

TRENDS OF MULTIPOLARITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PEACE

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*“...The earth is one but the world is not...” **Our Common Future**¹*

INTRODUCTION

International system has long been defined by the number of poles in it and these are normally dependent on the distribution of power and influence of states in a region or internationally.² The trend of multi-polar has brought in a shift of power and new players into the international scene that are steadily forging closer cooperation and solving problems at regional and sub regional levels. This is a welcome phenomenon since most of these new players are the ones who in the past, during the bipolar and early stages of the multi-polar system were left outside of the geo-politics strategic agenda.

A number of regional integration arrangements are in place in many regions in the already porous multi-polar world. Although this is done in line with the UN charter, it is still important to understand the implications of this new phenomenon to the regional and global peace and its effects on the good image of the United Nations especially in light of the growing concern for what appears to be the re-emergence of cold war practices in the current international relations.

The UN seems to be struggling in fulfilling its main objectives of maintaining global peace and security. This is a problem which could have some implications not only to the already fragile global ‘hot peace’, but also to the very existence of the United Nations as a credible international organization for the maintenance of peace and security.

Multi polarity and Regional Integration: A Conceptual Analysis

The argument on multipolarity hinges on the concept of relative power. Relative power is the perceived amount of power an entity has in relation to another state. Applied to international relation, scholars see new powers emerging into the global scene and maintain that what is important is relative power as opposed to absolute power. States are primarily concerned with relative power that is how much power

1. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development published in 1987 by Oxford University Press as an annex to the document A/42/428-Development and International Cooperation available at www.un-documents.net/wecd-oct.html.
2. Yang X, The Unipolar Challenge: Power, Culture and Authority and the Advent of War. *Politics and International Relations* (POIR) 2010 p 4. Accessed on www.peakyou.com/andrew_lessman-UnitedStates.

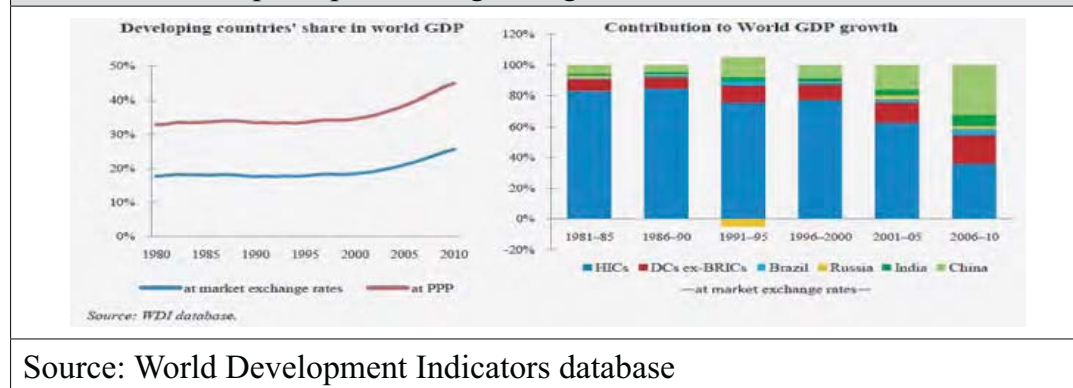
including soft power, a particular state has in relation to another.

This argument is justified by the fact that today, United States in military terms, continues to be the mightiest power in the world with overwhelming asymmetry over its rivals and may continue as such for a couple of decades more. But despite the predominant superiority in global military power and force projections capabilities, what is emerging in a discernable manner to analysts is that the USA is presently unable to influence the global political and strategic landscape decisively.³ The general feeling is that the US super power structure and massive capital wealth are insufficient to cope with a transformed new world.

The Power Shift Theory

Among the theories explaining the current trend of multipolarity is the power shift theory. Scholars maintain that, the economic and business environment is gradually moving to a new multipolar balance, where the old economic triad, USA, EU and Japan is no longer the main source of consumption, talents, capital, resources and ideas. The result of all this is an increasing economic interdependence, where the national and regional boundaries are becoming less and less important. (Figure1)

Figure 1: Developing countries are leading the rebound in an increasingly multi-polar pattern of global growth*

