

## **EVOLVING STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN**

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### **Abstract**

*For over two centuries, the West dominated the world. 'The New World Order' in post 'Cold War' era gave further pre-eminence to the United States, which exclusively dominated the global economics, politics, science, and culture, therefore, preordained to lead the world. However, the geostrategic landscape changed dramatically since the unfortunate incidents of 9/11 and US deflection towards Afghanistan, Iraq and changes taking place around wider Middle East as a result of Arab Spring. The events following US led war on terrorism provided space to fast pace economic development of China what is generally referred as China's peaceful rise. Secondly, Russian resurgence and rise of regional economic blocks like BRICS, European Union (EU) and ASEAN which represent the larger blocks on the globe suggest that uni-polarity does not have the stamina to sustain itself any longer and the world is fast moving towards multi-polarity and era of economic integration, interdependence and common development. The evolving strategic milieu brings enormous opportunities for Pakistan as rising powers and economic blocks are favorably poised towards Pakistan. However, it is preconditioned on the premise of correct positioning and right type of foreign policy choices made through proactive planning and active diplomacy.*

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*This research article explores the validity of notion of declining uni-polarity by analyzing the reshaping of geo-strategic construct and suggesting viable foreign policy priorities for Pakistan to accrue maximum dividends from the evolving landscape. This is academic discourse, therefore, the views expressed are author's own views.*

**Key words:** *Uni-polarity, Multi-polarity, Statuesque power, Rising power, Pakistan, Infrastructure Development, Evolving landscape, Global Economics, Politics and United States.*

### **Introduction**

The end of Second World War was a defining moment for reshaping the future world order with rise of United States as a victor of war, who undertook the esteemed responsibility of reconstruction of war ravaged Europe and Asia through Marshal Plan aimed at bringing economic prosperity and infrastructure development. However, soon the world witnessed East and West competition to the degree of confrontation for dominating the strategic landscape, thus giving birth to Cold War era generally referred as Bipolar World Order. The demise of Soviet Union in 1980s paved the way for uni-polarity and emergence of New World Order which gave pre-eminence to the United States (US) once again as a sole super power. With its economic and military supremacy, USA exclusively dominated the global economy, politics, science, and culture. Putting the Realist notion of Power and Security maximization into play, it ventured into six wars since the end of cold war and placed sanctions on half of the world's population in past fifteen years. (Ibid, p-3). That dominance has been unravelled with unique character unprecedented in contemporary history.

However, the China's peaceful rise, the Russian resurgence, emergence of regional blocs, strategic overstretch being felt in US foreign policy priorities, economic surge in Asia-Pacific, the vacuum of power created after US exit from Iraq, Afghanistan and waning leverage in Middle East especially when viewed in the context of Syria, all suggest that US dominance in the form of uni-polarity is on the decline. The question arises, is power shifting from the West to the Rest

(Ibid, p-3). Through this article, an attempt has been made to sketch out the future world order, predict the opportunities and suggest a course of action for Pakistan in carefully adjusting to the emerging realities.

### **Significance of Research Article**

The world is transforming at a very fast pace. New alliances and partnerships are being established to serve respective national interests. The era of interdependent world, joint development, common prosperity and win –win cooperation is on the rise. The evolving landscape offers enormous opportunities to Pakistan, which if harnessed and capitalized well, will have far reaching effects on our international standing. This article will dig deeper in analysing evolving landscape and how it affects Pakistan. Also suggesting the course of action for sustainable policy reforms in adjusting to the emerging realities.

### **Research Methodology**

The article has been prepared using qualitative research method.

### **Research Questions**

Following questions have been answered during the course of research article;

Q 1. Is the US dominated Unipolar World Order' under stress?

Q 2. Is the evolving strategic landscape in transition from uni-polarity towards multi-polarity?

Q 3. How the evolving World Order is being shaped given the realities of Rise of Rest?

Q 4. What is the course of action for Pakistan in positioning itself for future world order?

### **Analytical Debate on the Polar Powers**

Before proceeding further, it will be pertinent to highlight changing world orders in a snap shot to build the context of changes in polar powers over the centuries;

- 15th Century. Rise of the Western World that produced modernity in realm of science and technology, commerce and capitalism and agriculture.
- 18/19th Centuries. Emergence of British Empire vis-a-vis Industrial Revolution in Europe.

