Destabilizing Unipolar World And Emergence Of Multi-Polarity: Theoretical Debate

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to understand and analyze the concept of return of geopolitics. This contemporary world is referred to as the era of the return of geopolitics. The revisionist powers try to contain and challenge the unipolar structure and existing world order. This paper also aims to bring out the relevance of geography and territory, highlighted and explained, in the foreign policy agenda of the revisionist powers. This creates a dilemma for the US and its unipolar structure of power. Thus, the international system is transforming into a multipolar than unipolar one. In the present age, the economy is the driving force that ensures the applicability of Ratzel's Organic State Theory. The struggle for power and sustenance is visible at the systemic, regional, state, and institutional levels. Technological advancement and kinetic warfare have some ground relevance in the present age, but geography has never become obsolete in the state foreign policy agenda. China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Turkey and their authoritative leader's foreign policy choices illustrate their plan for territorial security and occupying the land force for their survival and hegemonic ambitions.

Keywords: Returns of Geopolitics, Organic State Theory, Unipolar, Multipolar

Introduction
The research discusses the role of geopolitics in the contemporary era while focusing on the foreign policy objectives of the states under study. The power distribution in the international system and capabilities of the states determine the number and potential of great powers and their influence on the international system. The conventional narrative regarding the future of the US has profoundly shaped the status quo of the global system. The United States' globe-shaping efforts have borne fruit. The study elucidates the concept of return of geopolitics under the theoretical structure of Organic State Theory which provides that states continually seek nourishment by gaining territories, similar to that of a living organism in need of food for its nutrition. If a state desires to have control over a particular domain, then it should profess the concept of Lebensraum (living space), which means creating more room for its territorial expansion; having a smaller territory for self-satisfaction will not ensure its survival and hegemony in the system. Therefore, states in a continued endeavor to have control over the maximum amount of geography and territory, either through direct intervention or indirect intervention in the political spheres of other states. (Basin, 1987, p. 475). In this particular theoretical aspect, this piece explains the approaches adopted by the major, middle, and revisionist powers, keeping in mind their potential to influence world politics. The discussion had brought the concept of returns of geopolitics to explain the typical patterns of states in international political discourse. Interestingly, the rise of China is the notion that speculates the future of international power structure vis-à-vis the global economy and indicates the instability of the unipolar world that this research emphasizes. Although the rise of China alone cannot be considered a single reason for the multi-polarity and promotion of other powers, which will be discussed in detail in this article, it specifies the emergence of multi-polarity in the international system.

Return of Geopolitics is the concept that explains that in the contemporary era, the relevance of geopolitics has once again been established by the revisionist and challenging powers. It is imperative here to explain the concept of return of geopolitics. Geopolitics is the study of a state and its policies in the context of geography and understanding the basis of state power and the number of state interactions and vice versa. (Jeffrey & Painter, 2009, p. 29) After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Cold War ended, and scholars such as Francis Fukuyama came up with their version of understanding world politics in his book End of History and the Last Man; where he explained capitalism and democracy as the final product for understanding world politics and as global world order. (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 3-4) However, several criticisms were made over Fukuyama's vision of world politics by Samuel P Huntington in his Clash of Civilizations and other scholars.

After the September 11, 2001 attack on the USA, the relevance of geopolitics once again came to the forefront. The United States launched a war against terrorism. Later on, its invasion of Iraq (2003) brought back the attention to the relevance of geography in defining the state's foreign policy. After 2014, the geopolitical rivalries were quite evident in the shape of Russian aggression in Crimea, supporting the Bashar al Asaad regime in Syria, and supplying Turkey and India with S-400 missile technology. (*Russia hopes to agree on new S-400 missile deal with Turkey next
year," 2019) The same year also witnessed China's aggressive policies in the South China Sea and its clash with India at Doklam, and its military aggression in South Sudan, particularly in Darfur. Japan coming up with its proactive strategy in the Asia Pacific and Iran's using its alliance with Syria and Hezbollah for dominance in the Middle East were all alarming signs for the United States and European Union (EU). North Korea's belligerent policies toward the United States and its ally South Korea are also an essential factor that provides evidence that the unipolar status of the US is being challenged. All these factors mentioned above remained alarming for the unipolar structure of the world. Western countries (US & Europe) have never considered China, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and North Korea in the revival of the geopolitical fashion. Instead, they felt the triumph of capitalist democracy over communism as the ultimate end of the Cold War. Thus, these emerging situations prove the research's central premise that unipolar order is being de-stabilized due to the emergence of multi-polarity.