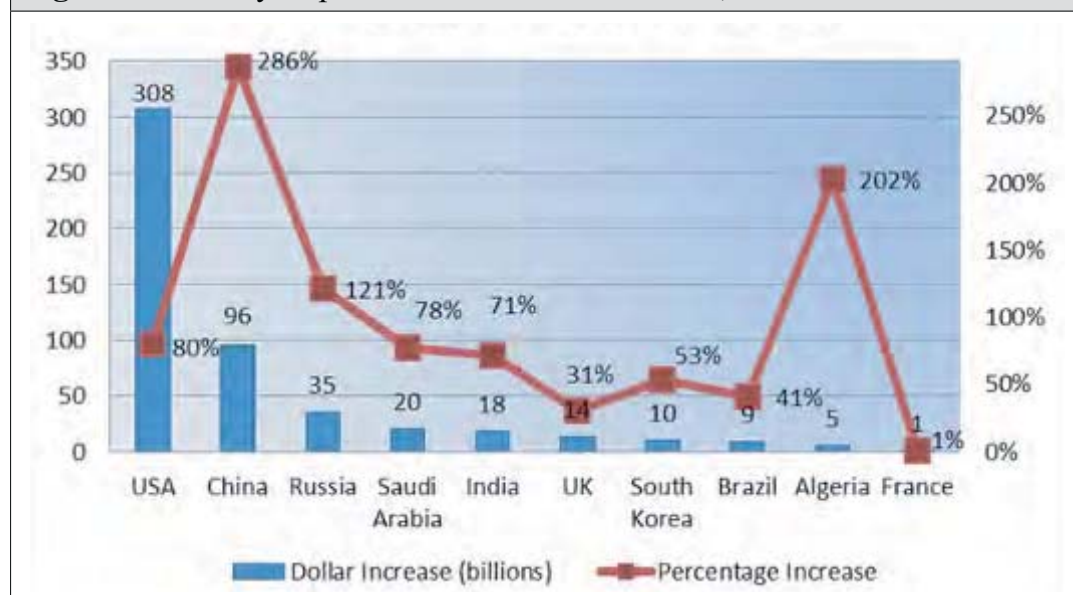


3. Kapila S, United States Global Strategic Dominance Diminished *South Asia Analysis Group* Paper No 4997 April 2012 accessed at www.SouthAsiaAnalysisOrganisation/default

The most popular explanation in the power shift theory is that of ‘CHINDIA’ i.e. China and India.⁴ Today, China and India’s rise in Asia is clearly hugely significant. Never before have such large economies with a combined population of 2.3 billion grown so fast so long: GDP growth in China averaged 9.1% and India 6.1% over the last decade.⁵ Its import and export volume grew from US\$ 20.6 billion worth in 1978 to US\$2.978 trillion worth in 2010.⁶ Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) once said “China is a sleeping giant. ...Let her sleep for when she wakes, she will shake the world...”⁷ And it seems the world is now shaking.

The Chinese military expenditure has also increased dramatically in recent years. Recent research on top ten military spenders of the world revealed that China is the highest military spender after US (US\$ 687 billion). (**Figure 2**) .

Figure 2: Military Expenditure Increase 2000-2011, selected countries



Source: SIPRI Expenditure Database 2012.

4. In his book, *The Elephant, the Tiger and Cell phone: India, the Emerging 21st Century Power* the celebrated author Shashi Tharoor discusses and demystifies the vast changes that have taken place in India to transform this once sleeping giant into an emerging world leader.
5. Mahbubani K, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Power to the East* NewYork Public Affairs , 2008.
6. China’s Peaceful Development, *State Council Information Office of the Peoples Republic of China* September 06, 2011.
7. See www.wideworldofquotes.com/quotes/napoleon-bonaparte-quotes.html.

Not all agree that America is declining with the rise of Asia. Some scholars argue that America's future decline has been greatly over-exaggerated. Still its wherewithal and national power is well ahead of any state on earth. They argue that even at the current rate of growth, it will take average Asian 77 years to reach an income of the average American.⁸ Fareed Zakaria in his book titled *The Post American World* says "it is not about America's 'elegant declining' but rather about the rise of everyone else." He elaborates: "...the greatest story of our time is the rise of the rest..."⁹ The word 'rest' there probably refers to India and 'the peaceful rise' of China¹⁰

However, Virmani, India's representative to the IMF sees the world moving towards a tri polar world with India and China joining the United States and disagrees with a question of income per capita as a main factor. According to him, it is not absolute growth that matters, but rather how the economies of nations compare with that of the United States economy and of other important players over time.¹¹

Regional Integration in a Multipolar World

The multipolar era has witnessed the emergence and strengthening of several trading blocks and economic groupings all over the world. Michael Schultz, Fredrick Sodabaur and Joackim Ojendal say "There is no single universal criterion that defines regions. ... Geographical, historical, cultural and economic variables as well as pattern of conflict, security and other criteria, all create pattern of interaction and produce conceptions of region-ness..."¹²

Chandra Bhatta gives a constructivist definition of a region. He says a region is a set of countries in close geographical proximity with each other but also most important must share a certain commonality of (national) interest. Constructivists see regions not merely as geographical constructs.¹³

8. Mahbubani K, 'Why Asian Wins?' *Foreign Policy* 24 August 2009 Accessed on <http://www.mahbubani.net/articles%20by%20dean/why%20aisa%20wins.pdf>.

9. Fareed Zakaria *The Post –America World* Penguin-Viking New York, 2008.

10. See China's Peaceful Development, *State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China* 06 September 2011. China's government released a policy document that laid out its vision for the country's future pledging peaceful rise and assuring other countries not to fear for this rise. Its white paper says China will not repeat the mistakes of other great powers who sought to dominate others. See also 'China's Threat' or a 'Peaceful Rise of China' *New York Times* available at www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-007.html.

