

Revisiting Order in Asia: Prognosis and Prospects

Ali Khan Ghumro*
Parvaiz Ali Mahesar†
Syed Anwar Mustafa‡

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to critically revisit order in Asia and its prognosis and prospects. In contrast to Western and European powers, the Asian powers have hardly seen a respite from socio-economic woes. With the evolving Cold War between the US and China in the Asian geopolitics, the academics globally believe that there is a visible shift of power from the West to the East. Examining the extant literature, the study finds that the predictions and the prospects for an evolving regional order in Asia seems to be more economic interdependent than security as seen by the western experts.

Key words: *Asia, Power politics, Geopolitics, Cold War, Economic interdependence, Southeast Asia*

Introduction

There are various schools of thought, which hold different perspectives on Sino-US relations. The school of thought, which believes that China will not replace US in the future includes the scholars, such as Segal (1999), Sutter (2005), Beckley (2011), Beardson (2013), Gurtov (2013), Fenby (2014), and Abrami, Kirby and McFarlan (2014). While the school, which holds the perspective that there is no alternative to East Asian countries to vent their anger than to look for Chinese alliance. It is this policy of China which has

*Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Sindh Email: ali.khan@usindh.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

†Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Sindh. Email: pervaiz_mahesar@yahoo.com

‡Lecturer, Department of Political Science, University of Sindh. Email: anwar.gsyed@usindh.edu.pk

won many friends to her in the region. This school of thought includes the Scholars such as Huang and Ding (2006), Kurlantzick (2007), Findlay and Watson (1997), Beeson, (2005), and Hale and Hale (2003). The school of thought on US containment policy holds the perspective that US will continue the policy of containment against China in Asia, includes the Scholars such as; Betts (1993), Mearsheimer (2001), Friedberg (2011), Yan (2013), Buzan (2004), Ross (2006), and Kang (2013). There are many scholars either in the East or the West whose studies focus on China or the US. In this paper, further studies have been explored so that there could be a clear picture of evolving order in Asia, its prognosis and prospects.

The Asian region is deeply imbued with social and cultural values. It is located in an evolving fulcrum of global economy embraced with changing contours of geopolitical transformation. The dynamic changes and regional reconfiguration pose a very fundamental question about how and in what way the Asian order is going to be shaped in the future. In the midst of a geopolitical transformation in the Asian region, the study seeks to explore and examine the evolving significant factors within the regional order in Asia. This study is divided into four sections; i) Literature on emerging Asian order; ii) critical analysis of various assumption by Eastern and western experts; iii) Futuristic glance over China's rise; and 4) Conclusion.

Literature Review

For a decade, the academic studies of evolving order in Asia are American-centric Asia. In connection to that, the study by Wang Yong (2013) examines economic interdependence, balance of power politics, and common security. This study identified that there is a wide gap between the violent conflict, stability and prosperity in the Post-Cold War era. The author further points out key factors that could affect security dynamics in the region, like the rise of China, ASEAN's attempts for regional cooperation, Japan and China

dispute. The study concludes that economic interdependence and cooperation in Asia could further constrain a power struggle. This power struggle is expected to be out of control, while open regionalism has become a pragmatic approach to regional institution building (Yang, 2013). The study by Jaeho Hwang and Chen Dong Xiao (2010) suggests that there is no proper regional strategy in the context of Asia. To them, Chinese diplomacy indicates that Asia is moving towards peace and harmony. He further argued that harmonious Asia indicates a feeling of togetherness that is what it magnifies and gravitates the attention of the people.

To elaborate on the strategy, the Mao's China is moving along three paths, namely: economic cooperation, installing partnerships, and multilateral security. It is widely held that China's Asia strategy has been quite fruitful. According to the critics of China, there seems to be four daunting challenges for China in terms of realising its vision for harmonious Asia. It could be constrained by the smart power of the US. They further suggested that the reality of either a Sino-US co-leadership structure or a Sino-US-Japan tripartite concert would be unlikely to come to prevail in the near future in the midst of China-US mistrust.

