

WHO WILL TAKE THE NEXT 'WORLD THRONE'?

Abstract

The world is experiencing major events that highlights the differing interpretations of power at various levels. International politics provides an overview of multifarious activities to cope up with the recent understanding of authority and its legitimacy. This paper first journeys through the evolution of the concept of power ever since the inception of states and nations in the world political stage and grasps the features of changing dimensions within state activities. States' behaviour studied at the international level further provides the incite of how the actors in the world stage have perceived the understanding of power with a different approach over every century that they have witnessed. In fact, the article here, starts with a note of identifying the different arenas of international power holding by various ancient states and concludes on a skeptic note as to who is likely to embrace the current understanding of real authority and rule the world in a legitimate manner. Also, the next question explored is whether power is likely to rest in an absolute manner among a nation or a supranational organization whose contributions, in the last century, cannot be simply ignored.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Modern understanding of power has diverse implications. Unlike the traditional concept, it tries to focus on various aspects and accommodates almost everything that renders an individual or a group much superior and way ahead of the others (over whom this power is being applied). Power gets established due to authority. With the progress in human civilizations, technological advancement, well planned modes of transport and communication the idea of power has been taken so much for granted that the world hardly realizes where it is being applied or where it is being restricted or who is applying it in a subtle manner. Moreover, authority further spreads the roots of power into multi directional channels, enriching the base of the power holder and enabling him to highlight his dominance in almost a coercive manner.

The prerequisite of authority is structured consent. This structured consent is the norm of a democratic society that so vehemently opposes coercion and force, hardly realizing that the structured consent itself paves the way for the dynamics of power and dominance. It is often assumed that power, authority, dominance and democracy (in its current interpretation) are born from similar seeds fabricating a fragile relation among states twinned with intense competition in the national and international race for superiority.

The source of authority in the world of democracy is legitimacy. The question that is vital at this juncture is what practices of power will make its authority legitimate. Can the power holder use the garb of democracy (rule by consent) to declare its power to be legitimate? To what extent should legitimacy prevail in circumstances within which the power holder can wield even more authority and yet not start abusing power?

The transformational nature of legitimate authority, in the twenty first century, has immensely impacted power relations among states in international politics. In fact, the understanding of numerous concepts like power, authority, legitimacy, democracy and dominance is being revisited at the academic level to arrive at an empirical meaning in the global political level. It is with the help of this empirical knowledge (as is expected) that the behaviour of the states and their equation in world affairs can be scrutinized to provide a fair judgment.

II. POWER DYNAMICS AND ITS PHASES

Tracing the evolution of state mannerisms and its conduct with other states, it has been observed that the political life of every state is embedded with multiple challenges arousing from both within and outside its borders. The birth of 'nation states' in the theory of International Relations, recognised for the first time by the Treaty of Westphalia 1648, replaced the ancient significance of 'Empires' (Roman Empire to be more precise) and unfolded itself to establish sovereign territories. The aim of such nation states was to secure its borders and protect its citizens. The idea was independent existence by commanding legitimate power and minimizing threats at different levels of power sharing.

When we turn the pages of history we notice that the subjects of power were mere recipients of authority which they were told is legitimate. It was neither scrutinized nor verified. For example, monarchy was unquestioned authority. Unlimited power whether just

or unjust was synonymous with legitimacy. The noble born can never make errors- this was the common belief. This interpretation of celestial authority of the monarch was reflected in Thomas Hobbes' Social Contract Theory. In his book, 'Leviathan' Hobbes rationalizes the presence of absolute governments and undivided sovereign authority which he believes rests with the monarch to avoid the state of anarchy. Furthermore, the experience of political disintegration culminating into the English civil war made him adhere to the philosophy of reciprocal relationship between political obedience and peace.

The seventeenth century nation states snapped the dominance of the Roman Empire and laid the first stone of centralized sovereign authority within a fixed territory. This century also witnessed unitary sovereignty, divided and balanced sovereignty and sovereign power limited by universal principles. The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 saw the dichotomous struggle with the ruler on one end and his subjects on the other, both eager to highlight their individual liberty. Sovereignty, being the central issue of power struggle, was either interpreted in terms of the absolute power of the crown, or residing amidst the 'Crown' and the 'Parliament'. However, this era of 'absolutism' mitigated into a state of equilibrium or status quo when the eighteenth century scholars analyzed the trends in power shift to 'balance of power'. This balance of power practiced by the emerging nation states also sought to maintain a delicate balance since they were not willing to accept any dominant power or hegemon acting as an obstruction to their sovereign identity creation. Alliances and counter-alliances of the nineteenth century seemed to be the perfect way out to avoid the potential hegemon rising as a single power.

