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ABSTRACT

This article unveils the contours of third-party mediation towards resolving Kashmir dispute in the era of unipolarity. The scope of the article rotates around making an empirical inquiry whether third party mediation is a yielding concept or totally defunct and irrelevant in the present geopolitical milieu. The notion of unipolarity is dominating in the Global Post-Cold War scenario and the US is executing her sole superpower as a manifestation of an established unipolar entity on the global geo-strategic and geo-economic chessboard. For sustaining unipolarity, the US has to overcome multiple challenges including maintaining the status quo at the regional and global level. In South Asia, the nuclearization of India, compelled Pakistan for entering the nuclear arena, has generated serious security repercussions for the region especially due to the Kashmir issue. In pursuit of maintaining the status quo, the US played dominant role in defusing Pak-India tension during crises in the past. Moreover, while examining US role during Kargil crisis, 2001-2002 military standoff and Mumbai incidence, it is anticipated that the US has the potential to contribute in ensuring peace and stability in South Asia. Nevertheless, for sustaining the status quo under unipolarity, the US is unlikely to become mediator in resolving Kashmir conflict which is the main source of contention between India and Pakistan. The enduring strategic environment of South Asia is vulnerable due to the Kashmir issue and this paper evaluates that under unipolarity, the mediating role of the US for the tangible resolution of said dispute will hardly impending.

Key Words: South Asian Stability, Kashmir Issue and US Response, Pak-India Standoff, Nuclearization and Kashmir & Third Party Mediation.

Introduction

India and Pakistan are the hostages of past ever since their inception especially due to Kashmir issue. India occupied Kashmir in October 27, 1947, that distressed the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir and they rejected Indian occupation and initiated a disobedient movement (Wolpert 2010). The inhabitants of tribal areas of Pakistan entered Kashmir for providing assistance to their Muslim brethren of Jammu and Kashmir that triggered first Pak-India war (Wolpert 2010). For resolving the dispute, India approached UN Security Council (Dictionary of Politics 1964). The UN Security Council passed the resolution for a ceasefire line and it was decided that a plebiscite would be held to settle the dispute (Sheikh 1987). The UN repeatedly passed the resolutions for plebiscite, (Wolpert 2010) and Pakistan remained intact with UN resolutions. India was reluctant to follow

UN resolutions due to risky outcome of expected plebiscite and adopted delaying tactics for avoiding plebiscite in one pretext or the other. The Muslims were in majority in Kashmir and India presumed that they would opt for Pakistan if plebiscite would be conducted in Kashmir. India and Pakistan have asymmetric positions and firm stances on Kashmir issue as India declares it as its 'integral part', while Pakistan describes it as its 'jagular vein' (Safdar, 2008). The two states had gone through two major wars (1948 and 1965) and a limited conflict (1999) due to Kashmir dispute. After the nuclear tests of 1998, Kashmir issue has become nuclear flashpoint and the armies of both the states are deployed along Line of Control (LoC) and any miscalculation may drift towards full-fledged war. India's recent attempt for relegating the autonomous status of Kashmir has multiplied tension between India and Pakistan and engendered warlike situation between them. India has revoked the article 370 of the Indian Constitution by a Presidential order on August 6, 2019. By ending article 370, India relegated the special autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated into two territories (Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir) and declared them as the constituent parts of India. The thesis of this paper is that 'third party mediation on Kashmir issue stands irrelevant under unipolarity regime'. Aforementioned in view, following questions merit attention with appropriate response:

- What is the significance of third-party mediation for normalizing Pak-India tension during crises?
- What is the main exponent due to which the role of the US under unipolarity in determining Kashmir issue becomes irreverent?

To answer above questions, the debate is evaluated while considering the mediating role of the US within the sphere of unipolarity especially during Kargil Crisis 1999, Military Standoff in 2001-2002, and Mumbai Incidence 2008.

Theoretical & empirical perspective

In the international political architecture, polarity has attained attention for preserving peace and stability at the global level. For sustaining the equilibrium, Richard Rosencrance emphasizes on the status quo, elite mind sets and obtainable resources within the system (Rosencrance 1957). Rosencrance relates stability with the inputs of muddle (insecurity, domestic disparities, ideologies and conflicting national interests among the nations) over directing forces (UN and the inducements of super powers for promoting peace and stability), as peace is inversely proportional to the inputs of muddle and vice versa (Rosencrance 1957). Singer, Waltz and Deutsch endorse system structure (Bipolarity and Multipolarity) for sustaining stability (Singer, Waltz and Deutsch 1964). The outcome of crises management is apparently corelated with crisis behavior in the global system. Power projection under Bipolarity is comparatively more appropriate for endorsing

stability while comparing with Multipolarity as explained by Pfaltzgraff and Dougherty:

In Bipolarity, the arrangements are evident, and rearrangements do not disturb the propensity of balance of power. In Multipolarity, arrangements are uncertain and projected more attention and generated ambiguity which resulted in more risk taking, miscalculations and prone to changes in the concept of interests that create hazardous strategic environment. In Multipolarity, the negotiating process is more critical among allies and in adversaries during crisis (Pfaltzgraff and Dougherty 2001).