11. Virmani A, Tri-Polar World: India, China, and the United States in the 21st Century, Ashley J. Tellis Washington DC, Wednesday, 9 February 2011.

12. Schulz M (ed) *Regionalism in a Globalizing World: A Comparative Perspective on Forms, Actors and Process*, Zed Books, London 2001, p185.

13. Bhatta C, *Regional Integration and Peace in South Asia: An Analysis*. Accessed on www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/dl/Regionalintegration.PDF.

Regional arrangements differ in terms of their institutional design and this has the implication for what they can do or cannot do. Haacke and Williams see a link between on the one hand design and on the other hand the level of resources and capacity available.¹⁴

Regional Integration Initiatives: The Case of Southern Africa and South Asia Regions

Southern Africa and South Asia are among the regions that have established integrations in their respective regions. Although both regions have some kind of identical basic objective conditions which tend to emphasize the need for integrated intra regional as well as inter-regional planning, they also have some unique characteristics which, when clearly understood; assist to evaluate its readiness and potential for cooperation and integration.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

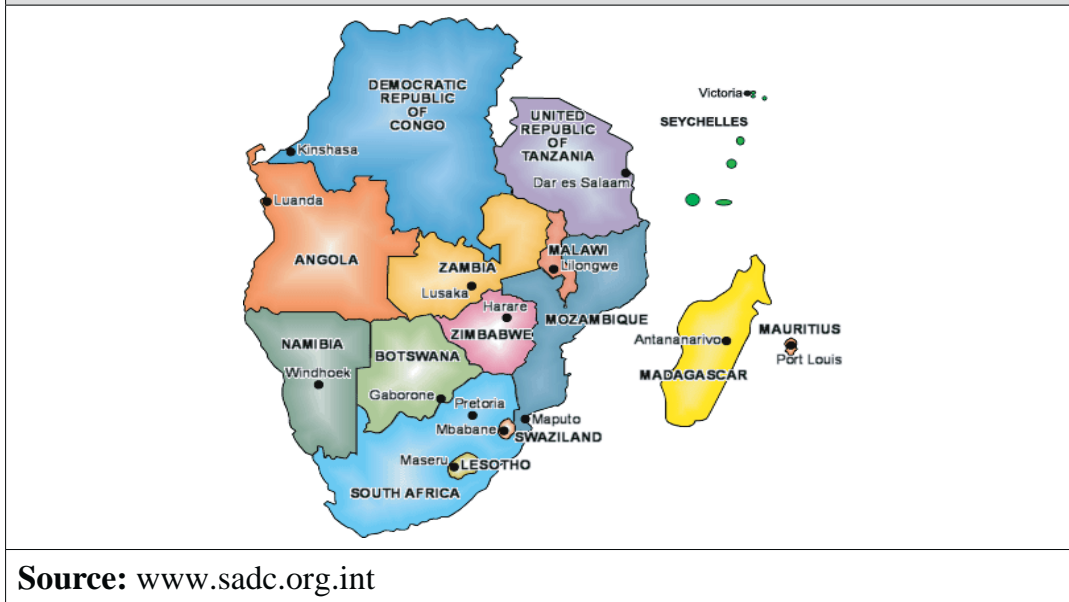
Defining the Region

The Southern Africa region is made up of 15 countries namely Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe although geographically speaking, some of these countries are not located in southern part of Africa. Gavin Cawthra in his article titled *Southern Africa: Threats and Capability* describes these countries as disparate in many ways. They vary greatly in size, population and levels of economic growth and include some of the poorest countries in the world but also the richest in Africa.¹⁵ South Africa dominates the region. Its economy is the biggest than all other countries in the region combined.

14. Haacke J and Williams P, *Regional Arrangements and Security Challenges: A Comparative Analysis*, Crisis States Working Paper no 52, Regional and Global Axes of Conflict, Crisis States Research Centre and George Washington University, July 2009.

15. Cawthra G *Southern Africa: Threats and Capabilities Africa Program Working Paper Series International Peace Institute* November 2008 p1.