Walter Russel has illustrated the concept of return of geopolitics and discussed the challenge to the status quo by the major, middle, and revisionist powers. (Mead, 2014, p. 69) This research paper brings the concept of return of geopolitics in a theoretical framework and understanding this very concept with the help of a level of analysis. While explaining the Return of Geopolitics under Fredrich Ratzel's Organic State Theory, significant powers such as USA, Russia & China would be studied at the global/ systemic level, and how they are in a power contestation in particular regions would be examined at the regional level. Later on, the revisionist powers seeking revenge from the great powers and how they are trying to sustain their Lebensraum in such a power struggle would be examined at the state level. This paper will conclude how the return of geopolitics has affected the concept of globalization and liberal institutionalism.

**Theoretical Prism of Organic State Theory**

The Organic State Theory was given by Fredrich Ratzel, who was a 19th-century German geographer and ethnographer, in 1897; Ratzel's viewpoint on Organic State Theory states that there is homogeneity among all the organic life on earth, and his conception is based on the assumption that human society should also be studied according to the natural laws. He aimed to create a science from political geography equivalent to physical geography, and he established his theory of expansionism on Lebensraum (living space). Ratzel's perspective is that every human needs a specific territory and refers to it as the particular Lebensraum (living space) of that specific organism. To employ this biogeographical concept on human civilization, it was also imperative to trace the organism upon which this space desired to transmit the image. The state is composed of a homogenous population of humans and has morphological similarities with forests and animals. It operates according to the same law of development followed by the other living species. States behave similarly and, like living organisms for their survival, they need nourishment to gain political power. The growth of a state depends on achieving the Lebensraum (living space) in the form of physical territory. Henceforth, it can be said that organic state theory explains that political
entities need territory for their survival and nourishment, just like living organisms need survival food.

Organic State theory encourages states explicitly to conquer and gain more territory to survive in the international system. Ratzel's concept of state survival seems to be an adaptation from the classical realist paradigm. Furthermore, Ratzel continues his theory by arguing that if a state does not strive for its Lebensraum (gaining territory), its security is always at risk and is more vulnerable to threats from other states. The other states would operate in the same organic way and try to control as much territory for self-preservation. (Basin, 1987, p. 478) This action may lead to a change in international order and thus may lead to multi-polarity, which is the article's main argument.

**Debate of Unipolarity in International System**

At the systemic/structural level, since Second World War, China and Russia have been acting as revisionist powers and challengers to the US unipolar structure. Under the pretext of unipolarity, China and Russia are trying to balance out the international system. Still, due to a single hegemon, these two powers are regarded as revisionists rather than balancers. Their purpose is to replace the un-balanced unipolar system with a balanced power structure. To overcome this ideological stumbling block, China and Russia would de-legitimize the global unipolar order and authority through resistance that will pave the way for the next level of global contestation. (Schweller & Pu, 2011, p. 44-45)

Another evident factor is that the international system is becoming more multipolar than unipolar. In the present age, the economy is the driving force that ensures the applicability of Ratzel's Organic State Theory. China, the rising superpower, has already gained its bipolar superpower status by using the economy. Although the United States superpower status will remain as strong as ever in the strategic realm, it has also been challenged by the Chinese and Russians on different political, economic, and diplomatic fronts. Christopher Layne specified that a unipolar structure has the inborn capability to demise because the unbalanced power of the hegemon creates room for new great powers. (Layne, 1993, p. 10-11) The proclamation above depicts that the so-called unipolar structure has been challenged in multiple events thatched the deliberation of upcoming multi-polarity.

**Challenges to Unipolarity: Role of Great Powers**

Russia's exercise of coercive diplomacy against its European neighbors and using the military in Ukraine, Syria & Georgia has created a notion of Russian resurgence in Europe and across borders. This resurgence of Russia had ramifications for NATO instead of becoming a wedge between NATO and the US. This resurgence of Russia has left the US away from NATO and Europe. (Ibid) Meanwhile, the US is also trying to contain the Russian influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle
East by supporting their allies against the Russian resurgence and sheltering their unipolar structure. As the United States and European confront their domestic problems and challenges in different regions, such as Asia and the Middle East, Russia finds space to maneuver in the existing new pattern of indirect war by using hard and soft power. Under Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia allowed the policy of expanding its influence and took advantage of Trump's presidency under his America First policy notion. Trump's administration's decision to leave European Union (EU) was taken as undermining the integration of Europe and viewed the EU as an existential threat. This provided ground for the European powers to emerge as an individual influencers. Russia can also benefit from the US retreat from its long-established US leadership role of Post-World War II. Abandonment of promoting democracy, nation-building, return to isolationism, and refusal to acknowledge the challenge posed by Russia are all attributes that favor Russia to resurge and challenge the US hegemony and global world order. (Sokolsky & Stronski, 2017, p. 2-4) ow has expanded its global outreach and influence in the regions, particularly the Balkans and the Middle East. Russia was considered an essential player in the Cold War era.