Miller explicated that military advancement and polarity have the formation of international system which is casually linked with the prospects of unintended wars (Miller 2003). Layne assessed that the prospects of planned conflicts and inadvertent wars are less likely in Bipolarity (Layne 1993).

On the contrary, under Unipolarity, the preeminence of single power as a great power persists in the absence of competitor (Monterio 2011/12). After the disintegration of former Soviet Union in 1990s, the US is projected as the unipolar in the international system and for sustaining Unipolarity, the US is relying upon its military modernization (Monterio 2011/12). The US military budget is around half of the military expenditures at the global level that provide it incomparable potential for power-projection at the international level (Monterio 2011/12). Hence, the existing post-Cold War scenario is enumerated as Unipolar. The analysts are apprehensive about the prolongation of unipolarity as Robert Kagan contends that the unipolarity of the US is indeterminate and is evolving towards deterioration (Kagan 2008). Layne stated that the unipolarity of the US is under recession (Layne 2006). Waltz expressed that it is hardly probable for a state to sustain its unipolarity for a long while (Waltz 1979). Gilpin elaborated that it is uncertain for a state to regulate the international system (Gilpin 1981). The supporters of Unipolarity envisage the impending downfall of unipolarity, other assume that Unipolarity has the potential to persist not more than twenty to thirty years (Mastanuno 1999).

Presently, in contrast, the US is sustaining her unipolarity for more than two decades and is concentrating on proceeding the appearance of any imminent competitor (Mastanuno 1999). In the existing international architecture, the enduring status of the US as unipolar is due to projecting all the instruments of power: military, geography, economic and technology (Legro and Moravisck 1999). Another argument about the persistence of Unipolarity is expounded in the prism of power transition theory as the probability of military conflicts between unipolar and the remaining rising powers are less likely while comparing with Bipolarity and Multipolarity (Kenbery, Masanduno and Wohlforth 2009).

The global scenario is prevailing under unipolarity and the US is accomplishing as unipolar. The superpower under unipolarity ends to sustain status quo and the remaining states are anticipated to maintain the existing strategic setup because they fear that any upheaval might disturb their security (Fearon 1991). In case, the rising states intend to modify the status quo by increasing relative power,

territorial conquests, or by rearranging international adjustments, the unipolar tends to renounce such developments by emphasizing for its postponement (Monterio 2011/12). In August 1990, Saddam Hussain (former Iraqi President) triggered war and occupied Kuwait with an assumption that the US would not interfere against such transformation. The US objected and initially demanded Iraq to evacuate Kuwait and organized an international coalition and emerged the UN against Iraq and originated military action for the restoration of Kuwait in 1991 (Monterio 2011/12). Likewise, Serbian leaders overestimated US persistence and instigated aggression in Kosovo in 1999, and the US arranged a conference with the association of international community and signed Rambouillet agreement (Rambouillet agreement 1999). After the Serbian's refusal of agreement, a bombing campaign was launched by NATO against Serbia and compelled the Serbian authorities for conciliation (Posan 2000).

In South Asia, enmity persists between two major adversaries India and Pakistan since their inception in 1947 and the main source of contention between both the states is unresolved and long pending Kashmir issue (Safdar 2008). Pakistan proclaims that India's occupation on Kashmir in 1947 was irrational, illegal and against the spirit of partition plan, thus, constitute unresolved agenda of partition (Safdar 2008:14). South Asian peace and stability is hostage due to Kashmir issue since partition and both India and Pakistan were engaged in wars in 1948 and again in 1965 due to Kashmir conflict. Now, Kashmir issue has become the nuclear flashpoint in the region due the induction of nuclear weapons in 1998. For sustaining status quo and defusing Pak-India tensions after 1998, the US played considerable role that is analyzed in succeeding sections.

Mediating role of the US during Pak-India crises

Kargil incidence 1999

The Kargil incidence took place in summer 1999 just one year after the nuclear tests of India and Pakistan, and after the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan in 1999. Kargil incidence was an exceptional military engagement between two nuclear rivals that was not experienced earlier between nuclear states (Bidwai 2006).