The drive for national self-determination in the same period of history provides a testament to European colonialism resulting in tensions and rivalries over economic resources and geopolitical influence. This period is often referred to as the "long 19th century" and spanned from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. An engaging factor among the nation-states during this era was territorial disputes restructuring the political map of Europe and other regions. Events like the industrial revolution boosted the confidence of the states further to venture into daring aspirations that would ultimately result in proving a supreme state in the world. Advanced technology meant advanced armies projecting greater power in warfare and realizing the potential of the supreme. At times diplomatic alignments and ideological movements like conservatism, liberalism and socialism influenced state interactions. The complexities of this era laid the groundwork for the geopolitical dynamics that eventually led to the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

The nature of power among states in international relations during the twentieth century was characterized by profound and often tumultuous changes that shaped the geopolitical landscape in unprecedented ways. This century witnessed two devastating world wars, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, decolonization, and the emergence of new global challenges. Here are some key aspects that defined the nature of power during this period:

- 1. World Wars and Shifting Alliances:** The two World Wars, especially World War II, profoundly reshaped the global power structure. The conflicts led to the decline of traditional great powers and the rise of new ones, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union. The wars also prompted the formation of various military alliances, such as

NATO and the Warsaw Pact, as countries sought collective security against common threats.

2. **Superpower Rivalry and the Cold War:** The Cold War dominated much of the 20th century. The United States and the Soviet Union, both possessing nuclear arsenals, engaged in ideological, political, economic, and military competition. The bipolar world order led to a global division of influence and the development of proxy conflicts in various regions, as both superpowers sought to spread their respective ideologies and gain allies.
3. **Nuclear Deterrence:** The development of nuclear weapons introduced a new dimension to international relations. The concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) emerged, whereby the possession of nuclear weapons by multiple states acted as a deterrent against large-scale conflicts. This deterrence logic influenced strategic thinking and crisis management throughout the century.
4. **Decolonization and Nationalism:** The twentieth century witnessed a wave of decolonization as colonies across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East gained independence from colonial powers. Nationalism played a pivotal role in these movements, reshaping global power dynamics by creating new sovereign states and shifting the balance of influence.
5. **Regional Conflicts and Alliances:** Beyond the Cold War rivalry, regional conflicts and alliances emerged. Examples include the conflicts in the Middle East, the Indo-Pakistan rivalry, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. These conflicts often drew in major powers, contributing to the complexity of global power dynamics.
6. **Globalization and Economic Power:** The latter half of the century saw increased globalization, with advancements in transportation and communication facilitating greater interconnectedness among nations. Economic power became a significant component of global influence, with states competing not only militarily but also economically and technologically.
7. **International Organizations and Diplomacy:** The United Nations was established after World War II to promote international cooperation and prevent conflicts. Despite challenges and limitations, international organizations played a role in facilitating diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and conflict resolution.
8. **Emergence of New Norms and Human Rights:** The twentieth century witnessed the establishment of international norms and conventions, including those related to human rights, humanitarian intervention, and the prohibition of certain weapons. These norms added ethical dimensions to international relations and influenced state behavior.
9. **Technological Advancements:** The century saw rapid technological progress, including advancements in communication, transportation, and warfare. Technological innovations had a profound impact on military capabilities, intelligence gathering, and the ability to project power across borders.

10. End of the Cold War and Unipolarity: The late 20th century brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This transition led to a brief period of unipolarity, with the United States standing as the sole superpower. However, this era of unipolarity was marked by debates about the extent of American hegemony and the emergence of regional powers.

Thus, the nature of power among states in international relations during the twentieth century was defined by the aftermath of world wars, superpower rivalries, nuclear dynamics, decolonization, economic competition, and the emergence of new norms and challenges. The complex interplay of these factors contributed to a dynamic and ever-evolving global landscape.

When we step into the twenty-first century we witness that the source of power sharing, today, is international politics itself where states do not compete but act individually within their domain. The global stage appears to be the 'billiard board' and the states are the 'billiard balls' existing in temporary relationships of friendship and enemy or 'frenemy'.

The challenges to US hegemony and its decline has further paved the way for other states and regional organizations to step into a more dominating role and each in the contemporary era is trying to emerge most powerful to set the trend for a new age in international politics. No state is isolated or neutral today. Those who further need circumstantial aids are also trying to tap the resources available to the best possible way so as to rise high through the vertical columns of the world's power set up. The equation among countries today is not directly pronounced in terms of friendship or enemy rather diplomacy in a subtle way. The reason behind this approach to relations among states can be due to the dynamic interpretations of power with changing times and ever advancing technology. No one is in the dark, no one is under unknown threat or resistance. Each state is measuring their steps while getting involved in world affairs.

Given the differing authorities that states and regional organizations have in the contemporary era, international discourses, debates and challenges undermine the former states behaviour with their intentions of power sharing proving the unlikeliness to deconstruct the fundamental assumptions of 'who will rule the world in the near future?'

At this juncture, all seems equally deserving and at the same time none seems to be flawless. Be it that of the individual states or international organizations. Theorists, liberalists, neo-liberalists, realists and pluralists all have so far been subjective in their analysis because a quantitative, objective response to this ever changing power dynamics is almost next to impossible. However, one can compare the achievements of various regional organizations and individual states in their current domain and enhance the quality of the response through debates. Debates can initiate vigour through the triumph of new ideas and trends.

The thought and deliberations hereafter suggests that conclusion regarding the above question can be reached only after a healthy scrutiny of who stands where today and what fate does its position direct to secure its power in an autonomous unidirectional

way. Even, whether at all, can the present promising nature of the state or regional organizations truly define the actual understanding of power.