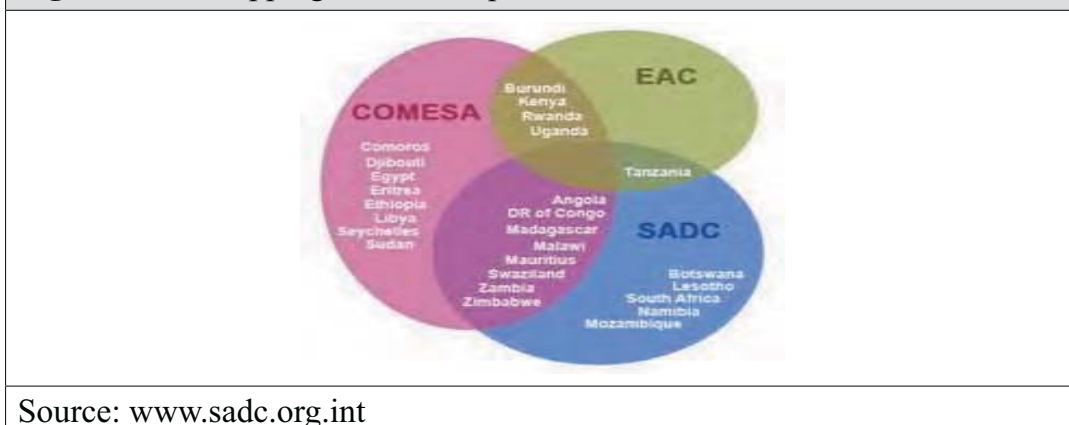
Figure 3: SADC Countries.



SADC Integration Initiatives

The first formal step to integration was the formation of Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980. In 1992, SADCC was transformed into Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). A common feature of the current SADC membership is overlapping membership. Tanzania for example, because of its geographical location and its central role during the liberation struggles of the Southern African countries is a member of both the East African Community (EAC) and SADC while other member states also belong to Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Figure 4: Overlapping Membership SADC, COMESA and EAC



The principles of the SADC include solidarity, peace and security and peaceful settlement of disputes among others. The SADC region signed Free Trade Area (FTA) agreement in 2008 with a view to fostering integration through trade. In addition to FTA, further goals such as the achievement of a planned Common Market by 2015, a Monetary Union by 2016 and a single currency by 2018 remains incredibly ambitious by SADC with some economic and political commentators saying these plans may not be realistically obtainable in the near to medium term future.¹⁶

SADC Peace and Security Issues

Although SADC was founded on a foundation of facilitating and supporting economic growth in the region, it has increasingly taken on roles that enhance political and security cooperation within the region.¹⁷ Article 11 of the SADC Protocol on Defence and Security provides for relationship between the SADC, the African Union (AU) and the UN mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. This paves the way for SADC to participate in peacekeeping operations on the African continent in the spirit of the AU and as a member of the world community in missions outside the continent.¹⁸

The region has had two high profile military interventions to maintain peace and security in the name of SADC both in 1998. These were Operation **Sovereign Legitimacy** in DR Congo (carried out by Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola) and Operation **BOLEAS** (carried out by South Africa and Botswana).¹⁹ Some analysts described these interventions as legitimate but illegal as they contravened Article 53 of the UN Charter since UN approval wasn't sought and was granted only post-hoc.²⁰

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16. Chetty Lee-Roy, Macroeconomic convergence within the SADC region, *Mail and Guardian Online Network* posted on June 15, 2012 accessed on www.thoughtleader.co.za/leeroychetty/2012/0615macroeconomic-convergence-withintheSADCregion.
 17. Hull C and Derblom M, 2009, Abandoning Frontline Trenches? Capabilities for Peace and Security in the SADC region, *FOI Swedish Defence Research Agency*, Stockholm, accessible on www.foi.se.
 18. Ngoma Naison SADC: Towards a Security Community? *African Security Review Vol 12, No 3, 2003* available at www.iss.co.za/za/pubs/asr/12no3/F2.html.
 19. Cawthra *ibid*.
 20. Cole K, *International Organisations and Peace Enforcement*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, Pp.116-193.

SOUTH ASIA

Defining the Region

The South Asia region is made up of 8 countries namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The constellation of the region is not a simple one. The countries are worlds apart on question of population, territory, military power, technological development, infrastructure and political influence.²¹ With its proximity with China, the region is at the heart of a vibrant world region.

Figure 5: SAARC Countries



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

South Asian states reflect a dynamic and persisting coexistence of discord and understanding, competition and convergence, conflict and collaboration in their mutual interactions although at times some deep rooted historical negative aspect appear to dominate. This seems to have an impact in their integration efforts.

21. Tomislav Delinc, SAARC-25 years of Regional Integration in South Asia, KAS International Report 02/2011 accessed on www.kas.de/saarc/en/publications/22415/

Regional Integration Initiatives

The region managed to establish South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the middle of 1980's in spite of reservations expressed about the ultimate successes because of a number of reasons. One scholar described the establishment of SAARC as the contemporary example of creative impulses thriving in the region along with the atmosphere of mutual apprehension and mistrust.²²

Past restrictive trade policies seem to have contributed to low trade activities in the SAARC region despite many agreements on papers. Barsha Khattry²³ puts the value of bilateral trade between the two leading economies in the region: India and Pakistan, as just US\$2.6 billion- an inconsequential amount when compared to the size of their economies. In general, there is a meagre quantum of trade within the region. .

