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.

1. **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.

1. **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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1. **Growth of West European Integration**

Europe at the end of the 2nd World War was in turmoil. There was a huge reconstruction job to be done. Some thought in terms of a united Europe like the United States of America in which the European States would come together under a federal system of government. However Europe soon split into two parts over the American Marshall plan to promote recovery in Europe. The nations of Western Europe gladly made use of American aid but the Russians refused to allow the countries of Eastern Europe to accept for fear that their own control over the area would be undermined. From 1947 onwards the two parts of Europe developed separately. It was kept apart by Joseph Stalin’s ‘Iron Curtain’.

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:

1. More powers to European Parliament,
2. Greater and Economic and Monetary Union with a common currency (EURO)
3. 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.

Further the effect of the United Kingdom’s departure from the EU has been mostly negative on both sides of the English Channel. Britain’s difficult historical relationship with Europe has often been a strenuous factor for the EU's increasing economic and political role in world politics. In recent years, preoccupied by the debt crisis, the fragility of its financial institutions, the fight for wages for growth and against unemployment, and the rise of populism, the European Union (EU) failed to strengthen, let alone increase its influence and presence on the international stage. Therefore, a couple of weeks before European citizens are called to exercise their great democratic right to elect a new European Parliament, the big question is this: in light of harsh realities and past failures, what can reasonably be done by the next Parliament to make significant progress with the Union’s foreign policy?

1. **The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**

In a region regaining independence and plagued by conflict since the end of the Second World War, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formally established in August 1967. It strived, first and foremost, to forge diplomatic cohesion among its members. Many of the countries were former colonial countries like Indonesia which had moved away from Western colonial powers and aligned itself with other former colonized countries to form the Non-Alignment Movement. But these countries faced considerable challenges, including concerns about the growing influence of communism in the region and massive debt. It was in this context we find the formation of ASEAN in 1967 which is based on the perceived need to establish a zone of peace and cooperation.

ASEAN continues to work with regional and global external partners, as its principle is open regionalism. One of the most important turning points in ASEAN cooperation was bridge building with external partners. Examples of ASEAN cooperation initiatives include the ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN plus Japan, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea), the East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Plus Six (the Plus Three countries, Australia, India, and New Zealand). The agreements between ASEAN and its partners have helped reinforce the so-called “open economy” of Asian countries.

However in ASEAN we find 3 types of states, one like Thailand and Malaysia which are relatively lagging then the fast-growing CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar & Vietnam) and thirdly open economies like Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia as big neighbours. The two original goals of the organization was (i) To prevent the historical disputes among its member states from developing into armed conflict. (ii) To keep the major external powers from using the region as an arena for their quarrels. These two goals remain relevant to ASEAN even today.

ASEAN in its early years was perceived as a rather “loose” organization with little tangible progress. It took some time for the organization to consolidate cooperation and cohesiveness among its member states. Its five original members were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. They signed the broadly defined Bangkok Declaration. In general, its objectives were “To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.... To promote regional peace and stability.... To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance... in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and administrative spheres.”

Subsequently, ASEAN grew into today’s close-knit group—holding some 700 meetings a year on economic, political, cultural, educational, and security issues. One of ASEAN’s greatest achievements has been to effectively promote itself regionally and internationally through a wide range of initiatives. Though economic cooperation was not the main goal of ASEAN in its early years, it has become more important over the years.

Economic cooperation became more important in the 1990s. A number of factors provided impetus to ASEAN’s economic cooperation. These include the rise of China as a major foreign direct investment (FDI) destination and exporter. Rising FDI and establishment of production chains in ASEAN was another factor. Global trading agreements also evolved with the establishment of MERCOSUR, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The AFTA Agreement was concluded at the Singapore ASEAN Summit in January 1992. The next landmark in ASEAN’s economic cooperation was the ASEAN Economic Community, first proposed in 2002 and established in December 2015.

