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The US attempt of supremacy in the twenty first century: Russian and Chinese response

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This study is about international politics of post-cold war period in which US attempted to become the singular hegemonic power in the international political affairs. The major purpose of the study was to explore the responses of emerging powers in the international political system to US ambition. The article will start with a discussion on elements of US Grand Strategy in its foreign affairs. It has been revealed that strategy was based on modernist premises even though the world has been changed by globalizing forces. However, the thesis that the end of cold war has brought with the end of sovereignty of the states was questioned by arguing that sovereignty of small states had decreased, while the sovereignty of strong states had increased. Rogue states defined by US had become allies of emerging powers. The regional wars fought by US in different locations simultaneously had weakened its capacity and economically unsustainable. Economic power of rising powers and military modernization of their armories had given them impetus to become more and more assertive. China and Russia had worked together in coalition in international forums to challenged US hegemony. The division within the allies of US also had weakened its position further. Thus, international politics of the contemporary world order could best understood multi-polar in character and content. The US attempt at the sole hegemonic power in international politics has become a dream in the context of emerging powers claim for greater role in international politics.

Key words: United States, Russia, China, grand strategy, unipolarity, emerging powers.

INTRODUCTION

The end of cold war has been heralded as victory of liberalism and supremacy of American values. The US has been perceived the World's Hegemonic Power (Fukuyama, 1989, 1991). The immediate post-cold war order and events had been interpreted as sings of infallibility of US led capitalism. But within a short span of time, US supremacy had been questioned and attached

by many actors in the international political arena (Nye, 2002a, 2002b, 2010, 2011; Mearsheimer, 2001). With the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, Foreign Policy Makers of US in fact had perceived US as World's only hegemonic power and strived to use its unchallenged global pre-eminence to shape the international order (Layne, 2011:149-150). The US policy makers had taken

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the position that world affairs was unipolar and supreme position of US in the distribution of power in international politics as objective reality (Kegan, 2008; Paupp, 2009; Zakaria, 2009). Preserving the United States hegemonic role in a unipolar world has been the overriding grand strategic objective of every post-cold war administration from George H Bush to Barack Obama (Roxborough, 2002; Nakayama, 2015). American political leadership and bureaucrats increasingly tended to perceive established norms and values of international politics as exceptions whenever they deemed proper and expedient.

It had been argued that American Foreign Policy approach was built upon outdated modernist theories and theorization and the approach was characterized by ethnocentrism (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2002:20-33). American security studies scholars, foreign policy analysts and policymakers had been pre-occupied with the issues of unipolarity and hegemony for the last two decades (Layne, 2011:149-150). Some scholars had questioned whether unipolar world thesis of world political affairs in the rapidly changing world characterized by emerging powers carry any meaning and whether it was possible for US to maintain hegemony. These questions had been contested. Some international scholars had pointed out that the unipolarity would backfire against the United States (Layne, 2006; Waltz, 1993). They had noted that the history of the modern state system has been characterized by repeated bids for hegemony that were defeated by the counterbalancing efforts of other great powers. Nevertheless, dominant international relation scholars in the United States argue that the claims that U.S. primacy would last far into the future (Ikenberry, 1999; Nye, 2002, 1990; Walt, 2005). Post-cold war period economic and military development indices indicated a different story. A set of large, populous, and increasingly wealthy countries, including, China, India and Russia were on the cusp of achieving or regaining great power status. There are a number of studies that have analyzed reasonably the trajectory of world politics in relations to those states handling their ascent to international power and status (Kupchan, 2012; Swaine, 2011; Mann, 2011; Ikenberry, 2008). They have highlighted the possibility of those states making a profound, sometimes violent effect on international politics. The focus of this article is to build upon the existing literature that addressed those critical movements of transformation in the global distribution of power.

The authors of the article had brought out that the unipolar era already has been drawing to a close. Three main arguments had been put forward: first, the rise of new great powers especially China and Russia has been transforming the international system from unipolar system of post-cold war international politics to multipolar world system. Second, growing economic cooperation among rising powers had posed challenges to US in the sphere of international economy. Thirdly, the emerging powers relative military power had been increasing in

relation to US.

The article starts with a discussion on Grand Strategy of US in the context of end of cold war. After explaining the elements of grand strategy, end of unipolar world system is explained. It is largely a historical recollection of information up to the end of the unipolar system. It was followed by a discussion on emerging powers. Consequently, a discussion on nuclear arm improvement and modernization has been brought out to the discussion to showcase the nature of balance of power in contemporary world affairs in the background of rising powers. After discussing the rising powers and their military strategy largely in relation to Russia and China, the article has drawn attention to their pattern of engagement into conflict which they had got stakes in.