III. GROWTH OF WEST EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Following the Second World War, chaos erupted throughout Europe. A massive reconstruction project has to be completed. Some envisioned a united Europe akin to the US, wherein the individual states of Europe would combine under a federal style of governance. However, the American Marshall plan to aid in Europe's rebuilding caused it to break into two halves relatively quickly. While the governments of Eastern Europe were happy to receive American aid, the Russians would not allow the countries of Western Europe to do so out of concern that their own authority over the region would be compromised. The two regions of Europe developed independently starting in 1947. Joseph Stalin's "Iron Curtain" kept it separate.

Of course, it received American aid but there is no denying the fact that Western Europe started recovering from the ravages of the War by working together and pulling their resources.

Secondly, these western European states were too small and their economies too weak. Hence, collaboration and cooperation was a precondition for their collective resurgence.

Thirdly, since the Soviet Union was aggressive, security was very important and this security cover was provided by the USA by setting up NATO and the Council of Europe (both in 1949).

Some other factors also helped in the recovery process of the Western Europe. These factors included gradual stabilization of the market, creation of new demands in the market and since Western European countries were industrialized so they had an advantage of producing quality products to carry forward the supply chain and promote trade.

At the same time, careful planning and peoples' enthusiasm energized European countries. A point to be noted however was the distinct attitude of Britain which feared that its sovereignty would be undermined by joining the integration process. So, initially it did not join the European Economic Community as it was set up in 1957. Later in 1961 Britain changed its mind and became a member despite the resistance of France.

Another point that deserves mention was the creation of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in 1948. It consolidated the process of Western European economic unity. It was established primarily with the goal to channelize American aid to west European states. Later we find that Trade was much encouraged amongst the member states. It was a success story which even attracted USA and Canada to join this organization and it became the Organization for European Cooperation and Development. From economic necessity the process of western European integration started to assume a political turn with the creation of the Council of Europe. By the end of the 1950s already Western European countries were able to form a common market and European community under the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

The important step towards transformation of Western Europe into a political formation can be traced to the constitution of some key institutions---European Parliament whose representatives were chosen by the parliament of member states,The European Community entrusted with the power to run the day-to—day functions of the community. Based in Brussels the most important task upon it was policy decision.

There was a Council of Ministers, consisting of government representatives from each member state; another important body was the European Court of Justice.

If we go through the evolution of the EU we would see a milestone was the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. It intensified the integration. Some important points that it agreed to include were:

- More powers to European Parliament,
- Greater and Economic and Monetary Union with a common currency (EURO)
- Common foreign and security policy

By the mid-1990s the EU was a success story both economically and also in terms of political understanding and consensus. It emerged as World's second biggest economy after America. Its economic power augmented its influence not only in Europe but also in Asia and Africa. With some of its members acting as permanent members of the UNSC its significance was amplified. Its diplomacy, economic investment and negotiation rather than coercion in its dialogue with China on human rights and environmental degradation made it more important. Militarily, the EU's combined armed forces are the second largest in the world. Its total spending on defense is second after the US. The EU also commands substantial influence in terms of the nuclear arsenal of some of its member states and in terms of research in space technology.

It is a supra-national organization which means its power exceeds and transcends the power of its constituent governments. However, one incompatibility lies in the fact that its member states also follow their own foreign and defense policies that are pitted against each other. For example while Britain often sides with the American foreign policy line, France and Germany tend to take their own stand. There is also deep-seated suspicion in some parts of Europe about the EU's integrationist agenda. That was why Britain kept itself out of the European market while Denmark and Sweden resisted the Maastricht treaty and adoption of the Euro.

Moreover, the impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU has predominantly been adverse for both parties on either side of the English Channel. The historical complexities of Britain's relationship with Europe have often posed challenges to the EU's efforts to enhance its economic and political standing in global affairs. In recent years, the EU has been preoccupied with addressing issues like the debt crisis, the fragility of its financial institutions, the pursuit of economic growth and job creation, and the rise of populism. Consequently, it failed to strengthen, let alone expand, its influence and presence on the international stage. With just a few weeks left before European citizens exercise their significant democratic right to elect a new European Parliament, a crucial question arises: given the harsh realities and past setbacks, what feasible steps can the next Parliament take to achieve substantial progress in the Union's foreign policy?

IV. THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN)

As a region that was experiencing conflict after World War II and was regaining its freedom, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formally founded in August 1967. Its primary goal was to help its members become more cohesive diplomatically. Many of the nations were former colonies, such as Indonesia, which joined forces with other former colonized nations to create the Non-Alignment Movement after turning away from Western colonial powers. However, these nations had to deal with a number of difficulties, including as heavy debt and worries about the spread of communism in the area. This backdrop led to the establishment of ASEAN in 1967, which was motivated by the idea that a region of cooperation and peace was necessary.