Having grown in strength and number—and its ambitious program of economic and trade reforms—ASEAN stood out to the developing world as a successful example of regional cooperation and integration worthy of emulation. By the 1990s, several domestic and external factors helped the ASEAN economic agenda transition from cooperation to integration. Singapore played an active role in pushing for integration initiatives. All these major strides strengthened ASEAN and it became the most resilient regional group among countries of the developing world. However at that very stage the 1997 Asian financial crisis struck.

For the ASEAN region, the crisis had two principal effects. First, it lost some of its commercial attractiveness, on the other hand, China and India were largely unaffected by the crisis. Moreover, ASEAN was seen by many as ineffective and unable to respond decisively in times of crisis. The second effect was more positive. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 led to a general rethinking towards deepening regional economic cooperation—the need to develop the capacity for some sort of coordinated macroeconomic response to avert future crises. Post-Asian financial crisis years were marked by intensification in regional cooperation initiatives. Some of the landmark initiatives adopted during this period were AFTA, the ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement, and the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services etc.

ASEAN’s evolution, at this juncture, was defined by two key features: one being the rapid return to economic growth; the second being the struggle to better articulate its rationale and identity against the backdrop of a fast-changing regional and global environment. This led to a plethora of initiatives affecting commercial policy architecture.

ASEAN has significant achievements to its credit:

First, it remains an effective functioning entity—far stronger than many other regional organizations in the developing world. Second, for a region characterized by great diversity and past political conflict, Southeast Asia has been largely peaceful since the mid-1980s, as the CLMV states progressively re-entered the regional and international mainstream. Nonetheless, while border skirmishes persist, most conflicts have been internal. As recent maritime territorial claims in the region have shown, economic progress on cooperation cannot be divorced from the geopolitical challenges facing ASEAN as a whole. Indeed, these events remind us that ASEAN was born as a politico-security pact, with the economic agenda a more recent experiment. Given the interdependence between economics and geopolitics, however, ASEAN as an institution will have to confront and resolve these challenges if it is to maximize progress on its joint economic potential. ASEAN’s third and most important achievement has been its rapid economic development and rising living standards. One can debate how much ASEAN as an institution has helped. But it is undeniable that the region’s leaders’ determination to forge more harmonious relations has helped facilitate this rapid economic development. In particular, the engagement with post-conflict Viet Nam, the Lao PDR, and Cambodia during their early stage of economic liberalization, after decades of acrimony and one of the most destructive wars in recent memory, has been a signal achievement.

Over the years since its formation, ASEAN has become a stronger organization in terms of cooperation in economic, political-security, and socio-cultural matters. A more recent challenge that ASEAN faces is the development gap between the early members and the CLMV countries. One objective of the ASEAN Economic Community is to close these gaps through economies of scale and efficiency in production network processes. However, one lack of balance so far as ASEAN is concerned is that it is currently seen as putting too much emphasis on economic cooperation while almost neglecting its political-security and socio-cultural aspects. The rise of a stronger and assertive China is a matter of concern for these countries.

Who will provide the Leadership in ASEAN is another major issue. Some members have resisted Indonesia’s leadership on many occasions.There are ample fears and suspicions amongst the members. For example, the Philippines feel afraid that the ASEAN Economic Community will flood the country with intra-ASEAN imports but such fears seem unfounded. With regard to exports, the Philippines lag behind other ASEAN member states in quality benchmarks. The Philippines have also been slow to ratify regional agreements on transport services liberalization, despite the potential gains from opening up this sector.

In the future, ASEAN member states will be faced with rising demographic pressures and an increasing probability of being caught in the middle- income trap. To prevent this, it is vital that ASEAN continue to raise the productivity and capacity of its people. ASEAN needs new economic arrangements that can open ways to strengthen economic cooperation to face those challenges

1. **"The subcontinent can rise and shine together"** - **SAARC**

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation of SAARC was established in 1985. Countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives are the pioneer members of the SAARC. Afghanistan has been included in the membership of SAARC in the year 2007.

