India's Role in the Context of the International Political and Security System as a Regional Hegemony in South Asia

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Abstract

This paper discusses the author's argument regarding India's strategy to become a regional hegemony in the South Asian region. As a country with fairly high economic growth, and superior defense and political stability capabilities compared to other countries in South Asia, the authors describe the capabilities of India as a dominant actor in the region by using the Regional Hegemony theory proposed by John Mearsheimer, and the concept of Foreign Policy The land of Robert Keohan.

Keyword: *Kashmir, War, Realism, Diplomatic Relations,Territory.*

A. INTRDUCTION

The end of the Cold War which ended the bipolar period also had a profound influence on the constellation of international politics. Changes that occur include increased interdependence between countries, especially in the economic field, the development of contemporary issues and low politics such as human rights and the environment, as well as increased intensity of regional relations through various institutions and intra and inter-regional cooperation. The shift in political constellation, where there is no longer a tug-of-war between the United States and the Soviet Union, has also led to new regional powers. One of them that will be examined in this paper is India, which since the beginning of the 21st century began to emerge as one of the important actors in the South Asian region. The South Asian region itself, which consists of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Bhutan and Nepal, is an area with unique characteristics. According to Joseph Lepgold, the regionalization process that occurred in the region compared to other regions in Asia, tends to be weak and conflictual (Lepgold, 2003: 15). The growth of regionalism, including efforts to build institutions to strengthen regional cooperation, is considered not yet to occur in the South Asian region. The challenge that complicates the process is the large number of conflicts that occur, both within and between regional countries with a high level of complexity, making it very difficult to achieve resolution and build security stability in the region. Another condition that is also a challenge in developing South Asian regionalism is that countries in the region have had very high population growth rates over the past 40 years. It is estimated that until 2012, the population in

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South Asia will reach a quarter of the total world population. Nevertheless, this region already has a regional cooperation framework formed in 1985, namely the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which was successfully formed after a lengthy negotiation process of approximately eight years. This weak but potential condition of the region should encourage India to emerge as a dominant actor, both in the economic, political, security and social and cultural fields. This will provide various benefits for India, especially in increasing its bargaining position internationally.

Meanwhile, the potential for the emergence of India as a dominant power in the South Asian region has caused various reactions, especially in the form of efforts to balance India's strength. With the composition of the largest Indian population compared to other neighbors and Indian political behavior that tends to be aggressive, causing jealousy and worry arises among its neighbors. As a result of that concern, large countries such as Russia, China and the United States helped determine the diplomatic framework of the South Asian region. The connection with a big country is not because of the interests of countries outside the region, but mainly because there are interests with countries in South Asia, for example Pakistan to align with China in order to avoid security threats from its neighbors. This makes power relations in the South Asian region even more interesting to study. Before analyzing further about India's role as major power in South Asia, the author will first discuss the theory as the basis for analysis. The regional hegemony concept that the author uses refers to the thought of John J. Mearsheimer. In 2001, Mearsheimer through his work The Tragedy of Great Power Politics introduced the theory of offensive realism. Offensive realism Mearsheimer emphasized that the state must have maximum power and try to become a hegemony, because only by becoming a hegemony of national safety is completely guaranteed (Mearsheimer, 2010: 102). By becoming a hegemony, no other country has the capability to be a threat to that country, because there will be an imbalance in the distribution of power in the system. Mearsheimer said that at least the state must strive to become a regional hegemony, to reduce the potential threats from other countries to a minimum (Mearsheimer, 2010: 106). Through the theory of offensive realism, Indian behavior that tries to be involved in resolving several conflicts around its territory, such as the Afghanistan and Sri Lanka conflicts, is explained as an effort to become a regional hegemony, a condition which Mearsheimer considers to be the ideal condition of a country.

Another concept used by the author is Foreign Policy, which according to Keohane is a set of targets that explain how a country interacts with other countries in the economic, political, social and military fields; and to a lesser extent also how the state interacts with non-state organizations (Robert Keohane, in Mearsheimer, 2010:

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125). These interactions are evaluated and monitored in an effort to maximize the benefits that can be obtained from international multilateral cooperation. Foreign policy is designed to help protect national interests, national security, ideological goals, and a country's economic prosperity. This can occur as a result of peaceful cooperation with other nations, or through exploitation.