The Kargil conflict was a mid-sized military combat comprised around 40,000 soldiers from India (Bidwai 2006) and 34,000 soldiers from Pakistan equipped with light weapons (Fair 2010). However, India employed air power during conflict (Cheema 2010). It was a limited conflict restricted geographically within the northern region along LoC. During conflict, the two states employed conventional weapons, however, India deployed Bofor guns and Mirage 2000 (Cheema 2010). In response, Pakistan relied upon Northern Light Infantry (NLI) equipped with light infantry (Levy and Das 1999). The two states planned to deploy nuclear weapons on delivery systems, i.e. medium and short ranges Agni

and Prithvi missiles, Mirage 2000 aircraft and they were stationed at red alert that indicates India's preparations to apply nuclear weapons within short notice (Chengapa 2000). The conflict continued for two months and both the states exchanged nuclear threats 13 times against each other (Bidwai 2006).

The US officials were vigilant about Pak-India tension on Kargil and planned to force Pakistan for the evacuation of armed forces. President Clinton was in contact with the Premiers of India and Pakistan in the first week of June 1999 and offered preconditions for diffusing the tension i.e. withdrawal of Pakistani forces and respect the LoC (News 1999). President Clinton contacted the Premiers of both the states for the second time in the mid of June and suggested to start negotiations but India's Premier Vaipavee refused to accept the proposal and insisted for the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Kargil (Lovay 2010). The US endorsed India's demand and persuaded Pakistan for the elimination of troops as Gen Zini asserted, 'if Pakistan is unwilling to withdraw, then it would be a distressing news for the international community that Pakistan will intend to wage a war with nuclear annihilation against itself' (Clancy, Zinni and Koltz 2004), and offered a safe exit for Pakistani forces during evacuation by repressing India (Zehra 1999). Eventually, Gen Musharraf (the then Pakistan's army chief) persuaded about the withdrawal of forces (Lovay 2010:369). Mirza Aslam Baig (former Pakistan's army chief) stated, 'Pakistan decided to follow Zini's offer and signed Washington Declaration to restore peace process as per Lahore Declaration and LoC would be respected' (Beg 1999). Consequently, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Gen Musharraf signed Washington Declaration on July 5, 1999.

Military standoff 2001-2002

Soon after Kargil episode, another strong accusation persisted when a militant group attacked Indian parliament on December 13, 2001, and besieged Indian legislation (Mistry 2009). They were interrupted and killed by Indian security forces (Cheema 2010). This attack was assumed as the violence against Indian parliamentarians, Indian Prime Minister and the Indian nation as well (The Hindu 2001). India accused Pakistan for assisting the militants and intended to wage preemptive military action against Pakistan and projected to extraordinary levels during 2002 (Cheema 2010). India planned to instigate 'Operation Parakaram' on December 15, 2001 and deployed heavy artillery near to Pak-India border (Cheema 2010:151). It was enormously hazardous situation because any accident, unintended miscalculation or misperception by any side might had triggered violence that enforce towards exchange of nuclear weapons. It was the second time within the interval of one and a half year that India and Pakistan came close to nuclear exchange. During standoff, around one million troops were mobilized that was world's largest mobilization after World War II, and the two states were near to brink of armed conflict in January and in May-June 2002 (Matinuddin 2003). Prime Minister Vajpayee stated, 'India was ready for sacrificing to win over a decisive war against Pakistan' (Kashmir Cisis 2002).

Pakistan rejected India's proclamations and asked for the proof of its accusation and refuted Indian coercion (Cheema 2010:415). In response of India's deployment, Pakistan deployed around 300,000 troops along the international border that was nearly three fourth of its military might, while, navy and air force were kept on red alert (Kashmir Cisis 2002). According to Abdul Sattar (Pakistan's former minister for foreign affairs), 'India's deployment of troops along Pak-India border was coercive and threatening, and recommended that both the states start negotiation for de-escalation of forces on the similar spiralings which were done during Brasstacks' (Kashmir Cisis 2002).

During standoff, the two states adopted deterrent measures i.e. testing and employing ballistic missiles. George Fernandes evidenced that in the beginning of standoff, India positioned *Prithvi* missiles along Pak-India border (Chari, Cheema and Cohen 2007). Similarly, Pakistan also placed *Hataf I* and *Hataf II* missiles, but it was undecided that whether these missiles were armed with nuclear or conventional warheads (Chari, Cheema and Cohen 2007). Exchange of threatening statements of political elite of both the states on deployment of missiles indicate their ambitions to spoil the brinkmanship and to manipulate the predominance of escalation.

