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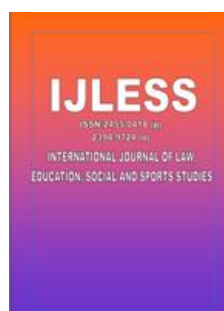


WAS UNI-POLARITY SELF-DESTRUCTIVE?

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at discussing the issues that determine the future polarity in international relations in world politics and discussed whether the unipolar world lead by USA was self-destructive. For convenience of the reader this article has been divided in to 9 headings like geopolitical location, alliances, military power, weapon of mass destruction and war on terrorism, regionalisation, economic interdependency, democracy, culture and identity, international institutions. In each heading I have tried discussing their role played in international power politics during post-cold war era till 1991, secondly from 1991 till present and finally the future of polarity in international system. I have also emphasised that fear of destabilisation has induced USA to maximise its power, which on the other hand gave USA an unchallenging position among world states to lead a unipolar world in international relations which proves that *“polarity is based on power of states and power is the result of fear”*. Finally I have concluded my arguments by saying that unipolar world led by USA were not self-destructive but always have remained self-constructive.

Key words: Unipolarity, USA, Geopolitical Location, Alliances, Military Power, Weapon of Mass Destruction, Regionalization, Economic Interdependence, Democracy, Culture and Identity, International institutions, Self-destructive, Self-constructive.

“Polarity is based on power of states and power is the result of fear.”

Introduction

The basic reason for each and everything is fear. Even the basic necessity of human being like food, shelter, clothing, education, and health is essential because without which human being fear to die, fear to suffer from hot and cold, fear of losing dignity, fear of not getting job, fear of having an unhealthy lifestyle respectively. Similarly a state wants power to withstand its enemies in this world to eliminate the fear caused by war and destruction. The power of a state is measured in terms of its economic strength, military might, and cultural influence. Some states that have all the above but still they are vulnerable to be destroyed by other states are due to their geopolitical location of the states. Hence states started to develop their power only to protect themselves from aggressors. But after a point of time they enhanced their powers to show off their strength and dominate others. In history at some point of time there were two or more states who shared the power to control the world states and the polarity of world was said to be bi-polar or multipolar and at some point of time there was only one state on which the power was concentrated and the whole world order rested on that state and world polarity was termed unipolar.

In this essay I have discussed the polarity in international relations in today's world and discussed whether the unipolar world led by USA was self-destructive. For convenience of the reader this essay has been divided into 9 headings like geopolitical location, alliances, military power, weapon of mass destruction and war on terrorism, regionalisation, economic interdependency, democracy, culture and identity and international institutions. In each heading I have tried discussing their role played in international power politics during post-cold war era till 1991, secondly from 1991 till present and finally the future of polarity in international system. Finally I have concluded my arguments by saying that unipolar world led by USA was not self-destructive but on the other hand was self-constructive. Following are the issues that decide whether USA will lead its unipolar movement.

Geopolitical location

An important and primary reason why USA led unipolarity is not self-destructive is because of its geopolitical location. USA is surrounded by water bodies which on the other hand have allowed building strong naval bases. The distance of USA from other continents and surrounded by water bodies acts as barrier to be easily attacked by other countries, this gives USA a favourable position to play great power politics in international relations and to maintain unipolarity in today's world. So unipolarity was not self-destructive and it will continue to be surviving, unless and until USA itself recognizes other states are equal to them in power or other states feel confident to challenge the USA's might.

Alliances

The powerful medium through which US presence contributes to regional order is through its hub-and-spoke system of bilateral military alliances (**Twining, 2007: 83**)¹. It is not solely the presence of the US military in the region that promotes stability; rather its development of a coherent alliance structure wherein participants are ostensibly able to mutually set the agenda for regional security. Largely based around its key relationships with South Korea and the 'linchpin' of the alliance, Japan, the US hub-and-spoke system constitutes the basis for regional stability in mediating the security dilemma (**Nye, 1995: 94**)². The alliance system further consolidates US primacy in the region through encouraging the bandwagoning of key regional players as they are induced to "rely on American alliance protection" (**Ikenberry, 2004: 354**)³.