According to Joshy 2012), the Asia-Pacific region is riddled with multiple military conflicts, for instance, the Sino-Japanese and Sino-Indian territorial disputes. He believes that late stability in the region has been achieved by adopting the multilateral approach and US involvement in the region. He argues that the receding influence of the US, lack of security mechanism and the Chinese peaceful emergence in Asia seem to pave the way for a break away from the current status-quo. In the backdrop of these developments in the region, the scholar argues that it is better that Asia should be free from both hegemony and power rivalry. In order to achieve this, he suggests 'co-operative balancing' mechanism to achieve a long-term peace and stability in the region. His study concludes that both India and Japan can balance against China at the same time, so that

mistrust could be diminished (Joshy, 2012).

The study by Raja Mohan (2012) looks into Asian destiny in the midst of great powers. He argues that given the new wave of the Cold War in Asia between the United States and China, the region seems to be moving towards multipolarity. He further explains that India is acquiring a greater importance in the region, due to economic and military activities. New Delhi expected to reflect the region's lack of enthusiasm to be strait-jacketed by a bipolar framework between Washington and Beijing. Therefore, he thinks that New Delhi inevitably attempts to improve its relations with both Washington and Beijing. He further argues that with great caution and care India recognizes the limits of security and regionalism in Asia, besides preserving unremitting triangular dialogue with the United States and China over regional and global issues (Mohan, 2012).

Similarly, Biwu Zhang (2015) focuses the Chinese perceptions of the American come back to Southeast Asia and the prospects of China's peaceful rise. The study critically examines the perceptions about US-China-ASEAN relations. It is further argued about the Chinese scholars who believe that the US return to Southeast Asia has multiple reasons, either positive or negative. The study indicates that the negative impact on China's interests outweighs the positive. The Chinese scholars have incorporated the strategy of peaceful rise, which would give them a big boost. The study concludes that if the US and China stick to their pertinent commitments, the rise of China would most likely be peaceful (Zhang, 2015).

The study by Suisheng Zhao (2012) on the how regional context is going to be shaped in the midst of Obama's policy of hedging against China. The study indicates that US (Xiao, 2009) attributes the Chinese rise to be the cause of the US frustration about China's great power ambitions in the 21st century. He finds that the US policy of adjustment towards China was not aimed at the containment of

China rise, but adopts such an approach that could engage China from a position of strength rather than weakness (Zhao, 2012).

Consequently, the study by Ren Xiao (2009) attempts to look at the process of China's participation in regional cooperation in Asia and the factors that could affect its participation. Study dilates upon the China–ASEAN relationship that is going to reshape Asia. He argues that in order to build a peaceful and stable external environment, China has been making many strides in the context of political, economic and in the security field to sustain and promote a harmonious and constructive relationship with its neighbouring East Asian countries. He further explains that politically, China acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), thus, China has been accommodating ASEAN, besides playing a leadership role in East Asian regional cooperation. His study concludes that China and Asian regional cooperation are still at an embryonic stage and require an in depth study (Xiao, 2009) .

However, the study of Yves-Heng Lim (2010) poses a serious question related to the rise of China in the Post-Cold War era. His study focuses on the power transition theory, which he believes that, the rise of China has popularized the idea of a likely overtaking of the American dominant power by the rising challenger. China, being the second largest economy in the world has been subject of debates on China's rise and receding US influence. The study by Yun-Han Chu, Liu Kang and amp, and Min-Hua Hang (2014) are worth discussing here. In this context, China has focused on economy, besides, her focus on military advancement, internal politics, and diplomatic engagement at regional and international levels. It suggests that there is a serious need to understand international perspective on the rise of China. To evaluate the East Asian perceptions, scholars conducted that geographic and cultural proximity had a greater impact on the attitudes of the East Asian people.

Most of the Asian countries consider China as a friendly neighbour and constructive partner, except Japan. Countries, which have security issues with China; such as, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan hold negative perspective about her, while rest of the region considers and welcomes China's economic cooperation and aid as a positive move. They see China as an opportunity instead of a threat (Chu, Kang, & Huang, 2015).