Russia-Ukraine relations met a setback in late 2013 when Ukraine desired to be a part of the European Union (EU) and NATO. Still, due to the Russian economic and political interests, Russia constrained Ukraine from joining these clubs. The Russo-Ukraine crisis erupted after Viktor Yanukovych visited Russia in 2014. (Freedman, 2019, p. 14-17) In the same year, Russia deployed its forces in Crimea and declared it to incorporate Crimea into Russian Federation. In justification of these actions, Russia described the regime change in Kyiv (Ukraine's capital) as a western orchestrated coup. This could be a direct threat to the security of Russians in Crimea. Another demand would be to abandon Russia's Black Sea fleet and bring Ukraine in the club of NATO members, which Russia was highly criticized and opposed.

Russia increased its military presence in Crimea in 2014, greater than its local citizens. Ukrainian officials claimed that Russia deployed 30,000 troops, S-400 missile systems, and advanced weaponry. (Welt, 2019, p. 9) After the annexation of Crimea, Moscow fabricated the rise of separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine. In April 2014, militants took power in several towns and cities of Eastern Ukraine, claiming separate entities (Donetsk People's Republic & Luhansk People's Republic), expanding their control over Ukraine territory. Ukraine volunteer forces and government restored some of the areas and suffered significant defeats in which regular Russian forces participated near Illovaisk, Donestk Airport, and Debaltseve. (Welt, 2019, p. 14)

The Russian employment of separatist groups in eastern Ukraine has helped. Russia claimed that it was trying to protect the pro-Russian groups in the region. However, many viewed this action by Moscow as complicating Ukraine's domestic politics and having leverage over its foreign policy agenda in the future realm. The response from the US officials over this Russian adventurism in Ukraine was also interesting. The US special representative for Ukrainian Negotiations, Kurt Volker, claimed that "Russia has the overarching command and control over the occupied territories, military forces, political groups, and economic activities." (Press Briefing with Kurt
Volker, Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations, 2019). Another interesting statement from Niki Hailey, US Ambassador to United Nations that "militants in eastern Ukraine are under the direct control of Russian military, who arms them, trains them, leads them and fight alongside them" (United Nations Security Council, 2018, p. 16). The US response to the Russian annexation of Crimea and its military presence in Ukraine illustrates that the US considers Russia a threat to its unipolarity and Russia is trying to vivificate its presence in the Eastern European hemisphere. These developments depict the above-discussed edict of the Returns of Geopolitics, especially during the Cold War period.

As an emerging economic power, China is challenging the US at economic, political, and military fronts. China has also challenged the US in the Pacific by building artificial islands and most of them for military purposes. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022) In artificial intelligence, China has claimed to become the global leader in this particular domain by the year 2030. (CBS News, 2017) China is also trying to undermine the US in the cyber environment and influence the global internet and communication. The rise of China as a revisionist power is particularly problematic for the United States. The threat posed by China is more accurate and eventually will surpass the United States as the world economic leader shortly. (Thompson, 2018, p. 18) At the systemic level, China and Russia are trying to contain and put the US back to the era of isolationism. Resurgent Russia and emerging China are dreadful nightmares for the US policymakers and could wave off the US status as a global leader. Henceforth, the return of geopolitics phenomena is quite active where the revisionist powers could interplay their policy goals and interests to undermine the existing world order.

**Challenges to Unipolarity: Role of Middle Powers**

This section of the paper categorically examines the foreign policy agendas of the US, Russia, and China in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Asia Pacific. The given regions are selected to prove the theoretical assumptions of Organic State Theory that how these states are in a series of power contests to gain more influence in these regions. Suffice, the convergence and divergence of interests between these three major political entities in the areas mentioned above would prove; that the unipolar structure is now under constant threat from the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia.

In September 2013, the President of China, Xi Jinping, announced a Silk Road Economic Belt on a visit to Kazakhstan to revive the historic trade route via Central Asia. After this, the project is re-branded as Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) expanded to 6 overland belts and one maritime road, including 70 partner countries. Central Asia is the key partner to this project, with two of the six overland routes passing through it. (Chen & Mardeusz, 2015, p. 6) Interestingly, Russia has emerged as an essential supporter and promoter of the BRI project. In the year 2015, both China and Russia signed the "Joint Statement on Cooperation on the Construction of Joint Eurasian
Economic Union and the Silk Road Projects." (Makarov & Sokolova, 2016, p. 30) China is trying to develop and connect East Asia with Europe with the help of the Silk Road Economic Belt, where Russia and Central Asia hold the pivotal position. China needs strategic cooperation from Russia and Central Asia to connect to Europe. This BRI is also beneficial for Russia because it requires interconnection with Europe for its trade and investment. (Bennet, 2016, p. 342) The Sino-Russia collaboration in BRI stimulates the convergence of economic and political interest between both the players, where both states are reviving their stimulus over Central Asia.