The overall scale of the South Asian region can be understood from international comparison. It consists of 3 percent of the world's area and it has nearly one quarter of the world's population. The inter-state boundaries are not settled yet and remain porous and disputed. Yet, bound together by the legacy of strong common bonds of historical struggle against European colonialism and evolution thereafter, social structure and longstanding human interaction across nations in this region, the 8 countries that make up the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have far more in common with each other than they do with their regional neighbours. Nevertheless the relationships of the SAARC member states continue to experience great stress in relation to each other and internally all these countries struggle to come out of poverty, and other socio-political challenges.

Under the aegis of SAARC the South Asian countries have committed themselves to increasing trade with each other by taking favourable steps like establishing specialist groups to implement proposals on liberalizing trade. This was brought into effect through the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements (SAPTA) in 1995. The treaty used the principle of reciprocity as a basis for negotiating tariff reform, the inclusion of all products and prioritizing the needs of least developed countries in 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. In fact, SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) provides a platform for the peoples of South Asia to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding. It aims to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.

Of Course, it must be remembered here that SAARC was established in 1985 with a lot of expectations. But those expectations have not yet been fulfilled completely. Even after 35 years of its establishment, collective self-reliance and mutual cooperation among the member states have not yet progressed much as expected. If we analyze the problems or obstacles that are in the way of SAARC’s success, we can realize the matter thoroughly; as we know there is a predominance of Nationalist viewpoints by these Nation-states of SAARC. Moreover, there are political disputes between member states of SAARC. Besides, there are the problems with bilateral relations between the nations. Apart from this, India’s hegemonic appearance to the neighboring states and India’s fear of the unity of neighbours act as a problem in promoting good relations among them. In addition, there is the episode of the long-drawn India-Pakistan dispute. Sometimes indirect intervention of foreign states creates obstacles in the smooth relations among the member states. Mutual competition in the economic field by the member states also sometimes poses unfriendly relations among the states.

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.

1. **Acronym of Five major emerging economies -BRICS**

BRICS holds significant implications for global politics, economics and development. A grouping of five countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa; BRICS members have diverse resources and natural assets -from having huge amounts of raw materials and natural resources, high technology, cheap and semi-skilled to skilled man power, i.e. good amount of human resource and a big market with good demand — hence, it is possible to draw a map for collaborations in the future, through joint ventures for mutual benefit. BRICS remains a powerful bloc, though it may not be hyperactive during the present times. Its total output was 23.2 percent of the world’s GDP in 2018. Its population was 41 per cent of the global population in 2015. BRIC was first founded in 2006 in Russia and soon South Africa was added in its first meeting and it became BRICS with a lot of fanfare in 2009. The key objectives of BRICS are primarily to cooperate and distribute mutual economic benefits among its members besides non-interference in the internal policies of each nation and mutual equality.

BRICS member countries will nearly account for 50 percent of world’s economic growth by 2030. The importance of innovations, digital economy and AI are going to be felt by BRICS members in the next few years and they can cooperate to promote re-skilling so that new jobs are created while old jobs are being lost. Cooperation in technology is going to be very important for the BRICS in the future. A point to be noted here is that BRICS are all developing economies which are transitioning from agriculture-based to developed industrial economies. But from the point of food security each of these countries of BRICS also underscored the importance of cooperation among themselves to develop agriculture: “We recognise the importance of science-based agriculture and deploying ICT to that end.” Besides, Russia has extended an invitation to India to invest in the Arctic region for natural gas. The 11th BRICS summit was held on November 14, 2019 in Brasilia. It was an important affair which Prime Minister Modi attended, but there were no great pronouncements and, on the whole, it went largely unnoticed. The western media especially did not take much notice of it, yet the BRICS meeting confirmed that the group, thought to be a challenger of the G7 group of advanced countries, was still together and building consensus for future collaborations.