- Post World War-I Era (1914 onwards). System of balance of power, entry of US on world arena, era of alliances and leagues of nations, rise of modern States in Middle East and totalitarianism.
- Post World War-II Era (1939 onwards). Era of two superpowers (US and Soviet Union) leading to Cold War and decolonization; Iranian revolution (1979), collapse of Eastern Europe (1989), dissolution of Soviet Union (1990) and end of Cold War (1990) are major events.
- Post-Cold War Era (1991 onwards). The US became sole superpower and 'New World Order' came into being.
- 21st Century. The US is a dominant global power; strategic tremor of 9/11 is reshaping the global security environment; the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, transformation across Middle East due to Arab Spring and change of governments, destabilisation due to waning state's capacity in meeting the threat which is beyond their capacity, space occupied by Non State Actors (NSAs) like DAESH etc and on the other side of spectrum is the emergence of new economic blocks and players.

### **The US Dominated Unipolar World or the American Century**

Henry R. Luce, the founder of Time, Fortune, and Life magazines first coined this term in 1941, by publishing an essay in Life magazine entitled "The American Century"; it said "the US must replace Britain as the world leader and completely transform the system of international relations through the global application of American principles". The idea of the "American Century" later found concrete expression in many ways. It helped support the aggressive internationalism of American foreign policy after World War-II. It helped sustain America's vast military establishment and justify the nation's increasing covert interventions in other states. The US has the greatest soft power in the world; receives far more immigrants each year (1 million) than any other country in the world. An attractive destination for students, taking 30 percent of the total number of foreign students globally. (Ibid, p-xii). It leads the world in super technology (Silicon Valley, nano technology & biotechnology), finance and business (Wall Street), the movies (Hollywood), higher education (17 of the top 20 universities in the world) and energy resource (Shale gas). It is still the world's leader for FDI at 180 billion dollars and GDP (16 trillion dollars), almost twice its nearest competitor. (Jonathan Adelman, 2013). It has the most powerful military, spending 577 billion

dollars a year, has 12 aircraft carriers, 133 foreign bases and most sophisticated defence technology. Its space and nuclear powers also have no parallel.

The scholars of liberal school of thought suggest “the American-led liberal hegemonic order is now in crisis. Pressures for change and for the reorganization of order are growing.” Gilford John Ikenberry, a theorist of international relations, claims that it is a crisis of authority - a struggle over how liberal order should be governed, not a crisis over the underlying principles of liberal international order, defined as an open and loosely rule-based system. (John Ikenberry G, 2011) Furthermore, he suggests, there will be increased pressure for more extensive forms of international cooperation and global institutional capacity to deal with economic and security interdependence. In other words, it is believed that if the current organizational logic of international order is in crisis, the solution to this crisis is more, not less, liberal international order.

### **New Strategic Realities Shaping the Strategic Landscape Peaceful Rise of China**

Napoleon famously said, “China is a sleeping giant, when China wakes, she will shake the world.” China’s peaceful rise is unprecedented in the contemporary international order. The size of the Chinese economy has doubled every eight years for three decades. China has grown over 9 percent a year for almost thirty years. The average Chinese person’s income has increased twenty fold. China today exports in a single day more than it exported in all of 1978. Foreign Exchange reserves are over US\$ 3.5 trillion. It is the world’s largest country, second largest economy, fastest-growing major manufacturer, second-largest consumer and second-largest military spender. In 2009-10, China alone lent more money to developing world (US\$ 110 billion), while World Bank as a whole committed only US\$ 100 billion. Its ‘One Belt One Road’ conception is likely to give China further pre-eminence. Pentagon report says, China’s rapid military modernization has the potential to reduce core US military technological advantages; China is the only nation other than the US to have two concurrent stealth fighter programmes (J-20 & J-31). (Anthony Capaccio, 2015)

### **Resurgence of Russia**

The Russian renaissance is primarily attributed to the leadership of Putin, the political stability after decade of turmoil in 1990s, and high oil prices, which have enabled the country to overcome the 1998 meltdown, to maintain an average rate of economic growth of 6 to 7 per-cent for the past decade, and to build US\$1 trillion economy, the basis of its new strength. (Andreas Goldthau, 2014). Russia owns 26.6 per-cent of the world's proven gas reserves, and 6.2 per-cent of the world's proven oil reserves. In 2005, the country accounted for 21.6 per-cent of global gas production and for 12.1 per-cent of global crude oil production. In that respect, Russia could in fact be perceived an energy superpower. (Andreas Goldthau, 2014) The resumption of regular long-range bomber missions after 16 years, conduct of military exercise with China and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation, increased defence spending, a new rearmament program, annexation of Crimea and retention of naval base at Tartus and current air campaign in support of Syrian Government are some indicators that Russia is resurging in order to challenge to US hegemony.