B. DISCUSSION

Based on these two theories, India's efforts to achieve regional hegemony can be proven by examining its foreign policy, whether there is a tendency to dominate by suppressing potential threats from other countries around it. This foreign policy can be seen from the defense strategy developed by India, as well as the economic progress and economic policy projections that will be implemented by India in the South Asian region. India's defense strategy since 1998 has tended to be offensive against Pakistan, where both countries have begun to develop nuclear weapons. India also builds alliances with the United States on various security issues, one of which is in combating terrorism, which includes arms sales and training of Indian military forces. Not only that, India strategically, since the Rajiv Gandhi government began actively mapping out threats from outside the region, one of which is China which is the major power in the East Asian region. India has long seen China as the greatest potential military threat; which was also driven by its relationship with the former Soviet Union in the Sino-Soviet era. Border disputes and China's relations with Pakistan, especially military assistance and secret missile support to Islamabad and nuclear weapons development programs, have been a constant concern for security. The Indian government has also recently developed a foreign policy 'Look East,' which is driven by Indian anxiety over the rapidly developing Chinese influence in Southeast Asia (Anadkat, 1999: 29). Although indeed until now India is the only country in South Asia that is a full dialogue partner of ASEAN and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), India is still trying to fight Chinese influence by expanding political, military and economic relations in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Anadkat stated that unlike Japan and ASEAN countries which allied with the United States to stem the power of China, India would instead aim to remain a hegemony in the South Asian region and develop as a new independent force and not be seen as a peripheral of China (Anadkat, 1999: 32).

In addition, the capability of India in building its military power is also considered very good compared to other countries in South Asia. The allocation of the Indian Defense Budget for 2012-2013 is 37.58 billion US dollars, all to meet the needs of the Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) and other relevant

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Department of Defense, such as Defense Research and Organizational Development (DRDO)) and defense equipment factories. This defense budget allocation includes spending on land, houses and army accommodation. India's defense budget increased by 5.63 billion US dollars from last year's budget, more than 17.63 percent compared with the allocation for 2011-12. The share of defense equipment expenditure is 15.46 billion US dollars or 41.14 percent of the total budget allocation (Mohan, 2008: 151). Increased military expansion from neighboring countries has ensured that India's budget expenditures will not be cut. This shows that militarily, in building national defense and security, India tends to develop strong defensive strategies to deal with various external threats. This condition clearly shows the intention of India to maintain its position as a regional hegemony in the South Asian region. Talking about the dynamics of the post-cold war regime, and the relationship of the regime to the power of hegemony, we cannot escape the Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST) and Keohane's notes in his journal "The Demand of The International Regimes". The theory of hegemony stability offered by the Neorealists said that the regime would be stable as long as there was a hegemonic power, which served as the forming and protector of the regime. This was later refuted by Keohane. He said that the regime could continue without hegemony, as long as the demand for the regime remained. With the end of the cold war, which was won by America, America will automatically become a world hegemony force, because there is no country that can balance the power possessed by America. This of course affected the international regime and also the constellation of world politics.

Seeing the movement of the current political constellation of the world, it cannot be denied that American hegemony is weakening, after the financial crisis that hit America in 2008. This financial crisis has not only hit America, but also spread to other parts of the world, and turned into a global financial crisis. The weakening of American hegemony can be felt in various regions, such as Asia - Pacific and ASEAN. While Americans are preoccupied with their economic arrangements after the crisis, new powers emerge in the world, namely China, India, and Japan. The decline in American hegemony has more or less influenced the dynamics of the international regime. America which has been the holder of power in the international regime began to feel overwhelmed, and asked for "help" from allied countries, even to countries that are considered successful in overcoming the 2008 financial crisis, through the G-20 forum. The collapse of the United States that was hit by the financial crisis in 2008 finally became an opportunity for other countries to emerge as important players through an institutional framework and international cooperation, one of which was India through the G-20 and SAARC. India's capability as a major power should also be supported by its ability to dominate the assessment of policy making in the framework of regional cooperation, namely SAARC. This regional cooperation

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framework actually has various goals for the development of the South Asian region, including to advance the welfare of the people in South Asia and to improve the quality of life of the people of South Asia, accelerate economic growth, social growth and also developments in the cultural field, providing opportunities for each individual to live with dignity and realize their potentials, provide and strengthen mutual trust between countries in South Asia, promote collaboration and so that there is mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural and knowledge fields between member countries, strengthen cooperation between SAARC member countries and countries developed countries, strengthen SAARC's internal cooperation between members in international forums in achieving common interests, as well as creating mutual trust, mutual understanding and a sense of appreciation for problems that occur in one member country. SAARC also continues to strive to build relationships between regions, by cooperating with international organizations and other regional organizations with similar goals and intentions.