The necessary information for the present study was collected from secondary sources for the authors did not have access to the original sources of policy documents of respective cases under study and was unable to contact public bureaucrats of respective states. The authors would like to note the future researchers that make use of this study for their studies to take note of those stated limitations.

US GRAND STRATEGY AFTER THE COLD WAR

The end of cold war had provided US the opportunity to create a new world order but in vein. As initially articulated by then President Georg Bush, the new world order was based on liberal world view. Its basic premise had been the possibility of preventing major international wars and assuring peace through the spread of free market and democracy which had been questioned by many (Krauthammer, 1990:556-560). According to Ian Roxborough, initially, Washington described America's opponents as 'rogue states' (Roxborough, 2002:341). The Washington needed imagined enemies for the purpose of perpetuating its huge bureaucratic establishment in the absence of major enemies. They canonically identified 'Rogue States' for planning purposes (Klare, 1995). Iraq and North Korea provided a useful element of continuity with Cold War military posture in that context and later extended to the force of hegemonic homogenization attempt spearheaded by US and her western allies. It helped in preventing the slowdown of inevitable decline in military spending at the end of the Cold War. The identification of rogues as America's principal security problem was, as it turns out, only a temporary stage in an evolving debate. The language of 'rogues' fed into the larger discourse of the new global order that was to emerge after the Cold War (Roxborough, 2002:340-342).

In this context, US had opted to follow a policy of engagement and enlargement (Ibid). By enlargement, the expanding of free market democracies through supportive action was implied. By engagement, managing potential

rivals in a variety of political, economic and military agreements, slowing down or preventing the emergence of autarkic blocs dangerous to world peace was implied. Isolated 'Rogue States', unwilling to abide by the rule of the international community, were to be contained. Managing Rogue State meant the replacement of global level rivalry by regional rivalries and regional strategies. In a second stage of strategy development, ushered in by the acceptance of popular globalization theory, the US was urged to embrace its imperial responsibilities (Kaplan, 1998). The US would seek to employ its military power in a way that was, for the first time, truly global. Now America was the leader of the globe, not just of the west implying dealing with the enemies of globalization and the development of appropriate new military strategies. American strategic development was set in motion by the attacks of 11 September 2001. US had assumed only viable economic system for the post-cold war world political order was that of open market economy and the liberal life style as practice in US was acceptable for the world community. They had made use of the World Bank and other financial institutions to push alternative economic systems to embrace neo-liberal economic and political agenda through compulsory conditionality by structural adjustment policy packages in economic and development aid. The initial Rogue State approach were also extended to the religious and cultural non-complying communities of the world and the 11 September attack could be understood as the political response of the dissatisfied Muslims of the world to US strategy. The same attacked had resulted to US to seek allies to face the new security challenge for the US and its allies.

THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR SYSTEM

There was evidence that the pro-US realist school's assumption of unipolar situation was wrong and permanence of US supremacy was unsustainable in the context of emerging powers, and that the balance-of-power realists were correct in predicting that unipolarity would stimulate the emergence of new great powers that would act as counterweight to American hegemony (Layne, 2011:151). Some balance-of-power realist forecast that unipolarity would give way quickly to multi-polarity after the Soviet Union's fall proved to be wrong (Ibid). However, the key insight was correct: the over-concentration of power in US hands after the Cold War would spur the emergence of an international system in which American hegemony would be counter-balanced (Layne, 1993, 2006a). Further, the United States was saddled with the responsibility for maintaining stability in Europe, East Asia and the Persian Gulf-commitment that were the legacy of cold war (Layne, 2011:153-155). At the end of the Cold War, the United States had taken on additional

responsibilities in the Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Ibid). These critical situations required the United States to maintain large, capable and expensive military forces. However, strategic experts increasingly had realized that America's force structure had been insufficient to meet all the United States far-flung security commitments (Layne, 2006b:7-41). It was evident in Russia-Georgia war in August 2008. Many U.S. leaders, including Republican presidential nominee John McCain wanted the United States to come to Georgia's aid (Layne, 2011:153). However, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States simply did not have the forces needed to defend Georgia. Similarly, there was good evidence that the United States wanted to use the military option to stop the nuclear programme of Iran and North Korea. But, it prevented military option because the bulk of the U.S. military was committed to the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. All these evidences had substantiated the fact that the American military was too small to meet the demands of these two wars, much less any other obligations the United States may had. All these facts revealed the incapacity of single super power to regulate the number of violent conflicts in the scattered places around the world.