### **Formation of New Blocks or Rise of Rest**

“The great power shift of modern era can now be called the rise of the rest. (Ibid, p-91). The rise of the rest is at heart an economic phenomenon, but it has consequence for nearly every other sphere of life. The ‘rest’ that is rising includes states e.g. China, Japan, Russia, India, Brazil and EU. The tallest building in the world is now in Dubai. The world's biggest plane is built in Russia and Ukraine; its leading refinery is in India. Largest Ferris Wheel is in Singapore. Such lists are arbitrary, but it is striking that the twenty years ago, America was at the top in many, if not most, of these categories. (Ibid, p-91). As countries become stronger and richer, world is likely to see more challenges and greater assertiveness from rising nations; the traditional application of national power by one single global power, will become less effective.

### **Rise of Several Non State Actors (NSAs)**

After forceful subjugation of Al Qaeda's ambitions, the vows of ‘Caliphate’ have resurfaced with emergence of Da'esh; Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has declared a ‘Caliphate’ for all the world's Muslims in the territory held by his group in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. In a speech to the Sydney Institute, Julie Bishop (Australian

Minister for Foreign Affairs) said, --the Islamic State terror group and similar violent jihadist movements are an even greater threat to ‘World Order’ than communism was during the Cold War. (David Woe, 2015) This borderless group is building "increasingly sophisticated transnational networks and uses the modern weapons, technology and social media. “Its inventory also includes some 2,000 to 3,000 fighters believed to be of European origin”.

### **Futuristic View of Evolving Landscape**

The National Intelligence Council of the United States in its report states “.....with the rapid rise of other countries, the ‘unipolar moment’ is over and Pax Americana - the era of American ascendancy in international politics that began in 1945 - is fast winding down.” (United States Intelligence Council, 2012). Joseph S. Nye refers world politics to a ‘complex three dimensional chess-game’. The top layer represents military power, which is largely unipolar and likely to remain so for some time. The middle layer is economic power, which has already become multi-polar. The bottom layer consists Non-State Actors (NSAs), operate largely outside of government control. (Joseph S Nye, 2010) Henry Kissinger has noted “international system of the twenty-first century, will contain at least six major powers - the US, Europe, China, Japan, Russia, and probably India - as well as a multiplicity of medium-sized and smaller countries.” (Henry Kissinger, 2014) The Chinese Scholars in post Cold War era generally accepted the notion of “one superpower, multiple great powers (Yichao Duoqiang)”; however, they believe, that sooner or later, the current mixed structure will give way to multi-polarity. Amitav Acharya states, “The American World Order is coming to an end whether or not America itself is declining.” (Amitay Acharya, 2014). A better metaphor for visualizing world order is that of multiplex cinema, offering a choice of plots (ideas), directors (powers) and action (leadership under one roof). (Amitay Acharya, 2014). Following trends and drivers will highlight the reshaping of international order.

| Trends  | Drivers  |
|---|--|
| Transition of power                                     | Emergence of new economic power centres; resurgent Russia                                    |
| Interplay between geo-economics and geopolitics         | Concept of Comprehensive National Security; role of States in world economy                  |
| Regional alliances/ blocs                               | Economic interdependence; energy and security concerns; Rebalancing to Asia                  |
| Transnational terrorism, extremism, sectarianism & NSAs | Religious & socio-economic vulnerabilities; weak states; sectarian fault-lines; Arab turmoil |
| Irregular warfare                                       | Nuclear overhang, aversion to conventional war & unresolved disputes                         |

### Statuesque Powers

**United States (US).** US's soft power, economy, technological innovations and military dominate the world, and will continue to pursue her ascendancy and global leadership.