The inhibiting and driving capabilities of India related to increasing regional cooperation in South Asia have been discussed, even before SAARC's conceptual journey began in 1983. India occupies a unique position in the South Asian region. With the virtue of potential size, location and economy, India assumes the role of natural leadership in the region. But India's presence with the aim of dominating regional leadership is also a source of concern for other countries in South Asia. As a result, the collaborative efforts of the South Asian countries that were "hijacked" by the dilemma in understanding India's role which was felt as a stepping stone, as mentioned earlier, could actually be a stumbling block for regionalism efforts. India claims a leadership position for itself. For a rational understanding of India's position and role in the region related to the concepts of leadership and hegemony, it will be influenced by Indian policy and the perception of neighboring countries towards it. In addition, another capability that shows India's superiority in South Asia is the economic sector. India initially experienced a slow pace of economic growth for decades, averaging only 3.0 percent a year. It was only at the end of the Rajiv Gandhi government, the late 1980s, especially after 1991 when Manmohan Singh, the finance minister launched a broad economic reform program, that the Indian economy began to grow more rapidly. Indian trade performance since the 1980s has progressed very rapidly. Between 1978 and 2005 nominal exports and imports, valued at current prices, as a whole were growing twice as fast. From around US $ 10 billion in 1978, exports and imports of Indian goods and services reached US $ 164 billion and US $ 188 billion in 2005, equivalent to 20% to 25% of the Chinese figure. India's trade growth has also increased since 2001. Nominal export and import growth increased by 28% and 30.2% between 2001 and 2005, compared to 9.1% and 8.3% for the period between 1978 and 2001 (Singh, 2011 : 18). Important notes that should be underlined from India's

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progress according to Singh lie in three things, namely liberalization and economic reform, internal forces and support of the external environment (Singh, 2011: 19). Since the economic liberalization of the early 1990s, India has emerged as a major country in information and communication technology and BPO (Business Process Outsourcing), which managed to increase growth by an average of 6.0 percent a year. Economic growth has been growing rapidly, especially since 2002, making India equal to China, the two Asian economic superpowers. This economic reform program includes deregulation of the financial sector and liberalization of trade protectionist policies and highly restrictive foreign direct investment policies. The cumulative impact of the economic policy reform program has been successful in encouraging direct private investment, including foreign private investment, so that it increases 7-8 percent of India's gross domestic product (GDP) in 4-5 years. From independence in 1947 until 1990, Indian economic activity proceeded very slowly. This condition is due to economic policies that are not pro-market, very strong government intervention and rely on import substitution. However, since the balance of payments difficulties in 1991 forced India to reform in various fields both economic and non-economic. This paradigm change turned out to have a positive impact on the Indian economy reflected in an increase in foreign trade, the flow of foreign capital flowing in the form of PI (Portfolio Investment) and FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) and economic activity that began to be vibrant. The progress of liberal policies adopted in this case has led to increased inflows of foreign investment in the country, both in terms of direct investment (FDI) and investment portfolios. The annual aggregate inflows of foreign investment varied between US $ 4 to 6 billion during the period 1993-94 to 2001-2002 (Singh, 2011: 25). India has been known as a relatively closed country and its market is difficult to penetrate by foreign parties. The dominant factor is to attribute the market power followed by a strong spirit of self-fulfillment. The role of government is very dominant, that is to regulate everything.

This strategy turned out to be ineffective as a development force, even the results obtained by poverty were increasingly rampant. Under the leadership of PM PV Nashimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Sigh, since 1991 India began to open up with economic liberalization. The government began disarming the King's License in terms of investment, industry and import licenses, ending the state monopoly in many sectors, and allowing foreign investors to pursue domestic business (Singh, 2011: 27). The paradigm shift in market power and foreign touch brought India to become a world power. Two sectors that escaped government interference namely information technology and the film industry turned out to be a great power of India in the future. The progress of information technology in India is phenomenal, even the city of Bangalore has become the world's IT center. Almost all giant IT industries open offices in this city from Microsoft, IBM, Infosys and Wipro.