Because its guiding concept is open regionalism, ASEAN keeps up its collaboration with both local and international partners. The creation of bridges with outside partners was one of the most significant turning points in ASEAN collaboration. The East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Plus Six (the Plus Three countries, Australia, India, and New Zealand), and the ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN plus Japan, the People's Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea) are a few examples of ASEAN cooperation initiatives. The agreements that ASEAN and its allies have made have contributed to the strengthening of the alleged "open economy" of Asian nations.

However, ASEAN is made up of three different kinds of nations: first, open economies like Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia as major neighbors; second, comparatively slower-growing CLMV countries (Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia); and third, somewhat slower-growing states like Thailand and Malaysia. One of the organization's initial two objectives was (i) to stop the long-standing disagreements between its member states from turning into violent confrontations. (ii) To prevent the main outside powers from utilizing the area as a fighting ground for their disputes. Even now, ASEAN still needs to pursue these two objectives.

Early on, ASEAN was thought to be a relatively "loose" organization that had not made much real progress. The organization needed some time to establish unity and collaboration among its member states. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand were its founding members. The widely worded Bangkok Declaration was signed by them. Its overarching goals were to "promote regional peace and stability...to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region...to encourage active collaboration and mutual assistance... in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and administrative spheres."

As a result, ASEAN developed into the close-knit organization it is now, hosting 700 sessions annually to discuss matters pertaining to politics, economy, culture, education, and security. Using a variety of programs, ASEAN has successfully promoted itself both regionally and globally, which is one of its biggest accomplishments. While not the primary objective of ASEAN in its early years, economic cooperation has grown in significance over time.

In the 1990s, economic cooperation gained importance. There were several elements that fueled ASEAN's economic cooperation. Among these is China's emergence as a

significant exporter and destination for foreign direct investment (FDI). Another aspect was the development of manufacturing chains and rising FDI in ASEAN. With the creation of MERCOSUR, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), international trade agreements also underwent evolution. During the January 1992 ASEAN Summit in Singapore, the AFTA Agreement was signed. The ASEAN Economic Community, which was founded in December 2015 after being first proposed in 2002, was the next significant development in ASEAN's economic cooperation.

With its increasing size, power, and ambitious agenda of trade and economic reforms, ASEAN became a model of regional integration and collaboration that the developing world might learn from. By the 1990s, the ASEAN economic agenda had moved from cooperation to integration thanks to a number of internal and external forces. Singapore was a driving force behind integration efforts. The ASEAN became the most resilient regional group among emerging nations as a result of all these significant advancements. However, the Asian financial crisis of 1997 happened at that exact moment.

There were two main consequences of the crisis for the ASEAN area. Its commercial appeal first declined, but China and India remained relatively unscathed by the crisis. Furthermore, a lot of people thought that ASEAN lacked effectiveness and couldn't act decisively during crises. More positively, there was a second effect. The 1997 Asian financial crisis prompted a broad reevaluation of regional economic cooperation and the necessity of building the capacity for a coordinated macroeconomic response in order to prevent future crises. Initiatives for regional cooperation intensified in the years following the Asian financial crisis. During this time, significant measures were enacted, including the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services, the AFTA, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

At this point in time, ASEAN's evolution has been characterized by two main aspects: first, a swift return to economic prosperity; and second, the challenge of strengthening its justification and sense of self in the face of a rapidly shifting regional and global landscape. Numerous initiatives impacting the architecture of commercial policy resulted from this. ASEAN has significant achievements to its credit:

First of all, compared to many other regional organizations in the developing world, it is still a significantly stronger and operationally effective organisation. Second, since the CLMV states gradually re-entered the regional and global mainstream in the mid-1980s, Southeast Asia—a region known for its immense variety and historical political unrest—has been relatively tranquil. However, although border clashes continue, domestic tensions have dominated. Recent maritime territorial claims in the area have demonstrated that ASEAN's geopolitical issues cannot be separated from the region's economic progress toward collaboration. In fact, these occurrences serve as a reminder that ASEAN was initially formed as a political-security alliance, with the economic goal emerging afterwards. However, given the connection of geopolitics and economics, ASEAN as an institution will need to face and overcome these obstacles if it is to fully realize its collective economic potential. The third and most significant accomplishment of ASEAN has been the region's quick economic growth and growing living standards. The extent to which ASEAN as an organization has benefited is debatable. However, it is indisputable that this quick economic progress has been made possible by the leaders of the region's resolve to create more cordial relations. One

notable accomplishment has been the engagement with newly independent Viet Nam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Cambodia during the early phases of their economic reform, following decades of hostility and one of the worst wars in recent memory.

Since its founding, ASEAN has developed into a more powerful alliance when it comes to working together on sociocultural, political, and economic issues. The development gap between the early members and the CLMV countries is a relatively recent difficulty that ASEAN has to deal with. Closing these disparities through production network process efficiency and economies of scale is one of the goals of the ASEAN Economic Community. Regarding ASEAN, there is, though, one area of imbalance as it is currently perceived as prioritizing economic cooperation over its political-security and socio-cultural facets. These nations are concerned about China's growing assertiveness and might.