Analysis of literature suggests that scholars are of the different opinions. A number of scholars shows uncertainty about evolving order in Asia, while others believe that US could be replaced by China even in the future and they acknowledge that US influence is decreasing due to various reasons, thus it could invite China to replace. Some still argue that US-China is so engaged economically that military option is invisible, given the huge losses it could impose in the eve of conflict. There is a section of scholars who opine that the Cold War is inevitable between two economic giants in Asia on the similar footing like the US and Russia in 1945-1991. Therefore, in the context of a broad spectrum of arguments and counter arguments, this study further critically analyses the key factors and forces that could contribute to an evolving order in Asia.

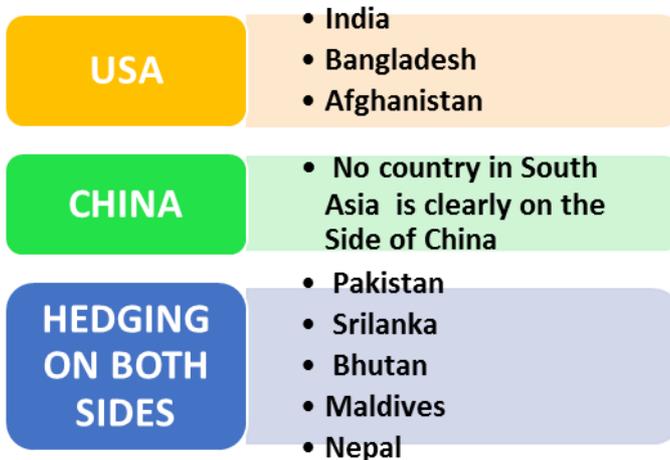
Assessment of Regions and Regional Alliances

This study examines the various characteristics pronounced in terms of the evolving regional order in Asia and various predictions made and prospects for the Asian order in the future. It first analyses the US-led security system that seems to have remained a leading regional security architecture in the Asian region. Secondly, it focuses on the China as an assertive power in the region. Thirdly, this study looks at the absence of Sino-American enmity as a key feature of the present regional order. Fourthly, it examines the important factors in the making of regional order in Asia.

The continuing pace of interaction of many nation states in the

region leads Asia watchers to conclude that the Asian regional order is passing through a considerable change. It is widely held that new order is going to evolve with the demise of an old regional order. The new regional structure is changing in order to fit into the new regional dynamics. There seems to be a general inclination of various nation states towards soft power rather than hard power. There are many theories of International Relations, i-e, Realism, Idealism, and Constructivism, which could reflect how different paradigms would fit into the newly emerging structure. It is being assumed that none of the above theories have so far talked extensively about an emerging order in the Asian region. The following alliances and counter alliances structure is brought into the limelight to understand the true nature of an emerging order in Asia.

Figure 1: Diagram South Asia



The above diagram shows that India has remained more important in an American calculus. Strategically, India has potential to counterbalance China in the region. In this way, India could serve as a surrogate for the US interests in the region. In that context, the former President of America, Bush initiated a policy that aimed at

lifting the various sanctions thrust on India. This policy of the American administration further resulted in the economic as well as technological cooperation with India. This deepening nexuses between India and USA could be alarming for the rising China in the region.

Similarly, China and Pakistan have shown their deep concern over the nuclear deal between India and USA. Ironically, the US is attempting to create a counterweight to China in the region. However, this idea does not bode well in the Chinese administration. The factor that concerns China is that both (India and China) nations are major powers in Asia equipped with nuclear weapons. They started their development together and had normal relations, but 1962 war set the seed of permanent confrontation. Since then, they do not see each other eye to eye, even after their rapprochement in 1980s (Jahangir & Anis, 2016). It is widely noted that no one intends to see China-US in strategic calculus. However, one cannot shy away from the probability of competition between two powers in the region.