Why is BRICS so popular or considered to be an emerging centre of power?

The answer lies primarily in its relative success and coordinated performance in the four broad areas of collective focus. Since its birth the organization has been expanding practical cooperation, improving communication and coordination, safeguarding peace and security, and embracing cultural diversity. Now BRICS members have also expressed commitment to work on other issues like terrorism, climate change, energy security, women's empowerment, poverty alleviation etc. In addition the logic of setting up New Development Bank’s regional centres in South Africa and Brazil demands that its coffers now be used to fund projects in Africa and other member countries. Second, what perhaps is also making BRICS grab headlines is US President Donald Trump's recent tariff wars against several of these emerging economies. The biggest of these have been against China which not just stands today as the second largest economy but contributes over one third of the annual global growth rate. Third, BRICS members, especially China, have over the years emerged as an inspiring model for fighting poverty and inequality. China, as also India, is contributing to several poverty alleviation programs and especially to infrastructure building in many African countries. Whereas the Bretton Woods system of global governance has generated extreme inequality both within and among nation-states, BRICS' new governance structures are emerging as models of equality, efficacy and efficiency. On the whole, the group of five important countries in the world seem to be getting on with their agenda of cooperation and exchange in various 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.

1. **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.

Today China’s reforms vindicate how globalization could usher in or translate into a high growth rate. It is already about to emerge as the largest economy of the world with an annual rate of over 9 percent during the 20-year period, 1995-2005—an experience unparalleled in world history. In fact today the Chinese themselves consciously talk about the ‘rise of China’. Chinese theoretician Zheng Bijian initiated the discourse on ‘peaceful rise of China’ in 2003, stressing the fact that the economic growth, increase in living standards and the growing prestige of China in world forums had been accomplished through peaceful development of China during the reform period. Soon this talk acquired widespread attention in China and abroad. The formulation was slightly altered when we replaced the word ‘rise’ to talk about China’s peaceful development, thus to avoid the threatening implication of ‘rise of a big power’. But clearly there was an acknowledgement of the fact that after over a century of struggle against domination by the West, China had emerged as a world power. Its industrial production is growing continuously at a high rate. It is already World’s number one producer of many industrial products like steel, coal, electricity, cement, chemical fibre, television sets besides being the leading producer of sugar, cereals, tea, fruits etc. Even though its position in the Human Development Index has fluctuated, the index itself has registered a rising trend. Its literacy and life expectancy have improved tremendously and there is a significant decline in poverty. Simultaneously it is also noticeable to watch that its volume of trade has increased several folds. China has experienced a large trade surplus in the fourth decade of reforms. China calls its system ‘socialist market economy’ to stress that it is a market economy guided or controlled by the Communist party and the state. Deng Xiaoping affirmed and assured that there was no need to fear the growth of capitalism in China because the Communist party leadership will always guard against any eventuality.

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.

For the longest time, India’s foreign policy was essentially defensive. Its early rhetoric was bold—championing, in former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s words, a “real internationalism” that promoted global peace and shared prosperity. Yet its material weaknesses ensured that its strategic aims in practice were focused principally on protecting the country’s democracy and development from the intense bipolar competition of the Cold War. Although the character of India’s international engagement varied during these years, its broad orientation did not: remaining fundamentally conservative, India’s nonalignment aimed mainly at preventing U.S.-Soviet hostility from undermining its security, autonomy, and well-being at a time when the country was still relatively infirm.

In retrospect, this effort turned out to be more successful than was imagined initially. India survived the Cold War with its territorial integrity broadly intact, its state and nation-building activities largely successful, and its political autonomy and international standing durably ensconced. In the process, it created some impressive industrial and technological capabilities, but its obsession with India’s nonalignment aimed mainly at preventing U.S.-Soviet hostility from undermining its security, autonomy, and well-being at a time when the country was still relatively infirm. India as a Leading Power “self-reliance” unfortunately also ensured the relative decline of India’s economic weight in Asia and beyond.