SAARC and Security Issues

For a region that has experienced a period of intense conflicts and mistrust, it is surprising that promotion of peace and stability is not part of SAARC objectives. This is different from even the neighbors to the region i.e. the South East Asia whose association the ASEAN is based on economic and security pillars, both of which are clearly enshrined in its Charter.²⁴ As Arvind Gupta makes it clear, South Asia has numerous long standing conflicts left over from history, and therefore defence cooperation could have been an excellent way of Confidence Building Measures (CBM) and reducing tension.²⁵

One of the notable and remarkable success stories in relation to peace and security from the region is its contribution to peacekeeping operations. Led by Bangladesh, peacekeepers from the region, mainly the uniformed ones, form the back bone of UN boots on the ground in mission areas. At present with strength of 10,293 peacekeepers, the country is the highest peacekeepers contributing country in the world, while Pakistan and India is the second and third TCC respectively. ²⁶ (Figure 6)

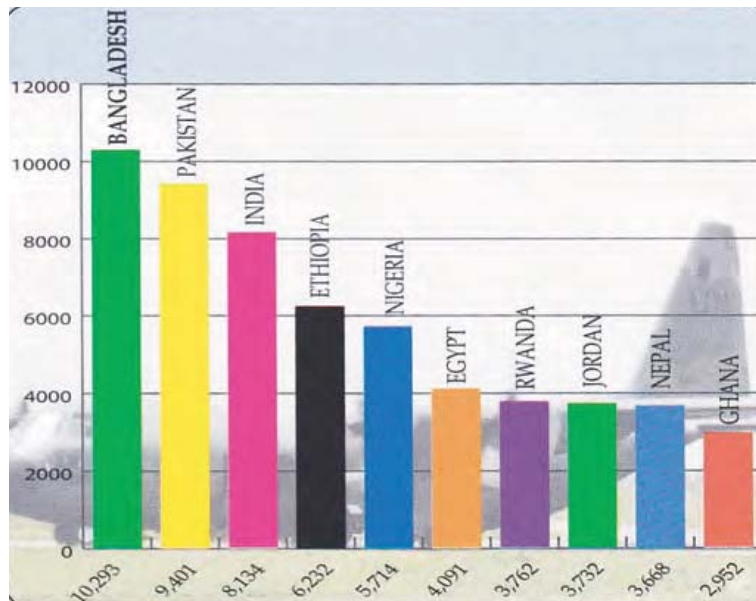
22. Khan Z (ed) op cit p1

23. Barsha Khattry is a former economic advisor, UNDP Bangladesh and now a regular columnist with the independent newspaper. See her article *Two Neighbours sixty years on-* Thursday August 23 August 2012, available at www.theindependentbd.com

24. Soare S, Security Architecture-Building and Regional Integration in Asia-Pacific accessed on www.garnet.sciencespobordeaux.fr/.../SOARE%20Simona.pdf

25. Gupta A, Will Cooperative Security Work in South Asia? *Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis* 13 November 2011, accessed on www.idsa.in/?q=idsacomment/willcooperativesecurityworkinsouthasia_agupta_131111

26. United Nations Website accessed on www.un.org/en/peacekeeping

Figure 6: Contributions to UN Operations (Up to 01 May 2012)

Source: Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs

SADC and SAARC: Same But Different

Although both SADC and SAARC were established in line with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter they differ on how they carry out their integration activities and this can be explained partly because of the differences in institutional designs, historical background, resources differences and more in the case of South Asia, because of deep rooted mistrust among some of the member states. The two regions have put on paper admirable set of treaties, protocols and arrangements to promote integration in their regions but in practice, they still appear to be far from realizing their goals.

Integration in both regions has been driven by two main factors: economics and conflicts. But while both regions have almost similar objectives in promotion of economic integration, the approach differed in the case of conflicts. Past conflicts mainly because of bitter liberation struggle, made SADC put up collective security strategy while SAARC on the contrary, because of past conflicts, decided to exclude defence cooperation from its Charter. What is clear here as some rightly observe, it seems the ‘political tectonic plates’ in the South Asia region have still not yet settled.²⁷

27. See Ambassador CM Shafi Sami presentation titled *Trans-boundary Waters: A diplomat's Perspective* presented at the World Water Week in Stockholm August 2011 available at www.siw.org.

Trends of Multi polarity: Implications for Peace

The world is changing and with it the increased demands for the UN to address peace and security issues. The UN provides a unique platform for international action, offering unparalleled legitimacy for global engagements owing to its universal membership and its inclusive decision-making process. In a multipolar era, when the role and position of the United States as the sole superpower is seen to be diminishing, the UN is expected to be an effective tool in preventing global conflicts. This part discusses some of new threats and challenges to global peace and its implications.

The UN and Collective Security

The 1945 UN Charter contains stronger provisions for decision making and collective military action than those of the weak League of Nations covenant. The role of the UN and collective security in general, has evolved given the rise of conflicts worldwide.