Figure 2: Diagram Southeast Asia

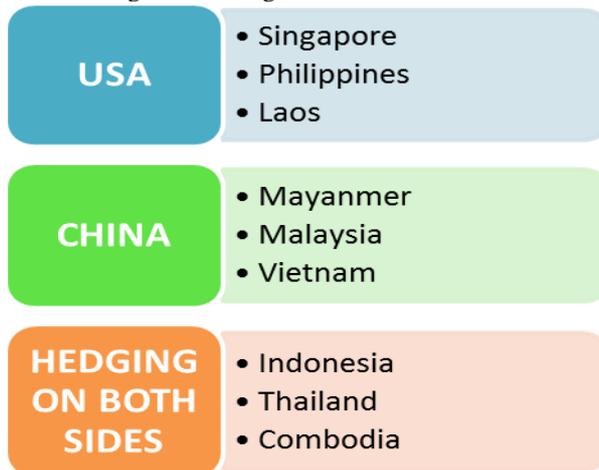


Diagram 2 reflects that China is considered as an opportunity as well as a challenge to the most of the Southeast Asian countries. It is

a well-known fact that China is the world's largest producer of agriculture and industrial products. It is one of the largest trading partners not only at a regional level, but also at the global level. As back as in 1950s and 1970s, China was considered to be aggressive as well as expansionist militarily. In the period of Cold War era it was believed to have been supporting the communist elements in the region. Thus, given the nature of threat perception, the US took an advantage by putting its muscles in the backyard of China-the South East Asia.

After the end of the Cold War, the geopolitical situation has significantly changed. China took part in many regional associations. It has adopted the policy of peaceful coexistence with all the neighbouring countries in the region. Due to the widening influence and image of China, the role of the US in this region seems to recede. Many countries are coming closer to China than the US because China is considered as a reliable partner. Therefore, there is a great optimism and hope for many countries in the rise of China. It is obvious that regional situation is going towards multilateralism that more or less suits countries in the region.

For a few countries like Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, China is believed to have long term territorial disputes. Therefore, these territorial issues are expected to be a certain irritating factor in the South East Asian nations. Moreover, China is attempting to reduce the risk or danger being felt by a few countries. For instance, China has signed the Code of Conduct in 2002 over the issue of South China Sea. It is now strongly believed that with this agreement, there are prospects for peace and stability in the region. The cooperative diplomacy and peace overtures made by China in the region seem to have been defining factors that could reflect how the new emerging order in the region is going to take place.

The US return to the South East Asian region has caused serious setback to Chinese interests in the areas of political and military co-

operation. Although China has expanded its reach economically to Africa, global South, North America and Europe but it is East Asia, where the US and China are competing for leadership position and have attracted the attention of academicians (Jones, Khoo & Smith, 2014). Since the return after Vietnam War, United States completely neglected South East Asia in her strategic engagement. Until US realized its losses, China got sufficient time to cover the space. It was obvious that the United States had no clear policy in engaging with Southeast Asia on many fronts. The re-engagement of the United States within the region is grave concern for China. For it perceives American agenda of War on Terror policy is designed not only to counter terrorism but to contain China as well, which China sees as a threat to her long term interest in South East Asia. China views South China Sea as 'golden land of opportunity'. However, the declining influence of the US in the region could be favourable to the Chinese interests in the region. The US-China has the capability to reduce the constraints on their relations through constant dialogue and engagement. In this way, the exchange of visits may herald into the institutional exchange that could reflect a tangible cooperation. It is widely believed that the developing countries consider China as an ally in the struggle for global justice (Liu, 2009).

Figure 3: Diagram Far East Asia



The figure 3 shows that the very foundations of the US-Japan ties are blended by two factors: engagement and hedging. However, the same base of relations cannot be attributed to China and Japan ties. In spite of a deep economic interaction, the China-Japan relations are expected to be at the lowest ebb on political and diplomatic levels. The maritime disputes in the South China Sea and historical mistrust have always marred the smooth relationship of China with Japan. Thus, many scholars attribute China-Japan relations as, 'Hot economies, cold Politics' (Kornberg & Faust, 2005).