**European Powers.** EU is third biggest economic power, second largest military power and is likely to retain significant global economic influence. Externally, Europe will find itself faced by an assertive Russia in the Eastern Europe and Arctic Region. Internally, German dominance of financial affairs of EU continues to resonate negatively amongst other EU countries.

**Russia.** Russia, though down a bit, is already a world power for reasons of its nuclear arsenal, military potential, technological advancements, natural resources, landmass and inherent economic strength.

**Japan.** Japan will remain one of the world's largest economies; alliance with the US will be central to its national security. Unless Japan decides to adopt more aggressive defence and security policy, it will remain predominantly an economic and technological power with considerable power potential.

### Rising Powers

**China.** China has potential to become world's largest economy by 2025; China's military capability may be close to matching that of the US by 2045. (Ministry of Defence UK, 2015). With foreign policy of active diplomacy, China is gradually gaining acceptance as sincere ally with rising international standing both diplomatically and economically.



**India.** An emerging regional power; projected to be world's second largest economy by 2050 in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). (John Hawksworth, 2015). Military capability is likely to increase but not to the point where it rivals that of China or the US by 2045.

**Important Regional Players.** Indonesia, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Nigeria are important regional powers.

**Africa.** US is maintaining over 30 military bases in Africa while China and India are also investing heavily in Africa; Africa figures in strategic calculations as an outpost where Al Qaeda or other such groups should not take refuge.

### **Conclusions Drawn from Analytical Debate**

From the analytical debate above, it is concluded that we are witnessing a historic change, which though still in fancy, is destined to transform the world; some of the major conclusions are;

- The centre of gravity of international relations is shifting from Atlantic to Asia; 'uni-polarity' is transiting into 'uni-multipolar world' and is ultimately destined to a 'multipolar global order' with US and China to be the two dominant powers. However, rise and decline of power does not occur in a straight line; it may reverse, speed up, or pause; calls for flexible policy options with reference to relations with international power houses.
- USA's "Pivot to Asia" appears to be driver of change due to rise of Asia in next century. Chinese march towards global leadership is expected to see daylight in mid to long-term; however, internal inadequacies, regional contests and economic shocks can be the major obstacles on highway of glory.
- East and South China Seas may be flashpoint for confrontation. Similarly, Kashmir, the Korean Peninsula, Ukraine and border between China and India are likely to be areas of tension. The risk of direct or indirect state-on-state conflict in the region cannot be ruled out.
- Europe will face difficult challenges that could constrain its ability to play a larger global role. NATO is likely to remain the key military organization, although its cohesion may be challenged.

- Russia will remain an influential regional power. Its assertiveness and power politics may cause security challenges to Europe.
- Arab state system is in disarray; phenomena like Arab spring, infighting in Iraq, Syria & Yemen, emergence of Da'esh and contest between sectarian groups have aggravated the instability, which has also put the Palestine issue on the backburner.
- Pakistan's geo-strategic location, and nuclear stature are cardinals of its interminable global relevance. However, the dividends of strategic geographical location are linked to its repositioning in the emerging global order.

### **Opportunities for Pakistan**

The emerging world order promises enormous opportunities for Pakistan. Considering the hard realities of US led unipolar world, where Pakistan has played its cards reasonably well, yet certain negative effects of being part of alliance in US led war on terrorism have been visible and Pakistan has paid a heavy price both as a nation and as a state. Capitalizing on our experience as part of alliance, Pakistan has to get out of zero sum mentality of International Relations and diversify approach and foreign policy options. The rising super power China is our Iron Brother, resurgent Russia is favourably poised towards Pakistan and EU and other global players have rationale approach towards Pakistan. The rise of rest, therefore, promise favourable posturing and voice for Pakistan, however, carefully crafted policies out of zero sum prism and correct positioning is the need of the hour, which should be adopted at priority.

### **Recommended Course of Action for Pakistan**

#### **Diversification of Foreign Policy**

Cold War era of alliances and East or West block is over and is unlikely to re-surface even in the emerging global order. Pakistan's foreign policy had been US centric for too long and therefore, has generally remained on a roller coaster ride. It is the need of time that Pakistan should craft a "foreign policy that is one of friendliness and goodwill towards all the nations of the world" in light of the guiding principles of the founding fathers. Our relations with China or Russia should not be at cost of relations with US or India and our relations with Saudi Arabia should not be at cost of relations with Iran or vice versa.