But while there seems to be much agreement on the need for collective multi lateral responses to security threats worldwide, there is however, less consensus on when and how to apply collective security. It is clear that Member States are generally reluctant to surrender sovereignty to a regime that encompasses binding rules and resist ceding decision making power on security issues to regional organizations.²⁸

Redefining the Concepts of Threats and Human Security

The multipolar world has made it necessary to redefine the concept of threats in order to cater for the new asymmetrical threats. These new threats demand new strategies in addressing them in addition to the traditional military approach. In its 2004 report titled: *A More Secure world: Our shared responsibility* the UN has outlined clusters of new security threats calling them threats without boundaries.²⁹

Recognizing the failure to respond to the most heinous crimes known to human kind, the expanded thinking that accompanies the new understanding of security is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which is people-centred. At its point of departure, it takes individuals and their communities rather than territory, states or governments.

28. Malebang G, National Security Policy: The Case of Botswana, Unpublished MM –P&DM Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, p. 113.

29. See Report of the Secretary – General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change available at www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf The report outlines seven clusters including Poverty, infectious diseases and environmental degradation, Conflict between and within states, Nuclear radiological chemical and biological weapons, Terrorism and Transnational organized crime.

In March 2011, the UN passed Resolution 1973 which approved enforcement of a no fly zone and authorized all necessary measures to protect civilian populated areas under threat or attack in Libya. However, whilst insisting that R2P tries to strike a balance between unilateral interference and indifference, Ramesh Thakur also cautions that the jury is still out on whether international military action in Libya has promoted consolidation or softening of R2P norm.³⁰

Peacekeeping as a Conflicts Management tool.

The end of cold war has changed the nature of conflicts with more intrastate conflicts rather than interstate ones and thus peacekeeping has become the main methods in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace and security. The top five contributors of finance for peacekeeping operations are the **United States (27.14%), Japan (12.53%), United Kingdom (8.15%) Germany (8.02%) and France (7.55%)**.³¹ On the other hand, the top five contributors of peacekeepers are Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Ethiopia and Nigeria.³² As of June 2012, none of the developed countries were among even the first twenty TCCs.

However, this 'division of labour' between the financiers and peacekeepers contributors compounds the differences between the haves and the have nots, or even the soon to have countries, a situation which should otherwise be avoided at this stage. This is likely to put pressure on the UN which has neither the troops nor finances of its own but depend on the same member states.³³

The Security Council Reforms

Established as one of principal organs of the UN, The Security Council bears the responsibility for the maintenance of International peace and security. The Council's mandate outlined further in Article 24 of the Charter, coupled with its ability to make legally binding decisions, makes it arguably the most powerful organ of the UN. However, lack of reforms has led to doubts over its effectiveness and legitimacy in the contemporary global politics especially in maintaining regional and global peace. One observer referred to the situation of lack of reforms as one of the most 'successful failures' in the history of the UN.³⁴

30. Thakur R, Has R2P Worked in Libya?, *The Canberra Times* 19 September 2011, accessed on www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/190-crisis-in-Libya.

31. Financing peacekeeping. Accessed on www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml.

32. Peacekeeping Fact sheet: www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml.

33. The former Head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Under Secretary Jean-Marie Guehenno (2000-2008) once cautioned the UN Member States that provision of well equipped, well trained and disciplined military and police personnel to UNPKO is the collective responsibility of the Member States. Countries from the South should not and must not be expected to shoulder this burden alone. See Provision of Well Equipped, Trained and Disciplines Peacekeepers Responsible of all Member States: Peacekeeping Committee Told. Available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/gapk177.doc.htm>.

34. Rabin A, United Nations Security Council: Prospects for Reforms, *International Energy Politics Culture* 18 Jan 2012 accessed on inpec.in/2012/01/18/united-nations-reforms.

But while there is a call for a representative Council,³⁵ one of the major explanations for the continuous stalemate for a new formula for its membership partly is because the term ‘representation’ has also different meaning. Some take representation to mean the Council to be so composed as to reflect population distribution, reflecting the major cultures, religion and civilization of the world. Similarly, some see it is in-conscionable that Africa and Latin America are not among the permanent members of the Security Council.³⁶

An interesting argument is from the advocates of the functionalist perspective who are calling for the inclusion of the two G4 members, Japan and Germany, the second and third largest financial contributors to the Council respectively on the grounds of Article 23 (1) of the Charter which states that selection to the Council must take into account the country’s commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organization and geographical distribution.³⁷

However, the question here is even if one is to agree with the functionalist interpretation of article 23 (1) then the interpretation of “countries commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security” should not be limited to financial aspect. It should also include participation in peacekeeping missions since this in itself is an even bigger commitment to the maintenance of peace and security. So regardless of their economic status, the major peacekeeping contributing countries should see themselves as the main contenders in this category.