Recently, in the context of financial and economic crisis, many economists had been raising concerns about the economic costs of America's hegemonic military posture (Ibid). For example, economists had estimated that the direct and indirect costs of the Iraq war would exceed US Dollar 3 trillion (Stiglitz and Bilmes, 2008). No similar estimate has been made for the Afghanistan conflict. In recent years, the weakening of the US economy and budget deficits were going to make for US. It was increasingly difficult to sustain the level of military commitments that U.S. hegemony required. Thus, the military expenditure became unbearable and number of conflict made single superpower's inability in assuring order in world political affairs. The emerging World Powers, particularly, China and Russia had sought to build new alliance in international political, military and economic spheres to counter and counterbalance US and its allies. The new developments in international political economy and military operations had marked the end unipolar world system that US aspired to have.

EMERGING POWERS, THEIR CONTENTIONS, AND US ALLIES

The emerging powers have claimed an increasing recognition in the international political arena due to their increased amount of economic and military prowess. The end of the cold war and the demise of the bipolar world order heralded an era of transition for global governance. Post-cold war period witnessed lack of consensus on the status of the distribution and exercise of power in

multipolar world (Young, 2010:2-14). However, it became clear the existence of new powers seeking a global political role comparable to their increased economic and military clout. The new powers included in that category had been BRICS countries and second-tier powers like Indonesia, Turkey and Mexico and they came to be known as “rising powers” or “emerging powers” for rapid economic development, expanding political and military influence (Narlikar, 2012; Mahnken and Blumenthal, 2014). Some of the emerging powers had adopted a confronting standard with US and Brazil, India and South Africa had opted to cooperative strategy with US to achieve their foreign policy objectives.

The emerging powers that had adopted confronting attitude to US had increasingly been using their influence to challenge the legitimacy of the post-cold war period, calling instead for more pluralist or multipolar conceptions in international politics. China for instance, its model of authoritarian capitalism had increasingly become an ideological export, challenging the United States liberal model. India, despite having aligned itself with Washington on many fronts and having significantly deepened bilateral economic ties with the United States, had been a voice of opposing at times.

Rising powers are changing the dynamics of power in the international system by seeking a greater voice in international institutions and building political bonds through regional organizations (Hopewell, 2015; Kirton 2013). The emerging powers had also become more vocal and persuasive on issues playing out in international institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and have seen their influence in regional organization such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN). In some cases, they had been able to organize the new regional mechanisms, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in Latin America and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and other regional forums¹.

Accordingly, within multilateral institutions the rising states could often wielded influence disproportionate to their individual economic size or formal voting power (Stephen, 2012:289-309). That was for certain institutional features caused to amplify emerging power influence. In some multilateral bodies, that was a function of decision-making rules that required consensus or near consensus (Ibid). At the UN, the emerging powers wielded substantial influence over decision through their roles in mobilizing regional blocs (Ferdinand, 2014:376-391). Emerging powers often made large contributions on issues central to the UN mandate, such as peacekeeping (Mohan and Gippner, 2015:47-77). Similarly bloc voting at the WTO had enabled India, Brazil and China to bloc US

and EU-driven proposals (Hopewell, 2015:311-315).

In the foreign policy realm, two factors helped to explain emerging powers’ influence (Cheng, 2011:405-446). The first were the deep, bilateral economic and political ties those states had with certain fragile or rouge states (Odagaard, 2013:252-257). Trade data showed that emerging power were often in a position to exert much greater economic leverage over many weak and fragile states than were the western powers. The second factor were the relative influence of the rising powers compared to the west was further amplified by western disunity (Mockli and Mauer, 2011). In Europe, the EU had yet to develop a fully coherent mechanism for the development and implementation of foreign policy, and political divisions within Europe had, at times limited European influence. Occasional differences between EU and the United States had complicated common efforts as well. Where unity in preferences was lacking, that usually stemmed from differences over what constituted the legitimate use of force, divergent attitudes toward multilateralism, and varying constraints from domestic public opinion. Recent examples of policy differences regarding the broader Middle East were a case in point.

