**Neo-unipolar world order**

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Long ago the Greek philosopherHeraclitus had said: “There is nothing permanent except change.” A constant in world order still remains to be the factor of influx. In the last century, the geo-politico-economic canvasses witnessed shifts brought about by global developments, such as the two World Wars, Cold War, and 9/11. The post-World War I order, which was multipolar in nature, could not bring peace rather it encouraged divisions in an already fragile Europe. Resultantly, the world witnessed yet another world crisis, i.e. World War II. The end of World War II brought about bipolar order and led to a burst of independence movements in the colonized parts of the world, which did alter the shape of traditional map of the globe with new nation-states.

The power wrestle between the US and the former USSR took global politics through a period of “Cold War”, which was engulfed by proxies and threats from changing dynamics brought about by emerging markets and exponential rise in industrialization. In post-Cold War era, the world saw a unipolar order with the US leading international arena. Lately, there is an agreement among strategic community around the world that in post-9/11 order, unipolarity has been challenged due to rise of China, resurgent, dynamic and more confidentRussia. Also, the post-COVID world is bound to test the nerves of most of countries as they might face difficult choices of getting themselves aligned with either the US or China or Russia.

We must be clear in our minds that we are no longer living in absolute unipolar world order as “neo-unipolarity” is already in the offing where the US is learning or adopting to live with two or three world powers of almost equal muscletoit in terms of economy, political clout and defence capabilities, thanks to Trump’s policies in expediting the process. Biden would try to restore American image in the world but neo-unipolarity would hardly be reversed. Neo-unipolarity should not be confused with a multipolar or bipolar world order as the US would continue to be seen as super power but with relative decline in its influence in the world.The US will still be capable of going unilateral wherever and whenever its national security demanded, but with strings attached.

Even well before Covid-19, the 21stcentury hadalready witnessed power diffusion as the phenomenon of transition had occurred from West to East. The diffusion process has already attributed higher stakes to non-governmental actors in statecraft, especially the economic giants in terms of multinational companies. Similarly, the technological transfer and creation of knowledge corridors have given many statesand even individuals and groups the capacity and capability, which once resided with the very few state. Besides, other stakeholders like INGOs with their global presence have circumvented states in various social and economic aspects. In the larger perspective, diffusion can be seen as a subset of bigger geo-economic and geo-political transitioning world order. With these developments, the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and concept of massive inter-continental integration, in terms of economics and trade, have come up askey policy catalysts.

As war zones shift to stock markets and cyber domain, geo-politics still remains relevant but its dimensions have become more unconventional.Likewise, modern day global dynamics are known for the rise of strongmen or populist movements, nationalism, protectionism or economic sovereignty, and state power beyond borders. Power transitions are occurring across the globe and new centers are emerging on the horizon. Resultantly, the current world order with the distinct feature of unipolarity has started witnessing a change, i.e. towards neo-unipolarity. Similarly, direct total war among states as a permanent feature of international politics has seen redundancy in recent years, which is why a rise in the concept of economic hit-men, cyber-attacks and transnational threat of terrorism are becoming visible.

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As power centers transit, analysts and social scientists, in the recent years, have come up with multiple terminologies to denote various aspects such as the “rise of Asia” or “advent of Asian century”. To support this argument, even regions have seen new demarcations for political discourse. The notions of simultaneous economic integration of Europe and Africa with Asia and extension of Asia-Pacific upto Indian Ocean Region (IOR) have gained traction in recent years. A new strategic paradigm has introduced the construct of “Indo-Pacific” region. The clubbing together of two entities, i.e. Pacific and Indian Oceans into a single larger geopolitical entity has every tendency to create an environment of competition than cooperation, keeping in view the existing faultiness in these oceans.

As shift comes to Asia, despite lower human development and security indices, the states like Pakistan have recently emerged as hub of economic connectivity. With focus on innovation in industry, R&Dspending in Asia, especially in China are all time high. As the number game oscillates between the US and China in Asia-Pacific, the military supremacy still lies with the former. Partly, it is attributed to strong alliance system, the US has in the shape of Quad. Being at crossroads of sub-regions of Asia, Pakistan is bound to be impacted by shifting currents of global politics, i.e. neo-unipolarity.

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