This is the main reason why USA's unipolar movement will not be self-destructive is that offforming alliances by extending financial aids and military support to the countries by entering into legal agreements, ideological considerations and on account of national interest. It was one among the primary reasons how USA with the help of NATO allies led to the collapse of USSR in 1991. This strategy has been followed by USA till present day to stabilise its power over the world states. USA has allies almost all over the world, if there is going to be a threat to USA then it will be a threat to all those countries which come under the allies umbrella of USA, hence in order to guard their national interest they will maintain the interest of USA in their region which will undermine the powers of those states growing in their region who are in position to compete with USA's unipolar movement. So in future this strategy of forming allies will greatly help USA to uphold unipolarity.

Military power

Though the great recession 2008 has jolted the USA's economy to a large extent it doesn't mean that USA will go away from unipolarity. Many scholars say that the great recession was the result of

¹ Twining D (2007) 'America's Grand Design in Asia', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol 30 (3): p83

² Nye JS (1995) 'East Asian Security: The Case for Deep Engagement', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 74: p 94

³ Ikenberry GJ (2004) 'American Hegemony and East Asian Order', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 58 (3): pp354

USA's heavy investment of finance on strengthening its military bases across the world and use it to fight the war on terror and the result was non concentration on its economic development (Berenskoetter, 2007, p. 64).⁴ This was meant to be unproductive in terms of economy but my argument is that USA though after 9/11 attack concentrated in eradicating terrorism has given chance to few countries to rise up conventionally especially China, which will not give confidence to compete with USA. Because now USA is more powerful than before, as in name of war on terror it has deployed military forces in the Middle East Asia and already it had its military and naval bases in some North and South East Asian countries. Hence I could say that the investment made in war on terror and deploying military bases is not a waste but it's productive as it has shown the military might of USA. Hence it is dreadful and will be a real threat to those who wants to go in power competition with USA.

Weapon of Mass Destruction and war on terrorism

In post-cold war era only USA and USSR were the only states who possessed and piled up nuclear weapons, so both were powerful and hence world remained bipolar. But after the collapse of Soviet Union it was only USA who developed economically strong and dominated the world states by using its military might and other states were also in position to comply with them because USA had weapon of mass destruction and since then world had become unipolar.

But since 1991 USA was concentrating on its economic development and it was in definite need of natural resources like oil and gases. The Middle East was rich in resources now USA's target was to get oil to USA. So the tool it used to lit war was "Terrorism". It raged war on terror against Iraq and Afghanistan; which was supported by Saudi Arabia which is an USA's ally in the Middle East. Meanwhile USA had hurdle from other Islamic countries like Iran, Iraq, and Syria. On January 29, 2002, American President George W. Bush gave his "Axis of evil" speech, describing Iran, along with North Korea and Iraq, as an axis of evil and warning that the proliferation of long-range missiles developed by these countries constituted terrorism and threatened the United States. The speech caused outrage in Iran and was condemned by reformists and conservatives.⁵ Since 2003, the United States has been flying unmanned aerial vehicles, launched from Iraq, over Iran to obtain intelligence on Iran's nuclear program, reportedly providing little new information.⁶ The Iranian government has described the surveillance as illegal.

In 2003, prior to the Iraq War, with help from the American Iranian Council, Iran purportedly proposed a "grand bargain", which would have resolved outstanding issues between the United States. In March 2005, the United States revised its Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations to include preemptive or possibly preventive use on non-nuclear states.

Since 2003, the United States has alleged that Iran has a program to develop nuclear weapons. Iran has maintained that its nuclear program is aimed only at generating electricity. The United States and other countries were alleged during the May 2005 NPT that Iran is in violation of a Safeguards Agreement related to the NPT, due to insufficient reporting of nuclear material, its processing and its use. From 2003 to early 2006, tensions mounted between the United States and Iran while IAEA inspections of sensitive nuclear industry sites in Iran continued.

The United States also claims that Iran is backing Shiite militias in Iraq and supplying them with arms in order to wage a proxy war on America. American and Iranian ambassadors in Iraq have engaged in direct talks, but tensions remain high over this issue.