For avoiding the standoff, the US again played mediating role after Kargil episode. Collin Powell (the US Secretary of State) forced the two states to remain dialogue and compelled India to conduct fair and free election in Indian occupied Kashmir, that was the main precursor for the resumption of negotiations (Rana 2002). Lastly, the governments of India and Pakistan accepted conciliatory posture due to US appearance and resumed their diplomatic relations in October 2002. Official postmortem expectedness indicated that both the states became advantageous spin on the crises (Musharraf 2002, The Hindu 2002).

Mumbai terrorist attack

The Pak-India relations again under strain for the third time due to Mumbai attack in 2008. A series of terrorist attacks were observed in Mumbai on November 26, 2008. During attack, some well-armed groups attacked on a restaurant, two luxury hotels, a hospital and a railway station and killed 183 persons, 293 injured and hundred were became hostage including the foreigners (Hammond 2008). Primarily, there was a confusion about the exact no of terrorists and after investigation, it was revealed that they were 10. During attacks, maximum damage due to killing of people was the main apprehension in creating panic (Hammond 2008).

After the attack, India suspended negotiations with Pakistan. India blamed Pakistan and demanded handing over 20 persons to India apparently involved in attack (Hammond 2008). Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated during an address on television on November 27, 2008, 'India will not tolerate at any cost if our neighboring state would not take concrete measures against terrorist groups grounded in India's neighborhood' (Singh 2008).

Consequently, India planned to propagate the attack with global war on terror to grasp world response in its favor. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh professed Pakistan as the 'epicenter of terrorism' during addressing in the Indian parliament in December 12, 2008 and requested the international community to interfere in determining the matter (Singh 2008a).

Pakistan denounced the attack in maximum possible term. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari asserted that it was a 'detestable act' and Pakistan's Premier Yousaf Raza Gillani declared it as a 'dreadful act of terrorism' and both communicated condolence messages to their India's counterparts and pronounced shock and grief on the killing of innocent people during attack (The News 2008).

Pakistan rejected India's assertions about its involvement in Mumbai attack. It was restated that non-state actors were involved in attack. President Zardari gave assurance for the second time that his government will take severe action against non-state actors (Zardari 2008). Pakistan decided to initiate investigation about India's proclamation of Pakistan's influence in Mumbai attack and demanded India to cooperate in establishing a joint investigation team and to provide credible evidence (Daily Times 2008). Pakistan advised that peace process must remain intact and not be detained due to Mumbai attack (Dawn 2008).

To counter Indian threats, Pakistan's military and political elite assured that they were well prepared to comprehend any India's misadventure and would uphold its (Pakistan's) integrity (The Nation 2008). Prime Minister Gillani excluded war and declared that Mumbai attack was primarily the failure of Indian intelligence to find main culprits of attack (The Tribune Chandigarh 2008).

In reply of India's statement to 'keep all options open', Gen Pervaiz Kiani (Pakistan's army chief) responded (The News 2008a):

If India planned any misadventure and initiate any surgical strike, Pakistan's defense forces would be ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their motherland.

The US administration was keenly observing Pak-India tension due to Mumbai attack and for sustaining peace and status quo, intervened for the third time and Condoleezza Rice (the US Secretary of State) emphasized on both the states to cooperate at the uppermost level for maintaining transparency and recognized Pakistan's exertions in investigation (Rice 2001-2009). The US declined India's assertions against Pakistan and condemned India's strategy for surgical strikes (Dawn 2008a). The US regressed the likelihoods of war due to Mumbai attack and both the states evaded the placement of troops along the international border (Dawn 2008b).

Way forward

Kashmir has become a most vulnerable issue since August 6, 2019, due to India's denial to accept special autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir that instigated doubts among the international community in general and germinated disturbance between the people of Indian held Kashmir in particular. For containing public reaction and suppressing Kashmiris. India espoused modern tactics and human right abuses by employing 800,000 troops. Under such frenzy circumstances, the Pak-India tension has become close to red alert that might lead towards conflict including nuclear exchange. To comprehend the issue, the US as unipolar has the potential to defuse Pak-India tension as it was observed during Kargil Episode, 2001-2002 Military Stand off and during Mumbai Incidence in 2008. This indicates that the persistence of third-party mediation persists for normalizing Pak-India relations. On the contrary, it might be critical for the US (under unipolarity for maintaining the status quo), to play a dominant role in seeking comprehensive plan for the resolution of Kashmir issue according to UN resolution. Therefore, under the existing circumstances, Pak-India dialogues within the framework of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are the best conceivable options for the permanent resolution of Kashmir issue according to UN resolutions, those will endorse peace and stability not only between Pakistan and India but for the South Asian region as well.

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