

WORLD DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS OF PREDICTABILITY AND CONTROLLABILITY

In one way, the end of bipolarity in the post-Cold War has helped the world in developing into an inclusive world. With advancement in information and technology as well as globalization, the world is coming closer, having stakes in the international decisions as well as raise voices of concerns against the domination of any unipolar hegemon. One can witness the acceleration towards the dismantling of the unipolar world order to a multipolar one. The developing countries, after years of being dominated, are having their own narratives of building a multi polar world order. The struggle for a world order to be compartmentalized in a particular box/set up is not new.

During the imperial times, there was a kind of multipolarity (whether one wants to acknowledge it or not) with many imperial powers being in contest with each other to dominate continents or regions. Wars have been fought, countries have been invaded and people have been colonized for domination and expansion. Technology has played a major role in this. The invention of advanced weaponry system as well as discoveries of new land by the West during the medieval time changed the equation of dominance. For example, the Ottoman Empire was dominating in the region however with close contacts with the Europeans and the lack of focusing in the development in all aspects apart from military one made the way for the collapse of the empire. Similar cases can be found in Asia too. With the two world wars that increased the pace of industrialization as well as competition between the countries, leaving an impact on the developing countries, the world was divided into a bloc approach between two super powers.

The period of bipolarity brought in chaos and also brought in an increase in the arms race. This arms race blended with the complexity of binding and dividing the world into two ideology, communism and capitalism, led the two nuclear powers, Russia and the

US, into the brink of war and also divided the people, including the construction of the Berlin wall within the same country. Though with the help of the international community and more because of the wisdom of the leaders the war was averted, leading to the end of the Cold War and breaking down of the Berlin Wall, however, the remnants of the complexity and competition between the two ex-superpowers have remained, whose ripple effect can be seen in the 21st century.

The world, after the post-Cold War, seemingly began in a positive direction, including the rapprochement between Russia and US, however, the 9/11 incident, the colour revolutions in the eastern European countries, the expansion of NATO and EU and keeping Russia at a distance led to the beginning of the complexities. Addition to these developments between Russia and the West, the developing countries, especially India, China, South Korea, had started the process of growing in an increased pace.

The progress in the world also strengthened other complexities such as the man-made catastrophes in the form of wars, dominance on others resources, conflict and lately, radicalization, terrorism and global climate change. National interests and proving one's power taking precedence over humanity is the root cause of all these problems.

All countries, including the major powers, talk about multipolarity, world peace, inclusiveness and cooperation with each other, including arms control and nuclear disarmament. Towards that many international institutions are being formed such as United Nations (various divisions), International Court of Justice, World Bank, G20, International Monetary Fund, Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) etc. and the newly formed regional multilateral organizations such as BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and European Union (EU) etc. To an extent, these international organizations and the regional multilateral organizations have been

able to work as agents of cooperation and peace-building, helping in constructing multipolarity.

The idea and the concept of multipolarity are noble. It is because every nation will have equal voice and partnership as stakeholders in the international community. To what extent it will be successful remains to be seen. It is because the ambitions and national interests of each country have somewhere held back to create a genuine multipolar world order. Also, though one can argue against unipolarity or bipolarity however, somewhere either of these two takes precedence. Even in the current situation, where countries are talking and working towards a multipolar world system, however, it seems that there will be an arrangement of either bipolarity or a polycentric with some powers who will be the dominant ones. How far it will have a positive impact needs to be seen. It is because the basic nature or tendency to swing or 'swing state' approach based on one's interest will still be prevalent in this new order.

In the current scenario, there is lot of confusion. It is because major powers such as US, Russia and China are though trying to cooperate but their competitive and dominating nature is creating more trouble for the world including the environment such as the Arctic and the Antarctica (in the name of scientific research and energy exploration, these areas are becoming future battlefields). In all these, middle and small nations too such as India, Germany, France, Turkey, Iran, Japan etc. are trying to find and strengthen their foothold.

Currently, there are no major wars or the Cold War, which saw an unprecedented arms race including the stockpiles of nuclear heads, however things have not become easy but more complicated. Depending on the region or countries or stakes, the level or mode of confrontation is seen to be manifesting. For instance, rather than direct confrontation between Russia and the US, there are proxy wars taking place all over the world, be it in Europe or Asia or Latin America or Arctic or Antarctica. Similar indirect confrontation

can be seen in Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia such as in Syria and Yemen. The conflict between Israel and Tehran is another area of proxy confrontation but at the same time has the seed of direct war too.

In Asia, both direct and proxy wars are common, which can be seen between India and Pakistan or India and China. Then there are tensions between China and Japan and China and Taiwan and China with its South China Sea neighbours etc. With Indo-Pacific and Arctic gaining prominence, great power competition is inevitable furthering the complications.

The advancement in information and technology with the advent of 4.0 Industrial Revolution has made life smooth yet complex. The cyber threats, interfering in other's elections, hacking, militarization in the outer space and artificial intelligence etc. are dividing countries and bringing like-minded ones together. The world can witness the deficit of trust amongst countries such as Russia and the West, China and in its neighborhood, Iran and the other regional players in West Asia etc. the reason behind this deficit is because the dialogues which takes place is not based on the respect and dignity of life but superficial. The national interests sometimes hinder genuine dialogue.