The Chinese White Paper on Chinese Arctic Policy published in January 2018 reflects its preparedness for building the Ice Silk Road with all the interested parties based on the use and development of the Arctic route. This response came after Russia's willingness to participate in the Chinese BRI project. (The State Council People's Republic of China, 2018) Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov asserted they do not consider China a competitor. We are strategic partners, and the plans of Russia and China regarding that region and overall, regarding Big Eurasia, do not contradict each other" (Kaczmarski, 2019). In this context, the Sino-Russian relations are seen through a no zero-sum game where the opposing views are dismissed because of the geopolitical connectivity.

Europe has always remained a theatre of war for the world's major powers. Stating right from the Napoleonic Wars to the World Wars, Europe has always remained an epic center of power flow. Post World War II, Europe was divided between the two ideological spheres of capitalism and communism. However, after the demise of the USSR in 1991, Europe tried to adopt an independent foreign policy, which previous ideological blocs did not dictate in the bi-polar world. For the Russian policymakers, Eastern Europe is their lifeline for their economic and energy needs, and Russia heavily relies on Eastern Europe for natural gas and oil. This Russian influence over Eastern Europe and particularly over the states surrounding its rim can be analyzed by taking the example of the 2014 Crimean crisis.

The Middle East is considered one of the most volatile and conflict-prone regions of the world. The importance of the Middle East in the context of its geostrategic location and oil industry is quite attractive for the global powers. The United States petro-dollar industry is the lifeline of the US economy. Supporting its allies such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and many other Arab countries is the US foreign policy agenda priority. However, the urgency of Russia in Syria, supporting the Bashar al Asad regime against rebels, and Russia's missile technology support to Iran and Turkey has created a problematic situation for the US and its allies in the region.

Russia has emerged as the winner in the current Syrian crisis, leaving all the key stakeholders behind. As President Trump announced plans to pull out US troops from Syria, Turkey invaded to fill up the vacuum resulting in the death of 25 Kurds and displacing 300,000. Contrary to this, Russia emerged as the power broker by leveraging its influence over Turkey and Syria. On October 22, 2019, Turkish President Erdogan and Russian President Putin reached an agreement to expel
the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) from northern Syria. Under the agreement, Russian and Turkish troops will patrol over the Syrian border strip. Previously, Kurds were also part of the Syrian army 5th Corps, including foreign volunteers, and are in control of the Russians. In reverse policy choice, Trump announced to send some 500 US troops to protect the Syrian oil fields from the Islamic State (IS) militiants' attacks. In reality, Trump tries to control the Syrian oil fields as leverage against the Syrian government. Syria and Russia denounced this move by Trump, referring to it as a violation of international law because the oil fields are part of Syrian territory. Russian resurgence in Syria appears after Turkey's realignment and tilting towards Russia, despite being a NATO member and western ally. Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 missile defense system technology and building four nuclear power plants with assistance from Russia has created an outrage in the United States.

Russia, like the US, has its military and economic interests in the Middle East. Both states want to promote their arms industry and increase their sales. Both seek to control the oil prices, Russia selling it to Turkey and Israel, while the US buying it from the Gulf countries. Both are willing to overthrow the Kurds whenever the Turkish government desires it. (Erlich, 2019) The resurgence of Russia in Syria as a key player and a winner elucidates that Russia is trying to increase its sphere of influence by gaining support from its allies such as Syria, Turkey, and Iran in the region to isolate the US control the oil prices.

**Challenges to Unipolarity: Role of Revisionist Powers**

In his Heartland Theory, Central Asia, also referred to as the heartland by Halford Mackinder, will be the next crucial geographical landmass for defining the future's great power. The US existence in Central Asia in creating a US military base at Manas (Kyrgyzstan) was a bone of contention for both China and Russia. During the early days of the war on terror in 2001, Russia had no objections to the US military base in Kyrgyzstan; however, later on, Russia considered the presence of foreign troops as a threat in its former imperial backyard. On March 6, 2014, the US Airbase in Manas was closed due to the political pressure from Russia, where the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan gave a deadline of July 2014 to complete its base. (Dzyubenko, 2014) The US is considered a catalyst by Russia, and China penetrated the Central Asian territory after the war on terror. Central Asian natural resources and strategic position in the Eurasian zone made it significant for the major powers to influence it. The convergence of interests between Russia and China in the Central Asian region makes it difficult for the US to remain an active player in the grand chessboard of Eurasian politics.