One other important question is who would lead ASEAN. On numerous instances, some members have opposed Indonesia's government. The members harbor a great deal of mistrust and anxiety. For instance, there is a perceived baseless worry in the Philippines that the ASEAN Economic Community will oversupply the nation with imports from other ASEAN countries. The Philippines lags behind other ASEAN members in terms of exports when it comes to quality standards. Despite the potential benefits of liberalizing the transport services industry, the Philippines has also been sluggish to ratify regional accords on this front.

Future demographic challenges and a growing likelihood of falling into the middle-income trap will confront ASEAN member states. It is essential that ASEAN keeps increasing its population's productivity and capacity in order to stop this. To meet these difficulties, ASEAN requires new economic agreements that can pave the road for bolstering economic cooperation.

V. "THE SUBCONTINENT CAN RISE AND SHINE TOGETHER" - SAARC

1985 saw the founding of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, or SAARC. The SAARC's founding members include nations like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. In 2007, Afghanistan became a member of SAARC.

To grasp the South Asian region's vastness, one can turn to international comparisons. This region encompasses 3 percent of the world's land area while housing nearly a quarter of the global population. Its inter-state boundaries remain unsettled, often porous and subject to disputes. However, despite these challenges, the eight nations comprising the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are bound together by a shared legacy of historical resistance against European colonialism and subsequent development, along with strong social ties and enduring human interactions across borders. In fact, these SAARC member states have more in common with each other than with their neighboring regions. Nevertheless, the relationships among SAARC nations continue to face significant tensions both externally and internally, as these countries grapple with the persistent challenges of poverty and other socio-political issues.

Within the framework of SAARC, South Asian nations have pledged to boost their trade activities by adopting favorable measures, including the formation of specialized groups tasked with implementing trade liberalization proposals. This commitment was formalized through the establishment of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements (SAPTA) in 1995. The SAPTA treaty was built upon the principle of reciprocity as a foundation for negotiating tariff reforms, encompassing all types of products, and placing a priority on addressing the requirements of the least developed countries within the region.

The 19th SAARC summit was scheduled to be held in Islamabad, Pakistan from 15 to 19 Nov. 2016, but could not be held due to an attack by Pakistan on India. However, the SAARC is implied to develop peace, progress & stability in the South Asian area. The secretaries, ministers and heads of the states participate in many programs held in various SAARC countries connected to economic development, furtherance of peoples' health, various trade facilities and exchange of cultural views, and so on. Multilateral issues are discussed here and any discussion on bilateral and contentious issues is strictly prohibited. India as a leader country has expanded its scope to foster beneficial trade relations among the member states of SAARC. Indeed, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) serves as a forum where the inhabitants of South Asia can collaborate in an atmosphere characterized by friendship, trust, and mutual understanding. Its overarching objective is to enhance the well-being of the South Asian populace and elevate their living standards by fostering rapid economic advancement, social development, and cultural enrichment within the region.

Naturally, it is important to keep in mind that SAARC was founded in 1985 with high hopes. However, those hopes haven't been entirely realized yet. The member states' collective self-reliance and mutual collaboration have not advanced as much as anticipated even after 35 years of its founding. We can fully understand the issue if we examine the issues or barriers preventing SAARC from succeeding; as we all know, nationalist perspectives are prevalent among SAARC member nations. In addition, there are political disagreements among SAARC members. In addition, there are issues with the countries' bilateral relations. In addition, India's dread of the unity of its neighbors and its hegemonic appearance to them both hinder the development of positive ties between them. Furthermore, there is the ongoing and protracted disagreement between Pakistan and India. The normal functioning of ties between member nations might occasionally be hampered by indirect meddling by foreign states. The member nations' mutual competition in the economy can occasionally lead to strained relations between them.

The critics of SAARC would bring up trade statistics or the association's failure in resolving major issues, slow pace of institutionalization, and inability to hold regular summits, as reasons to look beyond regional cooperation. Often we have seen bilateral hitch in relations have hampered regional process, it may be a transit facility to send goods to the third country which is often blocked under some pretexts, which speaks of a mindset of hostility although when broader supra-national cooperation is clearly in the national interest. For example, Pakistan has not only refused to grant India Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status which it is obligated to do under international agreements but also transit movement of goods across Pakistan from India to third countries is barred from time to time. The lack of infrastructural network is the biggest hurdle in this regard. The region has failed to play on its strengths and make use of existing opportunities. Perhaps, there is truth in the above-said

criticisms. But precisely because of these reasons, it has become all the more important for South Asia to rethink its regional priorities and pursue a second generation push. It is easy to despair and give up; but one needs courage and patience to build and sustain. The world's future lies in achieving a multipolar system with benign forces of regionalism to build layers of cooperation. In this mission SAARC can definitely make a key contribution.

VI. ACRONYM OF FIVE MAJOR EMERGING ECONOMIES-BRICS

The BRICS initiative has a big impact on world development, politics, and economy. The BRICS countries, which are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, have a variety of natural resources and resources. These include large amounts of raw materials and natural resources, high technology, cheap and semi-skilled labor, skilled labor, and a sizable market with strong demand. As a result, it is possible to map out future collaborations through joint ventures for mutual benefit. Even if it may not be very active right now, BRICS is still a strong bloc. In 2018, its total output accounted for 23.2% of the global GDP. In 2015, its population accounted for 41% of the world's total population. South Africa was quickly added to BRIC during its inaugural summit, which took place in Russia in 2006. In 2009, BRICS was formally established with great excitement. The main goals of BRICS, in addition to mutual equality and non-interference in each country's internal policy, are collaboration and the sharing of economic advantages among members.