Finally, the rising powers do not necessarily share the United States agenda on nonproliferation, global warming, currency management, or human rights. India and China for example, had been reluctant to put pressure on Myanmar and Sudan to refrain from human right abuses (Odagaard, 2013:245-268). These two Asian giants are unconcerned about Iran’s nuclear programmed (Alam, 2011; Garver, 2006). Russia had refused to withdraw its troops from part of Georgia that it occupied in the 2008 war (Gaddy and O’Hanlon, 2015:205-221).

NUCLEAR ARMS MODERNIZATION BY RISING POWERS

Russia and China had announced that they intended to increase their nuclear forces and both had been modernizing their forces (Norris and Kristensen, 2011). Russia and China regarded the U.S. as their main rival and arming against US was needed to protect their interests in international affairs. This was because both Russia and China had significant territorial claims against their neighbors and US involvement in those territories had been detrimental to their peaceful existence (Golts, 2013; Hayton, 2014). Russian claim to the Arctic Ocean and Chinese claims over the South China Sea were particularly becoming troubling. Recently, Russia intervened to Ukraine and Syrian Affairs. China continued to threaten war over Taiwan (Friedman, 2013:225-244). China had increasingly used military might to support its territorial claims in the South China Sea, creating incidents that had the potential to escalate into nuclear war (Heberer, 2015:96-100).

The Global Zero Report revealed both Russia and

¹ Recent Establishment of BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) can be read as collective effort of those emerging powers to the strengths of US and its allies within International Financial Institution.

China had increased their nuclear forces (Cartwright, 2012). They would modernize their entire ballistic missile force many years before the U.S. introduced any new systems and US modernization would only be partial (Schneider, 2014:193). Both Russia and China had been deploying new Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and new nuclear air-launched cruise missiles, and were about to deploy new Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and new ballistic missile submarines (Schneider, 2007; Antonov, 2013). Both had been developing still newer stealth bombers and deploying new nuclear weapons apparently with the assistance of hydro nuclear testing (Schneider, 2014:194). They were also modernizing non-strategic nuclear weapons (Ibid). Russia had no interest in post-New START arms control reductions (Schneider, 2012).

Russia had been modernizing its strategic and non-strategic nuclear warheads (Norris and Kristensen, 2015:1). It possessed 4500 nuclear warheads, of which roughly 1780 strategic warheads were deployed on missiles and at bombers bases (Ibid). Another 700 strategic warheads were in storage along with roughly 2000 non-strategic warheads (Ibid). Russia deployed on estimated 311 ICBMs that can carry approximate 1050 warheads (Ibid). It had been retiring all Soviet-era ICBMs and replacing them with new systems (Ibid).

Atomic scientists estimate that China had got approximately 260 warheads in its stockpile for delivery by approximately 160 land based ballistic missiles, aircrafts and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (Norris and Kristensen, 2015:77). Furthermore, China is the only one of the five recognized nuclear weapon states that is quantitatively increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal (Ibid). United States Intelligence community predicted that by the mid-2020s China could more than double its number of warheads (Burgess, 2012:19). Chinese news agencies reported ability of the Chinese Navy is developing the Jin-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine and JL-2 submarine launched ballistic missile capable to massive casualties by attacks on U.S. cities (Daily Mail, 2013). The report also talked about the ability of Chinese DF-31 ICBMs to attack American East Coast cities (Ibid).

Indeed, at the moment both Russia and China were escalating their territorial disputes and taking military measures intended to intimidate other nations into accepting their claims. Furthermore, Russia and China were attempting to use military power and the threat of war to force other nations to accept their controls of international waters and disputed islands. The new move by the two state needs to be understood as responses to the US claim for supremacy.

After discussing the weapon modernization schemes by rising powers, it is pertinent briefly to deliberate on assertive instances of engagements by emerging powers in world political affairs referring to Ukraine invasion, Syrian Crisis and Chinese engagement in South and East China Sea.

THE UKRAINE INVASION

The political crisis that erupted in Ukraine in early 2014 had marked the end of the period in Russian-Western relations that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Mearsheimer, 2014:77-89). The eruption had ended general cooperative phase of their relations with US and its western partners. The crisis opened a new period of heightened rivalry, even confrontation, between former cold war adversaries. The national interest of security of Ukraine and its geo-economics orientation paved the way for a competition between Russia and US over the future of Ukraine (Ibid). The root of the crisis, the war between Russia and Georgia, which ended the prospect of enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for both Georgia and Ukraine, beginning of the global financial crisis and EU enlargement had been perceived by Russia as threats to its National Interests and aggressive move to debacle its stability (Trenin, 2014:4-6).