In the US foreign policy, Central Asia is perceived as a breeding ground for terrorism; a crucial base from where the United States can move the war on terror elsewhere; preventing external forces – ideas, men, and guns- from fighting the internal uprising and instability that could spread in the whole region. Russia wanted to contain the US and have prevalence over the former Soviet Union territories under the nationalistic stance of Russia. This was coupled with the rejection of the US hegemony over the international system. T quest for multi-polarity was evident in the late
1990s, with the advancement of the Sino-Russia partnership. This partnership lasted till September 2001, when the US declared war on terror, and it brought Russia to align itself with the US as a partner in the global war on terror. During the early days of war on terror, Russia emphasized more over the economic expansion in Central Asia more. Despite restoring its territorial and materialistic gains, Russia expanded its influence through multilateral and cooperative agreements. These agreements supported Russia to emerge as an economic giant against foreign competitors in the energy sector. Though the war on terror and going into an alliance with the United States was beneficial for Russia against the Islamic terrorism pervading in Central Asia, the presence of the US military ended up being a threat to Russia. Henceforth, Russia went into a security alliance with China under Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002 to counter the eastward expansion of NATO and US forces. (Labban, 2009, p. 4)

Interestingly, Russia has emerged as an essential supporter and promoter of the BRI project. In 2015, both China and Russia signed the "Joint Statement on Cooperation on the Construction of Joint Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Projects" (Belt & Road, 2015). China is trying to develop and connect East Asia with Europe with the help of the Silk Road Economic Belt, where Russia and Central Asia hold the pivotal position. China needs strategic cooperation from Russia and Central Asia to connect to Europe. This BRI is also beneficial for Russia because it requires interconnection with Europe for its trade and investment. (Bennet, 2016, p. 346) The Sino-Russia collaboration in BRI stimulates the convergence of economic and political interest between both the players, where both states are reviving their stimulus over Central Asia.

South Asia is considered one of the most critical regions regarding the return of geopolitics. In this region, two major nuclear power countries, India & Pakistan, are linchpins in maintaining a balance of power at the systemic level. As per its Cold War policies and tactics, India adopted a non-alignment policy, which it takes to benefit from Russia, the United States, and sometimes China in the shape of BRICS. However, China considers Pakistan a balancer in South Asia against the US policies. The $46 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is the flagship project of BRI, is to gain more territorial influence through Chinese soft power projection.

In South Asia, the revisionist powers have adopted a patron-client relationship policy, where India and Pakistan are taken as balancers against the United States. Russia is trying to collaborate with India and Pakistan to counterweight the United States. Most recently, at the Sochi informal Summit in 2018 between Russia and India, the Strategic Economic Dialogue between NITI Aayog1 of India and the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia to identify the areas for cooperation in trade and investment. (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018) This informal summit had some intense ramifications on the Russian resurgence in South Asia, such as signing defense deals like the S-

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1NITI Aayog is a policy think tank of the Government of India, established with the aim to achieve sustainable development goals with cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.
400 missile defense system and Project 11356 class frigates. The summit also discussed some important aspects, including an invitation for India to invest in the Russian Far East (RFE). In the defense realm, several deals were signed through 2018 and 2019, estimated at $14.5 billion. (Russian News Agency, 2019)

Russia-India relations were affected post-Russia's strained ties with the West (US), followed by its closeness towards China and India's intensifying relations with the US. This has created two complex problems for Indian policymakers. Firstly, the threat of US sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) for purchasing any significant defense equipment from Russia, more closely the S-400 missile defense system. Secondly, the closeness between China and Russia in the defense sector. Concurrently, India has also convoluted its ties with Russia after improving its relations with Russia, promoting the concept of Indo-Pacific and revival of Quad, creating a divergence of interests with Russia. (Kapoor, 2019, p. 3)

China has developed its relations with Pakistan over the shared enmity both states have vis-a-vis India. Both consider each other as a strategic hedge against India. This partnership is further crystallized in the shape of the $46 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for containing India as the emerging regional and global power. On the other hand, China also includes the US footprints in South Asia with its road connectivity project. China also holds a vital position as the leading arms supplier to Pakistan. (Small, 2015, p. 27-31) Inconsistence in US foreign policy has encouraged Pakistan to reinforce its ties with China to counterbalance its reliance on US aid and support. China is seen as an alternate to the United States in this regard by Pakistan.

Beijing looks toward Pakistan as the central key to its rise as a global power. Despite CPEC's status of being a game-changer (Jamal, 2017) also contains the problem of mistrust and a relationship based on having India and the United States. China's strategy toward Pakistan explains that China asserts itself as a kind of regional leader at the expense of Pakistan (a normative power). (Aijazuddin, 2019, p. 7) In this regard, contemporary South Asia is also a theatre of soft power war, where the revisionist powers exercise soft power influence over the regional nuclear powers to contain unipolarity of the United States; and challenge the existing world order.

