarity along with new policy postures of United Nations. Kashmir is going to come in limelight. It is now not matter of years but for months and Pakistan must get ready with all her diplomatic potential.

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