The Russian Federation, for its part, tried to attract Ukraine and most of the rest of the former Soviet Union to its flagship under the customs union in 2009, and later it was converted Eurasian Economic Union² in 2014 (Ibid). The Eurasian Economic Union treaty signed by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia but without Ukraine. However, as suspected in the West, Moscow begun building a Russian-led community in Eurasia that would give Russia certain economic benefits (Popescu, 2014). Thus, Brussels and Moscow each saw Ukraine as an important element of their own geopolitical project. Eventually, both Russia and the EU came to see Ukraine's choice as a zero-sum game and worked hard to influence the outcome. Moreover, military intervention in the Ukraine crisis and annexing Crimea signaled the Russia readiness to challenge US supremacy whenever required by necessity of its national interest demanded to do so.

THE SYRIAN CRISIS

The Russia under bipolar international system had had global ambitions during cold war period. However, Russia had not shown such ambition immediately after the end of cold war. The Soviet Union had engaged in a global ideological competition with the US that created imperatives to seek influence and connections everywhere in good old days. In contrast, Russia lacked both ideological impetus and the geopolitical imperatives to compete with the US everywhere after the collapse of Soviet Union and Socialism as the ideology of the state.

The development in Russia and disregarding her in international affairs by the seemingly wining US and its partners had heartened the mind of Russian People. The

²The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is the most ambitious attempt yet at economically integrating the post-Soviet space.

gradual stabilization of Russia under the leadership of Putin had made Russia to seek a dignified role in international politics. During the past few years, it had assumed a guardian and protective role for the third world states in international forums together with China. The Syrian crisis opened it more assertive role in this direction as well as her economic interest.

In the aforementioned context of world affairs, there was an intermittent hopes that Moscow might play a constructive diplomatic role in resolving Syrian Crisis (Bagdonas, 2012:58-61). Further, Russia's centrality to international diplomacy on this issue and its seeming obstinacy exposed deep flaws in post-cold war western doctrine on international intervention (Cherap, 2013:35-36). Russia's centrality in the resolution of Syrian crisis pointed out the significant role that it could be played in global political issues.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Russia had been on the ties to Assad's Syria, including military, military-industrial and intelligence-sharing (Katz, 2013:38-46). Furthermore, Russian arms sales to Syria and its naval facility at Tartus compelled Russia to play a key role in the crisis (Ibid). A less noted, but more significant factor had been Russian anxieties about the displacement by Sunni Islamist government of secular autocrats in Syria and other Arab countries since the Arab Spring began (Cherap, 2013:35-41). Russia's immediate neighborhood in the North Caucasus and Central Asia features a number of countries where such a scenario cannot be excluded, and there were over 20 million Russian Muslims, the majority of whom are Sunni and live in the North Caucasus, where Russia has fought two civil wars and continued to battle what was called the Caucasus Emirate (Souleimanov and Petrylova, 2015:66-78). Decision-makers in Moscow were quick to point out that the emirate and its predecessors were directly supported by entities in some of the Arab countries leading the call for Assad's departure (Ibid).

These factors certainly played in some role in Moscow's approach to Syria. But they did not explain Russian policy on international action on the crisis. Indeed, the Kremlin had issued three UN Security Council vetoes and against the Geneva Communique calling for a peaceful transition of authority, and fastidiously avoided joining the call for "Assad to go" not because of its interests in Syria, its fear of extremist spillover, or because it backs Assad (Averre and Davies, 2015:813-834). That allegation, frequently leveled in recent past, files in the face of the persistent Russian signaling that Moscow could not care less about Assad fate.

On September 30, 2015 Russian fighter aircraft based in Latakia, Syria stating the bombing the forces opposed to President Bashar al- Assad in the Syrian cities (Hossain, 2015). This was for the first time since the end of the cold war that the Russian military had been in action anywhere in the Middle East (Ibid). However,

Russian troops were deployed in Syria, then it would also be the first time since the 1970's that Russian military officers were stationed in the Middle East.

Moscow did not believe the Security Council should be in the business of either implicitly or explicitly endorsing the removal of a sitting government. Many in the Russian foreign policy establishment believed that the string of U.S.-led interventions that had resulted in regime change since the end of the cold war – Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya-was a threat to the stability of the international system and potentially to regime stability in Russia itself and its allies in its neighborhood (Cherap, 2013:35-36). Russia did not let the Security Council give its imprimatur to these interventions, and would never do so if it suspected the stated or unstated motive was the removal of a sitting government.