**US-China Rivalry in Asian Pacific Politics**

Chinese Asia Pacific strategy has always remained a bone of contention for the United States. China's claim on the South China Sea and the artificial islands looms as the most alarming and dangerous situation for US policymakers. Meanwhile, China's coziness with North Korea is another concern for the US. The military adventurism between US & China lingers as the United States successfully tests the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense System THAAD missile defense system.

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2 Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the Quad) is an informal strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India that is maintained by talks between member countries.

The world hegemon, the United States, is trying to sustain its hegemony in the Pacific region. US interests constantly threaten Chinese policies and territorial claims over the islands. US policies and objectives are under "Global Commons" (Kraska & Pedrozo, 2013, p. 314), which safeguard its military presence in areas dealing with shared interests and protect its interests against any other challenge. The US is also trying to prevent any new power within this region.

China's objectives in the South China Sea are to secure its borders. China is under constant threat from the US encirclement of China strategy in the East Asian region. Its second objective is regional stability, which guarantees China's economic growth, followed by the containment of the US. As China is a potential challenger to the US military presence in the region, the US has adopted a hedging strategy. This strategy is adopted proactively to maintain balance in the area. As an offshore balancer in the East Asia region, the US orwards basing system has encouraged the East Asian states to bandwagon with the US on its rivalry with China. The US is acceptable to the Philippines and Thailand for credible security. (Goh, 2009, p. 75-76)

China is following the military modernization strategy along with operational doctrine. Potentially, China is facing threats from the Philippines' military modernization, the presence of India and US interests, and its aircraft carriers in the region. The Chinese grand strategy is based on the geostrategic control of the area through Island Chain Theory. (Hong Yu, 2003, p. 409-410) Under this theoretical assumption, China controls the region from two chains; one from the coastal line, i.e., South Japan and Indo China, while the other is between eastern Indo China & Japan. The South China Sea is a clear indicator of power contestation in the 21st century. South China is a strategic passage to connect the world. The state who controls this geopolitical landscape would be recognized as the world power. "This new balance of power has been called by another name: geo-economics, which uses economic instruments (from trade and investment policy to sanctions, cyber-attacks, and foreign aid) to achieve geopolitical goals." (Allison, 2017, p. 20) The US is trying to preserve its hegemony in the region, while China is trying to erode the US hegemonic designs.

**Revenge of the Revisionists and Challenges for the Unipolar System**

In this section of the paper, the revisionist states, primarily Iran, Turkey, North Korea, and Afghanistan, will be discussed. These states challenged the unipolar order of the world and showed resistance against the United States. These states have developed a forward bloc strategy aligning with either China or Russia to contain the US monopoly and hegemony. These states are trying to sustain their existence globally, eroding the US regime change tactics and supporting rebel proxies. In the case of Afghanistan, the Taliban has sown resistance against the US and its forces'
occupation. The state-level analysis would assist in justifying the sustenance aspect of the State Organic Theory to explore how these revisionist powers are sustaining and resisting the gallop polls of the hegemon.

**Iran's Resistance**

The United States' political and economic sanctions have strengthened Iran to come forward as a belligerent power against the US. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a landmark agreement to halt the Iran nuclear program. Still, Trump and his advisors have withdrawn from the JCPOA again, bringing us under economic sanctions. In response to such assertive actions by the US, Iran continues to assert its influence in the Middle East; Tehran has made its expansion in the Middle East because of the US policies in the last 15 years, such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and irresponsible response to the Syrian civil war. The US is trying to balance Iran by reinvigorating its ties with Saudi Arabia and moving closer to Israel. (Carlson, 2018, p. 30) However, this strategy will not support the United States in the long run.

Contrary to this, Iran financially supports Hezbollah (Lebanese Islamist organization) against the United States and its ally Israel. Iran and Russia are collaborating against the rebel forces supporting the Asad regime on the Syrian front. In August 2016, Russian bomber aircraft were allowed by Iran for a limited time to use its western airbase at Hamadan to launch an airstrike in Syria, and it was for the first time that Iran allowed a foreign force to use its territory for military purposes. China considers Shia Iran a strategic ally against the potential threat from the radical Sunni Muslims in Western China. China also supports Iran's stance on Syria and considers Asad the legitimate ruler in Syria. China also opposed the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, and it continued to buy oil from Iran, despite Iran being under the sanctions. China also supplied Iran with conventional arms, including cruise missiles, fast patrol navy boats operated by IRGC in the Persian Gulf, ballistic missiles, anti-ship missiles, guidance systems, and other technology related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD). (Katzman, 2021, p. 15) Iran's interplay of alliance politics with Russia and China is the most exact revenge by a revisionist power against a superpower. Iran, a minor power, looking eyeball to eyeball against the US by having an effective foreign and defense policy and sustaining itself in world politics.