The conflicts of the 20th century are still continuing such as India and Pakistan's, Israel and Palestine etc. The frozen conflicts such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya, Cyprus etc. still carries the spark to ignite and burn the West. Other challenges such as refugee crisis due to internal conflicts (which we are witnessing in Libya, Syria and Yemen) as well as the menace created by terrorism and radical non-state actors such as Taliban and ISIS have burdened the humanity.

Refocus on Africa will open another stage of great game of competition. This time it will be more complicated as the African countries are also developing their own voices and strength. These countries are trying to become untied. Moreover, for their development they are courting all the countries who are extending help such as China,

Turkey and Russia. India has always been present in that continent and contributing its bit. Addition to all these, the short-sightedness of the policy makers and leaders that has led to drastic global climate change whose impact we can see in the untimely and surprised natural disasters such as the various typhoons, floods, fires countries have faced and the melting of the Arctic and the Antarctica does not create a picture of positivity. The refugee crisis, migration, xenophobia, racism, subtle competition amongst civilizations and cultures etc. are adding on to the problems of the world.

On the economic front, the IMF and World Bank predict another economic downturn after a decade. With US trying to bring protectionism, the impending Brexit, low financial resilience in the West, trade war between US and China, competition against dollar by trading in national currencies amongst other nations, collapse of the Smart Money Flow Index between 2016 to 2018 – China’s stock prices have taken a dive by 49 percent, cyber attacks on financial firms¹ and fluctuations in oil prices etc. creates unfavourable situations in global economy. Though in Eurasia, there are multilateral economic initiatives such as Eurasian Economic Union, International North South Transport Corridor, Chabahar port, Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) etc. that are taking place that should be good news for the world however, it needs to be seen till how far it can dismantle the unipolar hegemony of US.

World has always moved with each countries’ national interest as priority, however, this aspect is became clear with US President Donald Trump’s open declaration of ‘America first’ policy. Other powers would not want to acknowledge this factor of ‘my country first’. Other powers such as Russia, China, India, Europe, Japan etc. talk about multipolarity however, if seen closely, then all countries are following the ‘my country

¹“Is 2019 the Year of the Financial Crisis Comeback?” *Tsam Insights*, 2019. <https://www.tsam.net/is-2019-the-year-of-the-financial-crisis-comeback/>

first' approach since imperial times. It is now that this term 'America first' or 'X first' have been designated. In fact, with the coming of President Trump, the great power competition which was made to get blurred under the Obama administration because of the rapprochement and pacifist policies, have become apparent. This factor is a boon and bane in itself.

It is advantageous as it helps countries to keep multidimensional foreign policy with the focus on strengthening one's national interests and priorities. At the same time, it is disadvantageous because of the competition it creates amongst the countries and the after effect of it on one's policies. For instance, Pakistan who is not been able to progress due to the domestic factors and its animosity towards India, leading to investing more budget in defence spending and ignoring the socio-development of the people of Pakistan. However, India's growth rate is high and is in the pace of 7.5 per cent. Meanwhile, Pakistan's GDP rate is at 4.8 per cent. It is not a positive news for the region or the world if Islamabad does not focus on its own development and have good neighbourliness with India. There are other points of faultlines which has the capacity to derail the positive developments, such as multilateralism in the world.

Though the world is talking and moving towards a multipolar world system, another point which might get overlooked because of globalization and multilateralism, however, is the divide between West and East and also the division amongst themselves. The West though is trying but somewhere is unable to accept the reality of multipolarity or of sharing power with others. It needs to be seen that how far will the West be able to accept the domination of the East. Cooperating closely in economic initiatives or bilateral relationship is different from sharing power. The West will try to keep its control intact.

At the same time, the West is having its own issues such as there is problem between US and Europe and its impacting on the trans-Atlantic partnership. EU is talking about

strengthening its own defence and security policies while US and UK is talking of strengthening the power of the NATO.

Russia's experience with the West has made it accept and understand the benefits of focusing on the Eurasian identity. It though has tried to come closer to the West, including America, but has not been successful to an extent. It seems there is a competition of the West towards Russia. At the same time, it needs to be seen that till how far Moscow is comfortable if Beijing becomes more powerful and goes closer to US. Then there is the competition within the East. India, China, Japan and South Korea are trying to become more powerful than each other.

Conclusion

Overall, though the world is progressing however, there are also problems that are inevitable. One can predict that there will be competition amongst the polycentric powers when a multipolar world system is built, leading to chaos. Due to the divisions between the West and the East, reaching to a common consensus amongst each other will be difficult, this can be seen in the present time as well. Problems like terrorism could have brought countries together but it has not been able to because of the different definitions as well as agendas each countries have towards it.

Further, it seems that rather than cooperation amongst civilizations, there will be competition amongst one another to prove one's own civilization the better. In fact, in this aspect too, there will be problems of controllability. Hence, the world needs a strong philosophy of humanity based on the respect and dignity of each individual life and not based on religion or civilization or national interests. Strengthening of borders and heightening of nationalism and right-wing politics ignited by anti-West or anti-East feelings will not be conducive. Genuine dialogues to find out genuine solutions based on a win-win situation are the key to create a better world.