The Indian Ocean: A key Area for International Security

Earlier in the last century Alfred Thayer Mahan predicted that in the 21st Century, the destiny of the world will be decided by its waters.³⁸ He went on to say, Indian Ocean is going to be the true nexus of the world powers and conflicts in the coming years and that it is here that the fight for democracy, independence and religious freedom will be lost or won. The current shift of economic power and the rise of China and India are bringing in a ‘tectonic shift’ in the strategic landscape of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean, *the ocean of the future*,³⁹ and

35. At present there is a widespread concern of how unrepresentative the Council, the apex body of the UN, has become. The UN membership has grown from 51 in 1945 to 193 today, while the Council has only grown from 11 members in 1945 to 15 today. Article 27 of the Charter grants the P5 a veto power whose membership is still restricted to five.

36. See Ramesh Thakur lecture delivered at the Institute of Security Studies, Pretoria, 18 November 2004 available at www.iss.co.za/pubs/asr/13No3/ETHakur.htm.

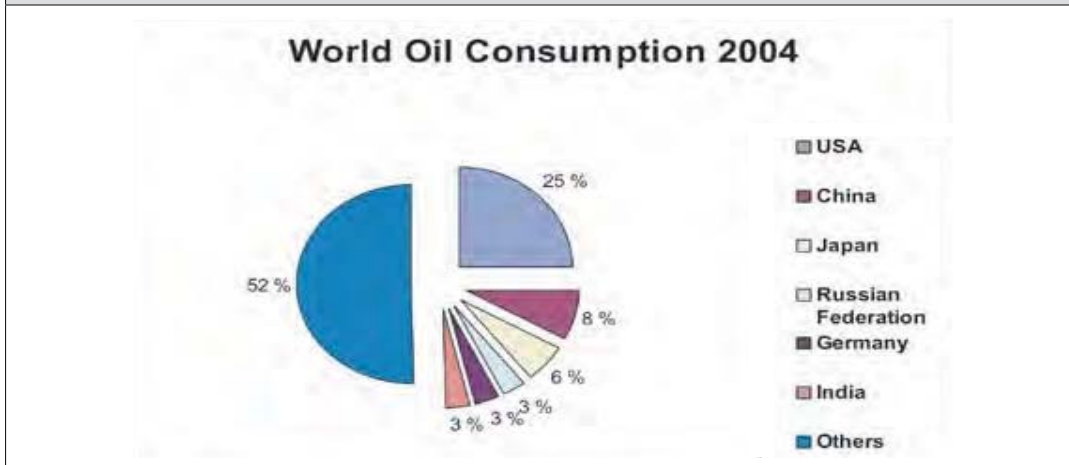
37. Rabin A – op cit.

38. Admiral Suresh Mehta, ‘India’s Maritime Diplomacy and International Security’, A speech delivered in International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) at London on 21 June 07. Accessed on www.iiiss.org/EasySiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=13389&type.

39. This was asserted by Aspi Cawasji a marine expert in a recent seminar in Canada, who stated that Atlantic Ocean was the ocean of the past, Pacific Ocean is the Ocean of the present and Indian Ocean is the ocean of the future. See David N Griffiths, *Regional Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean*, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 2011 p 79.

world's third largest ocean, is a key transit region for intercontinental trade in energy and commercial goods, desperately needed for China and India rapid growing economy.⁴⁰ China is the second world's largest oil consumer after the United States (**Figure 7**) and currently imports more than 50% of its petroleum need: 46% from the Middle East and 32% from Africa.⁴¹

Figure 7: Oil Consumption by Country.



Source: “Statistical Review of World Energy 2005”,BP

According to the 2004 US based consultancy Booz Allen report, Beijing is expanding its presence in the Indian Ocean using a “string of pearls strategy” which aims at cultivating Indian Ocean littoral states as friendly states, both to protect its economic interests and to bring about a balance of power in the Indian Ocean.⁴² The report further says “China has already built Gwadar Port in Pakistan and is acquiring more ports in Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Maldives and Myanmar. Each Pearl in the string is a link in a chain of the Chinese maritime presence that could take control over the world energy jugular.”⁴³

40. Associated Press, 6 August 2008, *India, China, jostle for influence in Indian Ocean* accessed on <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25024945/ns/news-asiapacific>.

41. In 2009, China's daily oil consumption was 7.85 million barrels of oil, and by 2015 this figure is projected to rise to 10 – 12 million barrels a day. 76% of the country's oil needs are transported along its western SLOCs which begin in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf snake South across the Indian Ocean, on through the maritime chokepoints of South East Asia, and finally to the South China Sea to be offloaded at Chinese ports along the eastern seaboard a journey of more than 6000 miles. See Storey Ian, Asia's Changing Balance Of Military Implications for the South China Sea Dispute, Dec 2011, *The National Bureau of Asian Research* available at <http://www.nbr.org>.

42. Blazevic J, Defensive Realism in the Indian Ocean: Oil Sea Lanes and Defensive Dilemma, *China Security*, Vol 5, No 3 2009, World Security Institute..