⁴Berenskoetter, F. (2007). *Power in world politics*. Newyork: Routledge p.64

⁵Linzer, Dafna (February 13, 2005). "U.S. Uses Drones to Probe Iran For Arms". *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19820-2005Feb12.html>. Retrieved May 5, 2010.

⁶<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19820-2005Feb12.html>

On Jan 3, 2012 Iran's army chief AtaollahSalehi warns "We recommend to the American warship that passed through the Strait of Hormuz and went to Gulf of Oman not to return to the Persian Gulf". However, this was later denied by the Defense Minister of Iran. The warship is believed to be the American aircraft carrier the USS John C. Stennis which recently vacated the area as Iran conducted a 10-day naval exercise near the Strait of Hormuz. Salehi was also quoted as saying "We have no plan to begin any irrational act but we are ready against any threat." The US Navy responded that it will continue with its regularly scheduled deployments, in accordance with international maritime conventions.⁷ So in this way USA has set its bases in Middle East to control any threat to its Unipolarity. This is the way weapon of mass destruction is used by USA as a weapon to conserve unipolarity.

Regionalisation

Initiatives towards a closer regional integration date back to the 1880s. The first coherent regionalism initiatives, however, took place during the 1950s and 1960s. During the late 1990s, however, a renewed interest in regionalism emerged and led to the rapid emergence of a global system of regions with political and economic parameters. The regionalism gained importance among nation states to make best use of their regional environment. To have better interaction between nation states belonging to the region, they had undergone to form association, agreements, and communities example: NAFTA, European community, ASEAN, SAARC (Andrew Fenton Cooper, 2008, p. 61)⁸. Creation of these regions has increased to develop the region and some states belonging to the region economically well off.

The development of regional powers like China, European community etc. will not by itself give these states the power to challenge the unipolar status of USA because no state can spend as much as USA to maintain stability in all regions of world. When we consider China, they are rising economically and militarily. China is considered to become most powerful and which is also seen as threat by neighbouring states and will challenge the USA in power sharing but this will not happen, because they will not lend their peaceful development and invest their economic growth and military might in countering USA. Because since beginning China has shown interest in developing their economy and military might only considering their national interest and this is clear from its non-participating tendency in war against terror. Though China claims for a multipolar world and great power status and is ready to accept USA as a sole super power it cannot challenge USA for it, because of complex interdependency created by globalisation. On the other hand China's challenge to power sharing with USA will affect its trade, leading Chinese economy to collapse affecting its military growth due to insufficient funding's as USA is the largest importer of Chinese products.

Economic interdependency

In post-cold war era trade was given importance but it was not considered as a tool to reduce wars. But after establishment of WTO in 1995, opening of markets and through concept of free trade, "trade" has played a significant role in establishing a world of complex interdependency eradicating the chances of war.

Globalisation is the important reason that makes everyone feel that USA is pinned under the concept of complex interdependency and once for all the unipolarity has come to an end and it is the space of multipolarity to come in to existence. The supporters of multipolar movement feel that USA

⁷U.S. says will continue to deploy warships in Persian Gulf despite Iranian threats." *Haaretz Newspaper*, 3 January 2012. <http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-01-03/iran-threatens-us/52354354/1/>

⁸Andrew Fenton Cooper, C. W. (2008). *Regionalisation and Global Governance: The Taming of Globalisation?* Britain: Routledge.

if still rides on its unipolar movement then the other nation states who have gained power will associate with each other and try to isolate USA from power politics. Here my argument would be, this can never happen because the theory of complex interdependency not only will apply to USA but also other countries who have economically and militarily risen, will lose USA's market which has led them to develop their economy.

Democracy

The propaganda of democracy in countries by using military interventions has not been always effective but some time it's counterproductive and at some point of time it has led to authoritarian form of government. On the other hand some writers claim that USA's export of democracy has improved the democratic form of government.