By 2030, the member nations of the BRICS will contribute over half of the global economic growth. In the next years, the BRICS countries will begin to feel the impact of innovations, the digital economy, and artificial intelligence. By working together, they can encourage reskilling to offset the loss of older employment and generate new ones. In the future, technical cooperation will be crucial for the BRICS. It is important to keep in mind that the growing economies of the BRICS are all making the shift from agrarian to developed industrial economies. However, each of the BRICS nations also emphasized the value of collaboration amongst one another in order to advance agriculture, saying, "We recognize the importance of science-based agriculture and deploying ICT to that end." In addition, Russia has invited India to make natural gas investments in the Arctic. The 11th BRICS summit took place in Brasilia on November 14, 2019. Prime Minister Modi attended a significant event, but overall, not much was spoken about it and no major announcements were made. The BRICS meeting demonstrated that the organization, which was once considered a rival to the G7 group of developed nations, was still together and forging agreements for future partnerships, even if the western media in particular paid little attention to it.

Why is BRICS so Popular or considered to be an Emerging Centre of Power?

The key to understanding BRICS' significance primarily lies in its relative success and coordinated efforts in four overarching areas of collective focus. Since its inception, the organization has steadily expanded practical cooperation, enhanced communication and coordination, upheld peace and security, and celebrated cultural diversity. BRICS member states have also expressed their commitment to addressing additional issues such as terrorism, climate change, energy security, women's empowerment, and poverty alleviation. Moreover, the decision to establish regional centers for the New Development Bank in South Africa and Brazil implies the utilization of its resources for funding projects in Africa and other member countries.

Another factor contributing to BRICS' prominence is the recent tariff disputes initiated by US President Donald Trump against several emerging economies, with China being a major target. China, as the world's second-largest economy and a substantial contributor to global growth, has been a central focus. Furthermore, BRICS members, particularly China, have emerged as role models in the fight against poverty and inequality. Both China and India are actively engaged in numerous poverty alleviation programs and infrastructure development projects in various African nations. In contrast to the unequal outcomes generated by the Bretton Woods system of global governance, BRICS' novel governance structures are emerging as exemplars of equality, effectiveness, and efficiency. Overall, these five influential countries in the world continue to advance their cooperative agenda and promote collaboration across diverse fields.

If BRICS is to work as a cohesive group it has to give a level playing field to all its members. But already the disturbing tendency is China's shadow looms large over the BRICS stage. And the Russians? President Putin is sure to hold BRICS leaders' optimal attention. Future global politics is mired in complexity. So, it is best to have moderate expectations of BRICS although with better mutual understanding BRICS may do better, strengthening cooperation among its own members and with its partners in Africa and elsewhere than pursuing a highly ambitious agenda to change the world. Several new challenges have arisen from: the rising global turbulence unleashed by Trump's unconventional and disruptive management of international affairs, the march towards Brexit, the deeply fractured western alliance, rise of unilateralism etc. BRICS aspires to bring about benign reforms in the UN, including the Security Council, a rules-based trading system, and a new global economic governance structure that reflects the voice of emerging and developing economies, but still it seems a far-fetched vision that can be achieved easily tomorrow.

VII. REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS VS INDIVIDUAL STATES

With the emergence and successful working of regional organizations (as has been analyzed above) the trend of a world hegemon was perceived to have been defeated in the beginning of the twenty first century. Globalization and the concept of viewing the world as shrinking territorial relevance, giving way to other dynamic forces, has almost unleashed a future immersed in the ocean of unipolarity. Multi Plurality, multipolarity, confederal existence and collaborative ventures are a result of the collective competition psyche where one organization (working with several countries) is trying to prove superior to its similar institutional fellow in international politics. However, the validity of this truth can further be contested in a debate claiming the next throne in world politics. The growing authority of China and India, with their shelter breaking role in international affairs, in the last two decades, have once again made a u-turn to the global power wavelength where unipolarism seems destined. The query at this juncture is which nation, India or China, will grab the world throne?

If we look at China's history we would see a history of success which was achieved through a persistent and sustained leadership. The revolutionized transformation was achieved not in one-shot. The second phase i.e. late 1970s and 1980s was led by the prominent leader Deng Xiaoping. Deng introduced new reforms. He perceived the necessity of radical reforms. Herein lies China's relative success when the Soviet leaders had failed to bring about coveted reforms. But the Chinese system did not collapse. The leaders were cool

and they firmly held the reign of control. So, the ability and farsightedness of the leaders allowed it to flourish and thrive.