CONFLICT IN THE EAST CHINA SEA/SOUTH CHINA SEA

China is also responding to US ascendancy in international political affairs in many fronts. One area that such responses are to be observed is the Conflict between China and Japan and its claim over Taiwan who are the closest allies of US in Asian region. The Conflict between China and Japan is over a group of eight small, uninhabited islands, located in the East China Sea approximately 120 nautical miles West of Fukien Province in China and 90 nautical miles Northwest of islands in the Japanese Ryukyu island chain (Wiegand, 2009:172).

The islands, known to the Chinese as Diaoyu and the Japanese as Senkaku, are thought to include large oil and gas reserves (Kawashima, 2013:122-123). Today, the islands are under the administrative control of Japan, which also claims sovereignty over the island chain but, China is assertively challenging Japanese claim. As the islands were claimed by both countries, the conflict escalated in 2012, when the Japanese government had purchased the islands (Yukio, 2012). In early 2013, the Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo declared that, Japan would take a tough stance regarding China's claims (McDevitt, 2014:102-103). In turn, Chinese president Xi Jinping declared the island issue to be a core interest of China (Meijing, 2014:190-191). Chinese warships started to petrol in the area, prompting Japanese accusations that the Chinese were risking military confrontation.

China's unilateral announcement in November 2013, that it was establishing an East China Sea "Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) marked a new dimension in the Chinese-Japanese conflict over the disputed islands which had got implications for US military strategy in the area (McDevitt, 2014:103-104). The Chinese Ministry of Defense demanded that aircraft entering into the zone identify themselves and follow its instructions (Yansheng, 2013). The Chinese ADIZ overlapped with that of Japan,

as it was extended to the disputed islands. Japan strongly opposed the Chinese ADIZ, arguing that it might trigger unpredictable consequences. The zone indicated a new more assertive pattern of behavior in China's foreign policy aimed at pressing Tokyo to admit the islands were disputed and to get it to the negotiation table (Mastro, 2015:151-170). In the end, however, it might be more accurate to interpret that Chinese step as a signal to the US, the major guarantor of peace and stability in the region, that it should press Japan to acknowledge and negotiate over a territorial conflict with China. As Mattis (2013) had convincingly argued, the actual target of China's action was not Japan, but Washington.

In 2014, territorial conflicts between China and other littoral states in the South China Sea (particularly, the Philippines and Vietnam) regarding sovereignty over islands. These conflicts are related not only fishing ground, oil and gas resources but also to the issue of who is to control strategic sea lanes and freight traffic from the oil and resource-rich regions of Asia, Africa and the Middle East to East and Southeast Asia (Heberer, 2015:96-97). Furthermore, more than one-third of the international trade pass through these SCS sea lane (Ibid). The Strait of Malacca located at one end of the South China Sea- is the world second busiest international sea lane (Rowan, 2005:415). This conflict is more crucial, since more than one-third of the world's trade passes through this sea lane (Yahuda, 2013:446-459). Accordingly, the South China Sea conflict is a bone of contention between China on the one side, and on the other, the US with its allies (Japan, Australia, and Philippine) as well as other major players such as Vietnam.

RUSSIA AND THE CHINA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Russia, China's possible axis formation is an important political development in the post-cold war period. Sino-Russian relations had been improving steadily and have taken a dramatic turn. The process of the solution of the border dispute between the two countries had already started and set-up a joint border commission at the end of 1980s (Dittmer, 2001:399-413). In 2001, two leaders of Russia and China signed the treaty of friendship and cooperation while the agreements in the areas of investment, energy, innovation and technology signified the seriousness of Russia in having good relations with China (Wishnick, 2001:797-821). This agreement had been resulted in enormous economic opportunities and Moscow realized the values of having close ties with Beijing. In addition, two countries worked together to set-up a new security forum towards the Islamic threats to the Central Asian Republics. For Moscow, Beijing had been also emerged as a major arms destination (MacHaffie, 2011). Russia and China had shown interest

in cooperating on Asian security issues (Kuchins, 2014:129-137). The two countries were working together in the Northwestern Pacific, an area where Russia was becoming increasingly active (Schneider, 2014: 196-197).