43. Associated Press, op cit.

Viewed alongside the large-scale naval modernization program being undertaken by China's Army and Navy, some worry that these trade-oriented ports could be upgraded into permanent naval bases. In a worst-case scenario, Beijing could use these bases to threaten India's security, menace global sea lanes and challenge the United States for regional naval primacy.⁴⁴

However, other observers see the 'string of pearls' assessment has been greatly exaggerated, saying although it does not necessarily mean these ports have no long term strategic value, but there is no evidence to suggest that the Chinese Navy is involved with these ports or are in future planning to transform these commercial ports into defendable forward bases.⁴⁵

Figure 8: India and China Race for Route Dominance



These activities in the Indian Ocean have also attracted the attention of the USA and other major sea powers that use Indian Ocean as a main sea route connecting to the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the Americas. USA seems to be following Alfred Thayer Mahan's advise who once cautioned in his seminal essay "*The Problem of Asia*", that great navies based on coastal areas of Asia could, if not checked threaten America's security.⁴⁶

This growing interest by the major powers in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea poses a great threat of re-igniting bitter rivalry similar to the one witnessed during the Cold War. Slowly there seems to be a growing cold war mentality and signs that this rival race for trade route dominance is also becoming militarized and multi polarized.

44. Pehrson Christopher *String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power Across Asia Littoral*, July 2006 accessed on <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB721PDF>.

45. Townshend Ashley, China's Indian Ocean 'String of Pearls Is no Military Threat-At least for Now', 20 September 2011 available at www.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/viewer.aspx#_showdialog.

46. Mahan and Sempa, *The Problem of Asia* New York; Transaction Books, 1905, p 133.

Whither the United Nations

A pertinent question at this juncture is whether the United Nations is in serious crisis brought by the unpredictable multipolar system. Professor Ramesh Thakur is of the opinion that the UN is not quite as bad as often believed.⁴⁷ The UN is not in serious crisis. If the UN is in crisis then it is crisis of expectations. What the UN needs to achieve is a better balance between the wish of the people and the will of governments as well as the aspirations for a better world and its performance in the real world.

The United Nations is not expected to abrogate its role as the main custodian of peace to regional bodies even if regional integration initiatives have been established in line with the UN Charter. The UN and regional bodies need each other, but it is the UN that remains primarily responsible for dealing with ‘threats to or breaches of the peace’ in the world. There is need to ensure that regional and other ad hoc arrangements do complement and reinforce, rather than undermine the UN’s legitimacy and capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the cold war now over, the UN is expected to be an effective tool in preventing global conflicts and to address some of the new threats and challenges to global peace in order to increase its effectiveness as an International organization. In view of the current regional and global security challenges, the following are therefore recommended:

- a. There is a great need of strengthening the United Nations’ capacity in resolving conflicts and especially its decision making process, in order to avoid a perception that the UN is used (or misused) to rubberstamp certain decisions by the major powers.
- b. Proper assessment on the new asymmetrical threats to peace and stability is required. These new threats demand formulation and employment of new non-military strategies in addition to the traditional military engagements. Local regional solutions should also be encouraged instead of relying mostly on a ‘one size fits all’ type of international military engagements. Equal emphasis should be placed on both state security and human security.
- c. The international community needs to find lasting solution to the current stalemate on reforms of the Security Council whose composition does not reflect the contemporary political realities. Lack of reforms leads to doubts on its effectiveness and legitimacy.

47. Thakur op cit 12 November 2004.

- d. The UN and the International community as a whole must closely monitor and remain seized on the issue of the growing rival race of trade route and dominance in the Indian Ocean and see it as a global security issue. Concerted efforts should therefore be taken to make sure that Indian Ocean as well as the South China Sea which is now becoming Asia's potential military flashpoint, remains demilitarized and a zone of peace so as to avoid zero sum game, a product of the cold war politics.
- e. Given the importance of this topic to regional and global peace and security, it is highly recommended that further researches be conducted especially those aimed at enhancing capacity of regional cooperation and coordination between the regional bodies and the United Nations. It is high time the international community started realizing that the real test of power is not the capacity to make war, but rather capacity to prevent it.

CONCLUSION

Multipolarity, the trend that characterizes world affairs, is a key concept for understanding today's global situation. This paper has examined the trend of multipolarity with particular attention to regional integration activities and its implications for regional and international peace and security. The current power shift with the economic and business environment is gradually moving to a new multipolar balance and this has increased economic interdependence where national and regional boundaries are becoming less and less important. The balance of power is leaning towards Asia, with China and India's rise being hugely significant.

Regional arrangements differ in terms of their institutional design and this has the implication for what they can do or cannot do since there is a link between on the one hand design, and on the other hand, the level of resources and capacity available. Southern Africa and South Asia regions examined in this paper both have some kind of identical basic objective conditions which tend to emphasize the need for integrated intra and inter-regional planning, but they also have some unique characteristics which are important in understanding their readiness and potential for cooperation and integration.

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