China's ongoing reforms exemplify how globalization can lead to or result in a substantial growth rate. Over the 20-year period from 1995 to 2005, China has already demonstrated an extraordinary annual growth rate of over 9 percent, positioning itself on the verge of becoming the world's largest economy—an unprecedented achievement in history. In fact, China openly acknowledges its own "rise" today. The concept of the "peaceful rise of China" was initially introduced by Chinese theorist Zheng Bijian in 2003. It emphasized that China's economic growth, improved living standards, and increasing global prestige had been achieved through peaceful development during the reform era. This discourse gained significant attention both domestically and internationally.

Subsequently, the terminology was adjusted to emphasize China's "peaceful development" to avoid any potentially threatening connotations associated with the "rise of a major power." Nonetheless, there was a recognition that, after a century of struggles against Western dominance, China had emerged as a global force. Its industrial production continues to grow steadily at a remarkable pace, making China the world's top producer of various industrial goods such as steel, coal, electricity, cement, chemical fiber, and television sets. Additionally, it leads in the production of sugar, cereals, tea, fruits, among others. While China's position in the Human Development Index has experienced fluctuations, there has been an overall upward trajectory. Literacy rates and life expectancy have notably improved, and there has been a substantial reduction in poverty. Concurrently, China's trade volume has seen a significant multi-fold increase, resulting in substantial trade surpluses during the fourth decade of reforms.

China characterizes its economic system as a "socialist market economy" to underscore that it is a market-driven economy under the guidance and control of the Communist Party and the state. Deng Xiaoping reassured that there was no need to fear the growth of capitalism in China because the leadership of the Communist Party would always safeguard against any unforeseen circumstances.

The present president Xi Jinping has pursued several ambitious programmes. One major initiative is deepening market reforms. Another remarkable international initiative is One Belt One Road that he announced in 2013. The ancient silk route linking the landmass of Asia and Europe on the one hand and the maritime route stretching from China's east coast to regions and islands in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, the Gulf etc were sought to be linked under this plan.

China has also taken initiative to set up AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) with over 40 countries including India. China is now a leading force, playing an influential role in G20, World Economic Forum and now it is asserting its sovereign rights over the 80 percent of South China Sea. Chinese naval power is also expanding in the Indian Ocean. China is a nuclear power with more nuclear warheads than that of India. China claimed that they have more than 250 warheads. However experts claim that it is complete hogwash as China never publishes their true military figures to the world.

Asian countries seem to be leading the political power game. In fact, the last two decades have often been termed as the 'Asian age' belonging to mostly India and China. With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization, India has redefined its policies which now tend to incline more towards global dynamism as compared to regional parochialism. To assess where India is headed today, it is important to look at the period immediately after independence in 1947, especially the first 10 to 15 years. Just after the colonial period, India tried to accept the challenges of nation building, shaping the boundaries of British India and the princely states. Ever since the setting up of the stage for the first democratic elections in 1952, India has been constantly focussing on soft power approach when Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India claimed 'no first use of weapons' as one of the basic mottos of India's foreign policy along with respecting sovereignty and integrity of the other nations. Moreover, the decolonisation process was supported by India to a large extent focussing on Non-Alignment movement during the Cold War and setting an example to the other newly independent nations.

India had a largely defensive foreign policy for a very long time. Its early rhetoric was audacious, supporting what former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru called a "real internationalism" that aimed to advance shared prosperity and world peace. However, because of its inherent shortcomings, its strategic objectives in reality were limited to shielding the nation's democracy and progress from the fierce bipolar rivalry of the Cold War. While India's foreign policy changed over these years, its overall orientation remained consistent. India remained fundamentally conservative and its nonalignment was primarily intended to keep U.S.-Soviet hostility from jeopardizing its security, autonomy, and well-being at a time when the nation was still relatively weak.

Looking back, this endeavor proved to be more fruitful than first anticipated. India emerged from the Cold War with a major portion of its territory still intact, a successful state and nation-building endeavor, sustained political autonomy, and a solid international reputation. Although it produced some amazing economic and technological capabilities in the process, its fixation with India's nonalignment was primarily directed against preventing the country's security, autonomy, and well-being at a time when it was still relatively weak from being undermined by U.S.-Soviet animosity. Unfortunately, India's "self-reliance" as a Leading Power also guaranteed the country's relative economic weight loss in Asia and abroad.

India began the second stage of its foreign policy growth after 1991, when it was released from the necessity of avoiding rival alliances at all costs. India pursued a range of strategic alliances with over 30 nations in an effort to broaden particular types of cooperation that would strengthen its position and quicken its ascent. The year the Soviet Union fell apart saw the implementation of significant internal economic changes that cleared the way for India to continue growing at a faster rate. The disastrous 3.5 percent annual growth rate that was observed up until the 1980s was pushed to 5.5 percent growth rate improvement and then to 7 percent growth since the new century by the 1991 reforms.

Thus, there are three distinct stages to the "Rising India" narrative. The Indian economy grew by 3.5 percent annually on average between 1950 and 1980, which was only slightly less than China's growth (which was closer to 4 percent) during that time. The Indian economy grew by 5.5% year on average between 1980 and 2000, while China's GDP grew by

over 10% annually during the same period. Additionally, the Indian economy expanded by roughly 7.5% year between 2000 and 2012. Consequently, even if India's economic growth lagged behind China's, it also showed that it was capable of expanding at a faster pace. India's tremendous growth between 1995 and 2010 changed the geopolitical dialogue surrounding the nation.