Over the last two decades, Russia and China presented themselves as a counterbalance to U.S- Western led global hegemony (Heberer, 2015:100-101). In such spirit, the two countries played a prominent role in opposing the U.S. - led war on Iraq in 2003; had periodically resisted the adoption sanction toward Iran; abstained in the vote of UNSC resolution (2011) on Libya and had blocked decisive action on Syria.

The question of Russia and China's ability to manage to reconcile their growing security and energy interests in Central Asia remained one of the most pressing issue for Asian geopolitics (Swanstrom, 2014:480-497). However, it was clear that both countries had attempted to neutralize bilateral relations through border agreements, confidence-building measures, and the build-up of common institutional venues (notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) for the past few years.

MISSED REALITIES BY AMERICAN POLICY MAKERS

It had already pointed out that US foreign policy makers had focused on modernist approach in formulating the strategy at the end of cold war international affairs. The globalization thesis in relation to state system had assumed homogenization of cultures and eraser or de-territorialized communities within the then existed nation state where American way of life would be the fashion and pattern of life. It also had assumed antagonistic and traditional political rivalries would be displaced by a politics of individuality and politics would have revolved around life and death issues. All of those issues had been questioned by resisting forces of culture. Of course, Sovereignty of weak states had been decreased while sovereignty of great and superpower states had been increased. The cultural forces that had been attacked by and through the forces of globalization ideology or Washington Consensus of hegemonic financial institutions had resorted once again to the ideology of state as the only emancipation in that context. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria provides a classic example in this context. The terrorist group's major target had been the creation of a powerful and strong enough state as the solution.

"Rogue states" defined by US bureaucratic organizations and their way of engagement had proved unsustainable for they had become allies of the emerging powers in their attempt at containing and countering US hegemony. Further, the imperial responsibility as the guardian of capitalism and liberal democracy had been questioned and attacked by many and in different region of the world. The number of regional wars US waged after the end of the cold war simultaneously had brought to the light US inability of dealing with them singularly and

gradual withdrawal of forces from places like Afghanistan and Iraq pointed out the inability of US to prolong them further in the context of stagnating the domestic economy and decline of US position in world trade.

CONCLUSION

The study has explored the US grand strategy after the cold war in international politics. The discussion on the US grand strategy and following the discussions and emerging powers responses, particularly by China and Russia help to logically conclude that grand strategy of US and its approach to international political issues were not realistic and unable to grasp the realities of post-cold war world politics. US had had an opportunity to create a better world system, but in vain because of its assumed role of guardian of free market and liberal democracy had made it economically weak and consequently unsustainable military set-up. The emerging powers, particularly China and Russia with their gradual economic prowess, have ventured to seek a great role in international politics. The US and its allies intolerance towards alternative systems of economy, politics and culture has resulted in penetration of Russia's sphere of competencies, particularly in neighboring states. It has promoted Russian an assertive role in international politics for many reasons. The establishment of BRICS Bank and other cooperation among emerging powers and rest of the world can be considered as reactions to US and US-led financial institution which ultimately result in challenging the hegemonic position in the world politics by US.

US foreign policy formulator have been unable to grasp the real situation after cold war and the states who are aspiring to become superpowers from a great power status. China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa are emerging economies of the world. It seems that India, Brazil and South Africa have not necessarily confronting attitudes towards US, China and Russia are very assertive and even ready to challenge US whenever required by necessity jointly or individually. The wars fought in different regions by US and much sought after partners of war and gradual withdrawing of forces and its inability to provide stability proved US is incapable of handling world affairs single handedly and its incapacity of prolonging such strategy for long in the context of unsustainable US economy, recession and decline.

Globalization has not erased the boundaries of the state system, instead it created a few more powerful states. The two major emerging powers, that is, China and Russia and sometimes other powers have perceived US as their enemy and thus they had engaged in military modernization schemes to counter US and its ally's attacks on them. They have become more and more assertive and emerging powers have worked collectively to counterbalance US hegemony, while resolving

differences among them more amicably. US position in international politics had further weakened by internal differences in the NATO and European Union on matters of force deployment to fight regional wars. In fact, there is no single war that US has fought itself alone and indicate it cannot be considered as the hegemonic power after cold war. The challenge ahead of scholars to come to develop new conceptual framework to comprehend world political system whether as multi-polar or something else in this context. What can be predicted is that US dream of hegemonic power cannot be achieved and it remains a dream only.

Conflict of Interests

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