**Partnership with China**

China is our all-weather friend and Iron Brother. Our relations are one of the exemplary and unique relations in the contemporary history of interstate relations. It is strongly recommended that we should vigorously pursue realization of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a national priority, irrespective of political affiliations and type of government in place as it is “The Game Changer” not only for Pakistan but the entire region. Besides, there is a need to diversify the relations and capitalize convergences to deal with regional challenges. At the same time, we should also address the concerns of regional neighbours and the US with reference to this partnership.

**Relations with Russia**

The incumbent dispensation in Moscow is favourably poised towards Pakistan. Few ice breaking visits of military leaders on both sides have been a great success towards confidence building. However, a lot more is required to build a comprehensive strategic relations with Russia as the time is ripe and we have to take steps in this direction. High level visits of government official and dignitaries followed by strategic dialogue and partnership is the need of time which should be vigorously pursued.

**Relations with India**

In the evolving global order where cooperation and common development are popular themes, Pakistan has to consider successful foreign policy modals in crafting foreign policy with India. While there should not be any compromise on the core issue of Kashmir and other national interests, Pakistan has to find ‘convergences’ and ‘areas of common interests / cooperation’ in order to incentivise India for win-win solutions to all outstanding issues. It is therefore suggested that resumption of ‘Composite Dialogue’ should commence at priority and initiation of Confidence Building Measures with a view to seek resolution of issues relatively easy to negotiate (Siachin/ Sir Creek). Secondly, to encourage Indian partnership in East-West and North-South corridors including CPEC and Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline Projects as these are economic projects which will eventually benefit both countries and increase interdependence. Another area of common interest is improving interconnectivity within SAARC countries, which will bind these countries in well-knit infrastructure for common

development. The bottom-line, however, is that flexibility by both sides and NOT appeasement will lead us to fulfil dream of common development and prosperity while keeping the core issues alive.

### **Relations with Afghanistan**

Pakistan has given enormous sacrifices for Afghanistan with ultimate end state of peace, stability and prosperity of brotherly neighbour as we have a common destiny. However, the surge in violence and resultant breakdown of relations with Afghanistan is not encouraging scenario for both countries. Concerted efforts for confidence building and sincere efforts by both countries in border management, control of violence and honourable return of refugees should be pursued at priority. Issues of common interests and development should form part of important agenda items for all future meetings. It must be remembered that Pakistan cannot be at peace without peace in Afghanistan, therefore, all out efforts are suggested in this regard.

### **Relations with Muslim Countries**

Pakistan should pursue good relations with all Muslim countries, making no exception. Pakistan must also act as a bridge between Saudi Arabia and Iran to diffuse tension in Middle East. Pakistan must stay away from any alliances in the Middle East, instead should craft foreign policy where it is relevant to every country and the region. Pakistan should capitalize on her stature as strong Muslim country and act as moderator for bringing stability in the entire region. Impartiality should be visible and acknowledged by every country, that will bring credibility and weightage to our foreign policy. Projects like Iran-Pakistan Gas pipeline and other such cooperative ventures with other gulf countries are recommended to be completed at priority to address growing energy needs.

### **Diversity in the Conduct of International Relations**

As of now, geopolitics is the dominant factor in our foreign policy. It is suggested to diversify our relations by allowing greater space to geo-economics. Pakistan needs to improve country's security outlook, induce confidence in foreign investors, and develop long term durable trade partnerships. Projects like energy cooperation and interdependence (TAPI, IPI & CASA-1000) will help resetting relations with Russia, CARs, Iran & India. For long term connectivity, CPEC

should be extended for improving connectivity with Afghanistan and CARs. Also capitalising on Pakistan's human resource in Gulf States, more incentives and job creation in the gulf be pursued at government level.

### Conclusion

The rapidly evolving strategic landscape in the 21st century also embodies the 'winds of change' moving fast from statuesque power of 'uni-polarity' towards rising power of 'multi-polarity'. What is different this time is that unlike Realist view for rising power challenging the statuesque power, it is professing common development, prosperity and building community of shared destiny and interests. Therefore, it is right time to depart away from cold war mentality of zero sum game and work together in harmony for achieving the goal of common development. It is only through the right choices, correct positioning and intelligent calibration of our strengths that, Pakistan can attain its historical promise.

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