**North Korea's Pugnaciousness**

North Korea's advancement in missile and nuclear weapon capabilities in the years 2016 and 2017 have created a direct threat to the US. Though the North Korean threat was quite imminent after it left out of the Nonproliferation Treaty, the recent missile developments from North Korea alarmed the United States. Threat from North Korea has multiple layers in several domains: long-range missile technology, nuclear weapons, short-range artillery, submarine-based attacks, and cyber-attacks. (Office of Secretary of Defense, 2018, p. 13) From January 2016 to September 2017, North Korea conducted three nuclear tests. In 2017, it conducted multiple missile tests that are considered to have a range of reaching the United States continent. (U.S. Congress, 2017)
North Korea's and US negotiations once again met a serve blow when North Korea changed its stance over denuclearization. The Kim regime demanded the US recognize North Korea as a nuclear weapon state and a peace treaty with the US as a requisite to denuclearization. (Lipes, 2018) Many analysts believe that North Korea has no intentions to give up its nuclear weapon program despite being under international and US sanctions. Pyongyang's demands are tactical moves, and it considers nuclear weapons as essential elements for the state's survival. (Pollack, 2011, p. 95) China is one of the few diplomatic and trade partners of North Korea. It provides North Korea with food and energy aid and has accounted for 90% of its total business since 2015. China fears the destabilizing effects of a humanitarian crisis, refugee crisis, and the uncertainty of how the US will respond in case of a power vacuum. North Korea also acts as a buffer between China and US allied South Korea for China. In this US-North Korea quagmire, China seems victorious with ineffective diplomacy and de-escalation of hostilities, cancelation of South Korea & US military drills that were bone of contention for Beijing; Kim Jon Un has goodwill and clout in his ties with China. (Manyin et al., 2017, p. 6) China is currently the largest trading partner of more than 130 countries globally, and among them, many are the major Asian powers. (Allison, 2017, p.21) This creates a dilemma for the US and its unipolar structure of power.

Turkey's Revival of Ottomanism

Turkey has emerged as an essential player in reviving its Ottomans legacy at the state level and geopolitical landscape. Under the leadership of Erdogan, Turkey is trying to materialize itself as the leader of the Muslim world. To this end, Turkey is trying to balance out its relations with Russia and the United States while being a member of the defense alliance; however, on the question of Kurds and US withdrawal from Syria, Turkey remained quite assertive towards the world's hegemonic power.

Turkey was once regarded as a model of democracy for the rest of the Middle East; however, recently, Turkey has taken a significant shift by heightening conflicts both within Turkey (Kurdistan) and the region (Syria). Erdogan wanted to remain in power as an authoritarian ruler with his political grip and suppress the media. During the Erdogan's regime, anti-Kurdish violence has reached its peak in the disturbing political environment matching the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) and Erdogan for rising hegemonic crisis and authoritarianism. (Kumral, 2018, p. 114)

The Syrian civil war turned internationalized when Kurds managed to develop a de-facto autonomy in the Rojava region near Turkey's border. The "democratic opening process" played a crucial role in strengthening the Rojava movement. Under the bilateral peace negotiations between Turkey and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Kurdish armed forces left Turkey and concentrated on Rojava in western Syria at the Turkish border. Kurdish movement gained de-facto autonomy and declared their self-rule in the cantons. This movement also gained international legitimacy.
after their services in defeating the IS militants in the Battle of Kobane. (Kumral, 2018, p. 115-116)

Regional dynamics of the Syrian war aggravated on August 24, 2016, when Turkey sent ground forces to Northern Syria to fight along with 3000 allied insurgents. The operation, Euphrates Shield, met with no resistance when Turkish forces entered Jarabulus (a strategic city of IS militants for the movement of weapons). Turkey also sent troops to al-Rai, Sawran, and Dabiq, and their government warned the US before taking the border movements. The operation was supported by the US military deploying Special Forces on the Turkish border and in al-Rai Dabiq and Sawran. (Stein, 2017, p. 2-3) Things went wrong when Trump announced the decision to withdraw its forces from Syria in October 2019. However, under Erdogan's resentment and pressure, the White House took a U-turn and allowed the Turkish offensive in northern Syria; the withdrawal of the US forces was an abrupt foreign policy decision abandoning the Kurds. The US is a long-term military partner in fighting against the IS. Trump defended his decision in a tweet that Kurds were heavily paid, and he is leaving the fight against IS to others for a specific time. President Trump tweeted, "We are 7,000 miles away," he tweeted while vowing to crush the extremist movement "if they come anywhere near us." (Julian, 2019) Later on, an agreement between Russia and Turkey ended the Turkish-led military operation in Northern Syria against the Kurdish militia alliance, which was previously allied to the US. This provides another significant factor challenging the international unipolar order.