Export of democracy is the most important factor in withstanding the regional stability in "Asia Pacific" which is now considered to be growing threat for America's unipolarity. Especially China is considered to be threat because of its rising economy and military power. The countries in Asia pacific are having a higher growth rate compared to that of in post-cold war era. Hence the presence of different form of government in the Asia pacific region is one more important factor why no state could claim its dominance in the region and which in itself will lead to destabilisation of the states in the region hence they are in no position to challenge the USA's unipolarity. Those who cannot dominate their own regional counterpart how they will survive dominating the world's longest hegemonic ruler USA.

Culture and Identity

Culture and Identity plays a vital role in helping USA maintain its hold in the world states. There is no head and tail difference in culture and identity in the west as that is found in east. The culture and identity are diverse in the east. These are the differences that create differences between the Asian countries that do not allow them to cooperate. America holds this as a trump card to create tension in the raising countries. For example USA is trying to maintain Taiwan- China identity issue to keep China under tension. This on the other hand makes China to concentrate on its own issues rather than dominating its regional neighbors or challenging USA's unipolarity. The border disputes in and around China, Japan, and South Korea also keeps these states away from getting any support from their neighbouring countries. They cannot solve these border issues because this will hamper their benefits to political will as people would think their government cannot keep up their national interest. So these states are compelled to maintain national interest which makes it difficult to bring regional stability, which is indeed good news for USA to maintains its unipolarity.

International Institutions

Institutions like IMF, IBRD, WTO, and UN are the most important key players in helping USA to maintain its unipolarity. USA is themajor shareholder in IMF and World Bank and without which these institutions might collapse due to shortage of funds is indirectly led by USA. IMF grants loan to developing and developed countries whenever any financial need arises. Hence USA being major shareholder in IMF and World Bank gives it strength to dictate terms and dominate the world states and these institutions. Hence this gives no option to other countries to challenge USA's power as they could only develop their economic status but will not be able to contribute funds to these financial institutions and influence them.

On the other hand WTO also helps USA in maintaining its supremacy because USA files many cases against the least developed and developing countries for their violation of non-discriminatory principles available in GATT agreement of 1995. Though many exceptions are given to least developed country and developing countries' considering their hurdles to rise due to colonisation is in no way helping. The inability to counter developed nations by least developed

nations and developing countries is because neither of these countries have specialisation in WTO laws, lacks people who has expertise to read, understand and interpret these technical instruments, lack of proper institutional arrangement to monitor trade related issues, failure to make policy changes in line with WTO rules. The most important thing why these institutions cannot be indispensable of USA is because USA is largest hub of trade and without which WTO will lose its significance or the objective for which it was established. Hence these strong ties with these institutions will give USA naturally the strength to with stand its unipolarity despite many countries rising economically and militarily.

Conclusion

Unipolarity gives rise to hegemonic status but not the reverse. To maintain unipolarity USA has projected itself as if they work for collective good and concern for human rights in world states and its culture has influenced all parts of the world and no other state has influenced either regionally or internationally using their economic, military and cultural traits as USA.

This essay concludes by saying that though the raise of many super powers especially economic and military raise of China, complex economic interdependency, great recession of 2008, strengthening of regions, threat of usage of nuclear weapons can sometimes make USA difficult to act unilaterally, however alliances exist and the USA is largely considered to be the sole superpower due to its unchallenged strength and influence, which would suggest a more unipolar world despite globalization. Hence the fear of destabilisation has induced USA to maximise its power, which on the other hand gave USA an unchallenging position among world states to lead a unipolar world in international relations which proves that "*polarity is based on power of states and power is the result of fear*". Finally power maximization framework set out by USA has proved that unipolarity was not self-destructive but on the other hand has given a break to make changes in USA's foreign policy to interact with foreign nations and sets standards of interaction for its organizations, corporations and individual citizens to define its national interest and strategies to safeguard and achieve its policy goals in order to stabilize its role in international politics as a sole hegemon. So from the above analysis we can come to a conclusion that USA's unipolar movement has not at any point self-destructive but always remained self-constructive.

Abbreviations

ASEAN- Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GATT- General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
IAEA- International Atomic Energy Agency
IBRD- International Bank of Reconstruction and Development
IMF- International Monetary Fund
NAFTA- North American Free Trade Agreement
NPT- Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty
SAARC- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
USA- United States of America
USSR- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN- United Nations
WTO- World Trade Organisation

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