India's enhanced economic performance allowed it to integrate its economy with the new development engines in Asia and liberalize its trade and investment policies. Increased interaction with East and Southeast Asia was facilitated by India's "Look East Policy." The Bay of Bengal Initiative for MultiSectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), an economic alliance comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, was established in response to India's hostile stance toward Pakistan in South Asia. India has been freed from Pakistan's attempts to keep it restricted to South Asia, with China's encouragement and backing, thanks to Modi's policies. India has attempted to reshape the surrounding area through BIMSTEC and its relationships within ASEAN.

Additionally, India has improved its commercial relations with nations in West Asia, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council. The nation's "Look West Policy" has made it possible for it to increase security and trade ties with the GCC. India also has defense alliances with Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. It has resisted pressure from the US and continued to pursue an autonomous foreign policy toward Iran. In West Asia, there are more than six million Indian workers who send back almost \$70 billion a year. In the Indian Ocean region, India has also increased its activity.

Reviving community building in the Indian Ocean Region is the goal of Modi's SAGAR ("Security and Growth for All in the Region") ideology. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was too ahead of its time and had too many members to be manageable, so it hasn't been able to have a significant impact. With a narrower focus on the Indian Ocean region, SAGAR aims to improve India's ties with countries around the seaboard of East Africa and Southeast Asia as well as island states like Singapore, Mauritius, the Maldives, and the Seychelles.

India is setting the groundwork for a new global architecture through its joint projects. Its G20 presidency adds even more evidence to support the aforementioned claim. "One Earth, One Family, One Future" is the subject of the President's varied agenda. The subject upholds the importance of humans, animals, plants, and microbes as well as their interdependence on Earth and in the larger world. India's international orientation has been further enhanced by its dominant position among the G20 countries.

The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the EU. The nineteen countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico and Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK and the US. India holds the Presidency of the G20 from 1st December 2022 to 30th November 2023. The Leaders' Summit is the climax of the G20 process and the work carried out over the year through Ministerial Meetings, Working Groups and Engagement Groups. The 18th Heads of State and Government Summit of the Group of 20 (G20) will take place in September, 2023 in New Delhi, India. The Indian Presidency will also spotlight Lifestyle for

Environment to emphasize a lifestyle inclined towards sustainable development and rational use of environmental friendly resources. The objective is to achieve a cleaner, greener and bluer environment. The Working Groups will focus on the following tracks : agriculture, anti-corruption, culture, digital economy, disaster risk reduction, development, education, employment, environment and climate sustainability, energy transitions, health, trade and investment and tourism.

The G20 Presidency has revamped India's thrust power to a great extent. Having lived up to challenges in society within its borders India uses experiments to address world poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. It is empathetic towards the least developed nations and offers a hand of friendship to countries which have so long been in the back stage of world politics and shy to step within the main lens of the world arena.

Capturing its further essence through Chandrayaan Project: India's Chandrayaan-3 becomes the first space mission to land near the south pole of the moon. Participating in the growing global interest in space and soft power India is now one of the four countries to have achieved the prestige of launching its spacecraft successfully, thus proving the wonder of its wise brains! Thanks to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for elevating the dreams and ambitions of every Indian. The high soaring rocket created to fulfill the programme of lunar exploration is not only a momentous achievement but it also bears the testament of the Indian scientists' relentless efforts.

Project director of Chandrayaan 1, Mr. Annadurai, states, "If we want to develop the Moon as an outpost, a gateway to deep space, then we need to carry out many more explorations to see what sort of habitat would we be able to build there with the locally-available material and how will we carry supplies to our people there." "Therefore, the ultimate objective of India's probes is that, when the Moon—which is currently separated from Earth by 360,000 kilometers of space—becomes an extended continent, we will not be a passive observer, but rather will have an active, protected life in that continent, and we need to keep working towards that." And a successful Chandrayaan-3 will be a significant step in that direction.

India has received congratulations from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin for their successful soft landing on the moon. India's third attempt to land on the moon comes only days after Russia's unmanned Luna-25 spacecraft lost control and collided with the moon.

Chandrayaan-3, as the name implies, is India's third expedition to the Moon. India will be the first nation to land close to the south pole if it is successful. In addition, it will only be the fourth nation to land softly on the moon; the others three have all landed close to the equator: the US, the former Soviet Union, and China.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The development scale seems to extend further for India especially in the last two decades. It is the fastest growing economy in the world and is poised to continue on this path with aspirations to reach high and grab the superpower throne. The dream projects and powerful missions have changed the equation in global power politics for India as well as

other nations. Perceptions have differed and so is the logic. The question with which the article began (who will take the next world throne?) creates a deep incite into the minds of political scientists to have an overview of the understanding of various terms in the subject. Concepts of democracy, power, superpower, ruler, nation and legitimate authority have proven to be more dynamic than ever before. States' acting on the billiard board today is quite unpredictable as the player keeps on changing his side for a perfect shot!

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