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All of that is supported by the quality of information technology education that has an international reputation. The film industry in India is the largest widescreen industry in the world and has even beaten Hollywood in the number of film productions. The film industry has a very big role in absorbing labor. As many as 2.3 million Indians work in this sector. One of the crucial steps that became the beginning of India's rise was the amount of government attention on the quality of education. The system and quality of education in India has world standards. Even India is known as a supplier of skilled workers in the world. As an illustration in the 1990s of the 150,000 foreign workers who worked at US IT companies as many as 60,000 of them were software experts from India. Rapid technological progress frightened other developed countries. According to J.N's analysis Dixit, with its majority population being young and highly knowledgeable, in the next 20-30 years India will be superior in information technology or knowledge-based services with long-distance services (Dixit, 2011). The progress of Indian entrepreneurs has also been worldwide. A number of Indian companies are known as world class players such as Tata, Infosys, and TVS Motor Company. Tata's lunge even has become a world player to be reckoned with. At present Tata's work has operated in 40 countries with 90 companies. Tata's business diversification is very broad from automotive, steel, IT and communications, services, consumer products and agriculture.

Not only that, in the field of pharmacy India is also known to be very speculative and taken into account in the global arena. India supplies 40% of the world's needs for bulk medicines. India is currently able to produce medicines much cheaper than any other country, which is only half the production costs in the United States. With very strong intellectual capital, India is able to produce up to 10 generic drugs a year, while foreign producers only have a maximum of 2 products. India is currently also targeting the medical service market. With costs 80% lower than in the US, several US companies are exploring health care services in India (Dixit, 2011). Thus, it has been proven that both in terms of political, military and security stability, as well as the economy, India has been far superior to other countries in South Asia. This is a great potential utilized by India to achieve its goal of becoming a regional hegemony. This achievement is not only obtained through excellence in various fields, but also capability in maintaining regional stability, such as the ability to resolve conflicts in the region. The post-Cold War international political constellation also raises an increasingly complex complexity in management and conflict resolution efforts, both at global and regional levels. During the bipolar period, the consequences of the conflict between the two major countries affected various problems at the regional level, because the United States and the Soviet Union carried out proxy warfare spread across several regions of the world. Meanwhile, after bipolarity collapsed, the United States and the Soviet Union, which were previously assumed to

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be responsible for mitigating various regional conflicts, appeared unable or unwilling to get involved in disputes in the periphery. However, this has changed especially since the beginning of the 21st century. The United States is currently committed to a high-value mission in Afghanistan and Iraq. This makes it clear that the current condition of international security cannot be guaranteed, especially given by the United States itself because there are too many and the problems faced are increasingly complex. The efforts made by various international organizations, especially the United Nations to fill the gap also proved disappointing. Thus until now, the search for conflict management mechanisms and resolutions is still ongoing. One aspect of the capability of the state that is needed in an effort to achieve domination of power or hegemony, is the ability to mitigate and encourage conflict resolution in the region. This unfortunately has not yet been fully met by India, because of the conflict that still engulfs the country with Pakistan. Nevertheless, India is trying to enter and carry out conflict resolution in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, to show its capability as an important actor who has the legitimacy and ability to resolve conflicts in the South Asian region.

C. CONCLUSION

Since its independence in 1947, India began to build its country with a spirit of anti-colonialism and imperialism, which was heavily influenced by the founders of the nation, such as Gandhi and Nehru. Various experiences in dealing with and mitigating conflicts at the beginning of the formation of their country, which were largely colored by communal identity feuds - both ethnic and religious, formed India into a heterogeneous, but strong national identity. Changes that continue to run from a culture of government that is religious, secular, to the modern religious; coupled with leaders who have great popularity among the people, making the Indian government more mature and superior among other countries in the region. These are the factors driving the progress of India, which since the beginning of the 21st century began to show its potential as one of the important actors in the South Asian region. Based on the explanation and theory elaborated above, the writer can conclude that India, through its foreign policy, is trying to make itself the greatest power in the region. Its efforts to become a regional hegemony are carried out through policies aimed at minimizing conflict, increasing economic, political, defense and technology and information excellence. Another effort undertaken by India is to emerge as a mediator of various intra-regional conflicts, such as the Sri Lankan conflict with the LTTE group and the Afghan conflict, but this has not been able to be maximally implemented because India itself still faces prolonged conflictual relations with

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Pakistan. Thus, India's position as a leading role in the South Asian region will be stronger if tensions with Pakistan has been appeased.

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