There is an urgent need of great care and caution in promoting Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) by the US so that conflict could be neutralized between the two giants. In this context, the US can be a key role player in promoting peace and stability in the region. The increased co-operation between Japan and the US in the area of security has raised the Chinese concerns about the rise of Japan as military power and its possible role at regional level (DiFilippo, 2015).

Critical Analysis

The above three illustrations are developed according to the regions (South Asia, East Asia and Far East). This study sets three main variables, namely economic alliance, military and hedging. Further, these diagrams show which country is regionally allied and with whom, militarily, economically or just hedging on both the sides with the US or China. Moreover, in order to briefly analyse in a more nuanced manner about how the current juxtaposition of different aspects could lead to an explicit characterization of what is termed as an emerging regional scenario.

While looking at how the US has hatched its plan for an alliance making in the South East Asia, South Asia, and more precisely Oceania, one could easily assume that the United States have more military ties in the region than any other country in the Asian context. However, the US claims for more stability and peace by

establishing military installations in the region. Since the Second World War, United States has remained main guarantor of Japanese security. This continued cooperation is the key factor to ensure regional peace and security, besides Japan's re-emergence as a regional military actor (Michael, 2016). What exactly irritates the US is the Chinese's increasing influence and good relations with its neighbours and its improving image as a friendly nation. It Further instigates the US that China is getting access to the South Asian, ASEAN and far eastern markets, not only this but she is reaching to central Asian and middle eastern market, which is becoming a growing concern for US.

Strategically, these countries are vital in the context of regional alliance, because this region is expected to develop a security architecture that could be aimed at 'Geographically Ring China'. Ironically, one cannot be dead sure about typical pro-US military nexuses in the region. The countries in the region feel confident enough to oblige or reject any alliance making. However, China's Taiwan policy is a matter of concern in the Washington. The strategists in US believe that since China is increasing her defense spending that could be used as a tool to bring Taiwan to its orbit (Carpenter, 2005). United States has played major role in Asian region. It has extended alliances with Japan, South Korea and bilateral alliances throughout Asia. The East Asia is witnessing the dominant role at two levels, on the one hand, the US has dominated the region in military and economic spheres. On the other hand, China is playing a dominant role as an economic partner. The countries in the region partly rely on US for their security, economic co-operation and development, and partly are dependent on China (Ikenberry, 2016). The Chinese modernization policy was not because of its engagement, but because of its internal changes. Given the wider scope of domestic changes in China, it also brought about a radical shift in its policies at social, political and economic openings to an outside world (Alastair,1999). China as a regional

power has unfolded its policies with an aim to bring about great transformation not only at the strategic or cultural level but also at economic level. Currently, China has been showing its activism at regional and global level. The Chinese rapprochement with regional countries is so impressive that many countries are willing to join its club.

Consequently, even some countries are uncertain about the China's designs, they are sure that engaging China at regional forums can constrain her from disrupting growth and peace at regional level. Currently, China is more involved at regional level than before 1998. A few examples could be quoted here like addressing a North Korean nuclear imbroglio. In fact, multilateralism in the region cannot be successful unless there is proper engagement with China, the rising activism and extensive economic and technological cooperation in the region, showing an obvious centrality of its approach and policies in the region. Except Japan, other regional neighbours are enjoying good relations with China. They consider her cooperative ventures and status quo approach as an improvement. Even the adversaries are praising China's policy regarding economic cooperation and peace initiatives. When one talks about the power transition in the region, it could easily be understood that the US and China are central to debate at global level. Since the post-cold war era, Chinese rise and 'China Threat' are most commonly discussed concepts in the scholarly world. Western scholars are looking for facts, where they could declare Chinese emergence as a potential threat to the West in specific and world in general (Zeng, Xiao & Breslin, 2015)

In fact, the delicate nature of China-US ties are punctuated with bilateral, regional and global levels. In spite of the fact that both powers are cooperating with each other, yet their relations are portrayed as suspicious in the context of actions as well as endeavours. According to David M. Lampton, the Sino-American relations are 'hedged engagement'. To him, both sides are engaged to a

significant level. Further, he said that this hedging has been positive against the possibility of a deteriorating relationship in future.

