

Save Balance of Power: Can We?

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Abstract : The present paper argues that Balance of Power (BOP) needs to conjugate with certain contingencies like geography. It is evident that sea powers ('insular' for better clarity) are not balanced (if at all) in the same way as land powers. Its apparent that artificial insularity that the US has achieved reduces the chances of balancing (constant) and helps it maintain preponderance (variable). But how precise is this approach in assessing the dynamics between China's rise and reaction of other powers and US. The 'evolved' theory can be validated by putting China and US in the equation. Systemic Relation between the nations was explained through the Balance of Power theory much before the systems theory was propounded. The BOP is the crux of functionality of 'power relation' dynamics which has played its role in the most astounding ways leading to situations of war and peace. Whimsical; but true that, the BOP has remained a complicated and indefinable concepts since Hans. Morgenthau to Kenneth Waltz. A challenge of the BOP, however remains; "that it has too many meanings". In the recent times it has become evident that the myriad of expectations generated by BOP has not met the practicality of the current world politics. It is for this reason; the BoP has been replaced by Preponderance Theory (PT) to explain prevailing power situation. PT does provide an empirical reasoning for the success of this theory but fails in a abstract logical reasoning required for making a theory universal. Unipolarity clarifies the current system as one where balance of power has become redundant. It seems to reach beyond the contours of BoP, where a superpower does what it must to remain one. The centrality of this arguments pivots around - an exception, every time BOP fails to operate, preponderance of power emerges. PT does not sit well with the primary logic of a theory because it works on an exception. The evolution of such a pattern and system where BOP fails and preponderance emerges is absent. The puzzle here is- if BOP really has become redundant or it needs polishing. The international power structure changed from multipolar to bipolar to unipolar. BOP was looked at to provide inevitable logic behind such changes and answer the dilemma we see today- why US is unchecked, unbalanced? But why was Britain unchecked in 19th century and why China was unbalanced in 13th century? It is the insularity of the state that makes BOP reproduce "imbalance of power", going a level up from off-shore balancer. This luxury of a state to maintain imbalance in the region of competition or threat is the causal relation between BOP's and geography. America has applied imbalancing-meaning disequilibrium (in its favor) to maintain the regional balance so that over time the weaker does not get stronger and pose a competition. It could do that due to the significant parity present between the US and the rest.

Keywords : balance of power, china, preponderance of power, US

Conference Title : ICPSIR 2015 : International Conference on Political Science and International Relations

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : July 09-10, 2015