After 1991, when it was freed from the compulsions of having to avoid competing alliances at all costs, India entered into the second phase of its foreign policy evolution. Pursuing a variety of strategic partnerships with more than 30 different countries, India sought to expand specific forms of collaboration that would increase its power and accelerate its rise. The domestic economic reforms unleashed in the very year of the Soviet Union’s collapse paved the way for consolidating India’s path towards higher growth. From the abysmal 3.5 percent annual growth witnessed until the 1980s, the 1991 reforms accelerated the improving 5.5 percent growth rate to the 7 percent demonstrated since the new millennium.

Therefore the “Rising India'' story has three sharp phases. From 1950 to 1980, the Indian economy grew by an average of 3.5 percent per year, which was only marginally lower than China’s growth during the same period (at closer to 4 per cent). Between 1980 and 2000, the Indian economy grew by an average of 5.5 percent per year, compared to almost 10 per cent for China. And from 2000 to 2012, the Indian economy grew by approximately 7.5 per cent per year. Thus, while India was consistently behind China in terms of its economic growth, it too demonstrated that it was capable of growing at higher rates. India’s rapid rise in the period 1995 – 2010 altered the geopolitical discourse around the country.

With its improved economic performance, India was able to liberalize its trade and investment policy and integrate its economy into the new engines of growth in Asia. India’s “Look East Policy'' contributed to greater engagement with East and Southeast Asia. In South Asia, Pakistan’s hostile approach towards India encouraged the latter to promote the regrouping of the region with the creation of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for MultiSectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), an economic grouping made up of Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Modi’s policy has been to liberate India from Pakistan’s attempts, with the support and encouragement of China, to keep India confined to South Asia. Through BIMSTEC and its relations within ASEAN, India has sought to redefine the surrounding region.

India has also strengthened economic ties with West Asian countries, including the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. The country’s “Look West Policy'' has allowed it to expand trade and security relations with the GCC. In addition, India has defense partnerships with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. It has maintained an independent foreign policy with respect to Iran, despite pressure from the United States. Over six million Indians live and work in West Asia, remitting around $70 billion annually. India has also become more active in the Indian Ocean Region.

Modi’s SAGAR (“Security and Growth for All in the Region”) doctrine is aimed at revitalizing community building in the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has not been able to make an impact because it was both ahead of its time and too unwieldy with too many members. SAGAR has a more limited focus on the Indian Ocean Region and is aimed at strengthening India’s relations with island nations including Singapore, Mauritius, the Maldives and the Seychelles, as well as with countries along the East African and Southeast Asian seaboards.

India’s collaborative projects are preparing the stage for a new global architecture. Its presidency in the G20 further proves the validity of the above statement. The Presidency has a diverse agenda with the theme of ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future.’ The theme affirms the value of human, animal, plant and microorganisms and their interconnectedness on planet Earth in the wider universe. India’s dominion status amongst the G20 members has boosted its international orientation to a great extent.

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.

"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," Mr Annadurai says, the project director of Chandrayan 1.

"So the ultimate goal for India's probes is that one day when the Moon - separated by 360,000km of space - will become an extended continent of Earth, we will not be a passive spectator, but have an active, protected life in that continent and we need to continue to work towards that."

And a successful Chandrayaan-3 will be a significant step in that direction.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have offered their congratulations to India for its successful soft-landing on the Moon. The attempt - India's third lunar mission - comes days after Russia's unmanned Luna-25 spacecraft spun out of control and crashed into the Moon.

As the name suggests, Chandrayaan-3 is India’s third Moon mission. If it’s successful, India will become the first country to land near the south pole. It will also be only the fourth country to achieve a soft landing on the Moon - after the US, the former Soviet Union and China who have all landed near the equator.

1. C**onclusion**

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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