The social and economic interactions between China and US manifests that their interdependence is widening at a much faster pace. Therefore, to think even of conflict at this stage could be an unwise decision. Since the China is rising economically at a fast pace, it seems that the US would prefer to remain away from direct confrontation approach. It is believed that the US intends to extend its economic as well as trade ties with China. With the increasing role of diplomacy and development, the Chinese leadership is committed and cooperating with many regional countries by paying frequent visits and signing agreements. If one takes the example of East Asian region, it could be visible that the Chinese development assistance is flowing freely to Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

In spite of these developments between China and US relations, the rise of the former may not bode well in Washington. Chinese cooperative diplomacy and trade policy have reduced the apprehensions about China as a threat, but still some scholars in the west see China's policy as continuation of 'China threat Theory' and suggest the continuation of China containment policy (Deng, 2014). As explained above, Chinese trade and economic developments are neither aimed at US, nor does she intend to promote hegemony in the region. However, one thing is clear that China will continue to advance its position, credibility and influence in the region. Though in general, perceptions about China such as a hegemonic power and counter balance to the US in the region seems to be less pragmatic approach. The potential factor of contention could be over the Taiwan issue. Chinese president Xi Jinping forwarded a concept of developing new approach to escape from Thucydides' prediction and bring out China and US from the apprehension of threat. This in turn will bring them to work together and encourage the concept of veneration. The Idea started a rigorous debate among eastern and

western scholars, where western scholar's preconceptions about China were clearly visible in their argument. Bottom line is that this idea can initiate the cooperative relationship based on respect for each other and peaceful co-existence, as the Chinese saying goes 'a mountain can accommodate two tigers' (Huang & June, 2016).

It is very interesting to note that a few of the countries are hedging on the both sides in order to get maximum benefit at the same time they wish to see stability and cooperative Sino-American relationship. These days, it is hot debated topic among scholars that what will be the position of states if there is any conflict between the US and China. Does states repeat Cold War pattern of joining one camp or the other? The most commonly agreed scenario is that the states will be forced to choose sides.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that there are no potential irritants in the Sino-US relations. For instance, Taiwan, human rights, intellectual property rights, American military installations in the Pacific, US-Japan security alliance, US-South Korea alliance, US-Australia alliance and its nuclear deals with India manifest that there is a Cold war like situation to contain the influence and encircle each other by extending alliances and counter-alliances against each other's periphery. Hillary Clinton on president Nixon's anniversary was quoted saying that, 'the US is attempting to work with a rising power to foster its rise as an active contributor to global security, stability and prosperity besides sustaining and securing American leadership in a changing world. We are trying to do this without entering into unhealthy competition, rivalry or conflict' (Steinberg & O'Hanlon 2015, p.1).

During 1990s, China's East China Sea conflict with Japan was considered as major security challenge, and seemed to underline the countries hegemonic ambitions (Malik & Schultz, 2008). But increased Chinese engagement at regional forums and joint military exercises with regional partners diluted the concerns of regional

countries and the US as well. The intra and inter regional cooperation was extended to such a level that it was compared with EU and other regional forums. Though they have long way to go but yet they have made the significant progress.

Socio-political structure in Asia is so deeply intertwined that it seems intractable to overcome emerging challenges at regional level. The most immediate concern for regional and international actors was the changing international setting emerged during Cold War era. The Post-Cold War period heralded in a new era of interdependence and reduced American presence in the region. Such scenario raised the fears of regional states. Assumptions were like, with the waning of US influence, the Japan or China could come to fill the power vacuum (Collins, 2003). The East Asian security dynamics have evolved after 1990s, but the level of political and military cooperation is at the lowest ebb (Curley, 2012).

As shown in the above analysis, regional multilateral cooperation and interdependence seems to be an emerging feature of Asian region that is tilted and inclined towards developing relationships by establishing a network through globalization and economic interdependence. The nation state is not a major actor any more but the non-state entities managing interaction at multiple levels. Through regional forums, states are so closely connected at different levels; such factors have increased interdependence in the 21st century, which is serving as a restrain to conflict and encouraging the peace and stability at regional and international level.