**Afghanistan Peace Deal and its Implications on Unipolarity**

In Afghanistan, Russia and China are facilitating the Afghan Peace Process. Taliban is a resurgent group that is challenging US intervention. The Trump administration is also seeking a swift withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, the Taliban have emerged as the resurgent group against the US forces. In November 2016, China and Russirestarted the Afghan Peace Process, where the Taliban emerged as the legitimate stakeholders in the Peace Process. The regional players, including Iran, are also interested in keeping peace in Afghanistan. As a revisionist power, the Taliban challenged the US monopoly and intervention in Afghanistan.

In August 2017, Trump announced an Afghanistan and South Asia strategy in a national address. (US Embassy and Consulate in Pakistan, 2017) This speech was considered extreme pressure on Pakistan, with an increase in the number of troops as a renewed commitment of the United States towards Afghanistan. (Constable, 2017) In July 2018, the Trump administration ordered direct talks with the Taliban, excluding the Afghan government. This represented a reverse strategy in US policy that was previously based on the Afghan-led Afghan-owned peace process. (Mashal & Schmit, 2018) In September 2018, Zalmay Khalilzad was appointed as Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Process by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Khalilzad held a

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continuous series of talks with Afghan, Pakistan, and other regional leaders. In March 2019, Zalmay Khalilzad announced a draft agreement with the Taliban and US troops' withdrawal. Did he assert that after the final deal? Taliban and the Afghan government, intra-Afghan negotiations will begin on a political settlement and ceasefire. (West, 2019)

Taliban officials responded that "our doors are open for negotiations." ("Afghanistan war: Taliban tell Trump their 'doors are open," 2019) After a month, unofficial news reports indicated that talks between Khalilzad and the Taliban had begun in Pakistan. Taliban gave contradictory remarks over the post-settlement Afghan governance, calling it a subject for Intra Afghan negotiations. (Thomas, 2020, p. 7) In the context of Afghanistan, the US is looking to leave Afghanistan as it does not want to continue the war in Afghanistan. The recent geopolitical trends suggest that insurgent groups such as the Taliban have become more influential in Afghanistan than in the US. The international institution gives the designer better bargaining advantages, yet the US has not been able to utilize those institutions in many cases, as mentioned above. All these patterns are evident because the US has to either amend the institution's governance or regain its unipolar status as the international unipolar order is being challenged by the emerging multipolar powers.

Concluding Remarks

At the institutional and organizational level, the return of geopolitics is considerably seen in the obsolete nature of the cold war institutions and newly developed institutions. A tug of war has been designed in contemporary settings' defense, economic, and political setup. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), with Russia and China as key members, has emerged in response to NATO's expansion in Central Asia. The Chinese Asian Development Bank (ADB) has emerged as Asia's indigenous bank to counter the West-oriented International Monetary Fund (IMF) monopoly. In the political landscape, the alliance between Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) has emerged to contain the US-led Quad group. The revisionist powers seek to prevent the United States from formulating institutions and organizational world order to change the existing world order.

The Organic State Theory accentuates that states need territorial space to survive and nourish. The demise of the Soviet Union led to the rise of the narrative that democracy and capitalism are the ultimate byproducts of world politics. The role of revisionist powers (such as China, Russia, Iran, Tukey, North Korea, and Afghanistan) have proved that US unipolarity is over. The world will be transformed into a multipolar world soon, where every state will try to attain regional or global power. The alliance system in the contemporary world is also under threat. NATO's cold response towards Turkey's operation against the Kurds and US reluctance towards Article 5 of NATO has put a question mark on the notion of attack on one considered an attack against all.

Similarly, China is trying to control the world through its BRI project and soft power influence. In the realm of technology, China is the leading competitor to the United States in cyber and artificial
intelligence. Russia's hostility towards the United States was seen in the Crimean War, and its jingoistic policy posture in Syria has alarmed the US policymakers. The US economic sanctions as a punishment are not viable in the case of Turkey, Iran, and North Korea, where these powers, despite being under the US and international economic sanctions, went eyeball to eyeball against the United States. The return of geopolitics and theoretical frameworks given by Fredrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, and Nicholas Spykman are pretty visible in the foreign policy choices of the revisionist powers. The revisionist powers are more inclined towards their territorial security and preserving their client states against the US hegemony. The present world is the revival of geopolitics where, besides technological advancement, geography is also an essential element while designing a state foreign policy.

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