Evolving Regional Order in Asia: Prospects

The Asian region is comprised of thirty states, the forces of globalization and new evolving patterns in the region point to the fact that there could be manifold faces of future regional order. In order to understand the possible scenarios at Asian level, the following range of factors should be taken into account. We would start with the US as a unilateral power in the region. In the context

of Asia, the US and China seem to be prime actors in the region. However, it is being feared that China as well as the US are lacking required strength and vitality in terms of influencing completely the region at their own will. Some others in the West still hold that the US as a powerful in terms of the military and sources could somehow control the region. But the history is witness to the fact that no power, including the US could completely control the region. Secondly, in the Asian context, BoP is mainly visualized among the US and China. Since 1979, Taiwan has relied on US security assurance, even after the rapprochement between the US and China. Even depending on American security, Taiwan has grew more closer economically to China than the US (Littlefield, 2014). He further observes that on the one hand, US military deployment in Asia is directed towards containment of China, and on the other hand, these arrangements facilitate her (US) against North Korea and Persian Gulf States.

The United States is engaged at various fronts and she is expecting China to play its role in Iran's and North Korean nuclear crises. Besides she (US) is hopeful of Chinese cooperation and help related to human rights, terrorism, and climate change. Below the surface, US might be in competition with China but at regional and international issues, she is seeking greater cooperation from China (Lawrence, 2013). Yet both countries are engaged at multiple levels of cooperation at regional and international arena. They both are expected to bend on to increasing their economic cooperation and interdependence.

If one looks at the theory of structural lop-sidedness and then the expected clash between the main established powers; the United States and China, such scenario seems to be visible, changing notion of BoP at regional level and conflict of interests between two can lead competition in future. Therefore, the international system requires the balance of two powers or one dominant power to ensure and preserve peace and stability.

Conclusion

It is explicitly obvious that the Asian region has no single power that could possess a dominant position. It is argued that the United States is a dominant military power in the region and the world at large, but due to the complexities of the international system, given the factors like; globalization, regionalism and increasing interdependence, no country could claim total control over the region. On the one hand, the fast pace of development and the diplomatic exchanges, on the other hand, economic interaction and interdependence point to the fact that the countries of the region are reluctant to compromise their national interests. They even do not want to upset either of the powers, i.e. United States or China. Thus, it is very clear that peripheral countries/developing countries adopt hedging strategy with both powers to gain maximum benefits. Rationally speaking, the assessment of an evolving regional order and considering the future possible, shape of emerging regional order unfolds complex dynamics of the regional order, which seems to be entirely diverse from that of previously existed. Therefore, it may not be wrong to say that the present and the possible future regional order could be more economically interdependent than military centric.

The forces of globalization and fast communication have put a great emphasis on regionalism that has brought nation-states closer to each other. However, the increasing interdependence further convolutes the setting of regional and international order. It is safe to assume that the emerging relationship seems to be cooperative and constructive in which the United States and China are cooperating at regional and global level. In order to preserve peace and stability and increase the pace of economic growth, both countries are cooperating on issues like; North Korean nuclear crises and Iran's nuclear crises. Apart from that, both countries have adopted a very constructive approach to economic interaction, even it is ASEAN or APEC. Therefore, both the countries are engaged in

cooperative, constructive and positive relationship. However, as far as the theories about the possible conflict between the United States and China and containment of China are concerned; the above facts are completely denying such possibility of a clash between two powers. There are no indications of a confrontation in the foreseeable future between them. In fact, their economic relationship is so strong that none of them can afford any confrontation, because of the cost of the conflict from an economic perspective. This can be seen as a positive aspect of their relationship, which is shaping this newly emerging regional order in Asia; both countries are hedging towards each other. This hedging seems to be the future structure of regional order in Asia.

To sum up, this study concludes that the US and China are hedging towards each other. This understanding leads Asian watchers to conclude that economic interdependence is the hall mark in their relations. Therefore, the evolving order in Asia seems to reflect more economic interdependence.

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