A World in Transition

Rethinking the Current Global Order

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Abstract: Over the past three decades, the world has experienced significant turbulence, shaped by conflicts, global transformations, and crises within the international community. The end of the Cold War disrupted a long-established order, leaving both policymakers and scholars in uncharted territory. During the Cold War, international relations were more predictable, offering a stable framework for strategic analysis. In the aftermath, a wave of activity in the United States — fueled by a sense of victory — sought to redefine the future. This effort went beyond physical actions, extending into research institutions, think tanks, and academia, all striving to chart new courses in both practice and theory. Yet, the rapid

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pace of change and the fluid nature of the global landscape led to numerous missteps and misjudgments, affecting both major and middle powers to varying degrees. This paper examines the consequences of these intellectual efforts and the transitional phase that followed. It explores the defining features of this period and the forces that have shaped it. By shedding light on these dynamics, the paper aims to equip policymakers and scholars with the insights needed to better understand and influence the emerging international order. The ultimate goal is to foster a practical understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead, helping navigate the complexities of the evolving global landscape.

Introduction

Numerous predictions and prescriptions offered by both scholars and practitioners have proven to be fundamentally flawed or prematurely articulated. Instances include the declaration of a "new world order" by a U.S. president during the early 1990s, alongside scholarly discourse in the late 1980s asserting the impending "end of sovereignty" and questioning the continued role of the state in international affairs.[1] The predictions of "global governance" engendered optimism for multilateral accomplishments.[2] Forecasts of an imminent "new American century" and the triumphant declaration of "mission accomplished" from a warship yielded to a resurgence of extreme unilateralism and a resurgence of nation-state prominence.[3]

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[1]George H.W. Bush, "Address to the 46th Session of the United Nations General Assembly," U.S. Department of States, September 23, 1991, https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207269.htm.

[2]James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.

[3]PNAC, *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: Project for the New American Century, 2000); Office of the Press Secretary, "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended," White House, May 1, 2003, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html.

These conceptual frameworks, which have evolved over the preceding three decades to characterize, predict, and prescribe the unfolding global landscape, underscore the pivotal nature of this era. The ensuing debates ponder whether prevailing trends will intensify or be supplanted by entirely distinct trajectories, accentuating the imperative for cognitive transformation. Practical comprehension and forthright delineation of the present international position, the aspired destination, and the probable trajectory assume heightened significance.

This paper delves into the pivotal notion of transition, encompassing a concise historical backdrop, ramifications and dimensions of globalization, and the pertinence of theoretical constructs and their divergent paradigms. Exploring transitional dynamics entails scrutiny of conceptual mutations, the advent of novel terminologies, and redefined interpretations of established constructs like power. Addressing challenges posed by power realignments, burgeoning sources, and hubs of influence, as well as new emerging actors, the discourse contemplates both roles and tribulations for established participants. Centering attention on the impracticability of hegemony, be it global or regional, the analysis navigates through the confrontations between major powers, the ascendancy of emerging forces, and the framing of notions like the "Post-Western World," a "State of Westlessness," and a "Post-polar World."

Order: A Historical Perspective

Throughout history, pivotal transitions marked by the collapse of established orders and the subsequent rise of new global order have often been accompanied by warfare and significant upheaval. These transformative junctures, while manifesting diverse criteria, predominantly pertain to Western historical epochs due to the dominant Western orientation of international relations. Recognizing this backdrop, the inadequacy of Western perspectives in comprehending global dynamics beyond their sphere becomes evident, necessitating the emergence of non-Western frameworks for conceptualizing the evolving global order. Given that the forthcoming global order is anticipated to encompass non-Western influences, this shift warrants attention.

The historical trajectory reveals seminal milestones that have shaped the international landscape. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia witnessed the

establishment of European sovereignties and the inception of the nation-state as a core unit within international affairs, thus introducing the concept of sovereignty and absolute territorial authority. The 1815 Congress of Vienna precipitated the Concert of Europe and introduced the Balance of Power System, which faltered, resulting in the First World War.[4] The aftermath of World War I, evidenced by the 1919 end of hostilities and the subsequent Briand-Kellogg Pact of Paris in 1928, denoted a shift towards idealistic aspirations and disarmament efforts, culminating in the establishment of the League of Nations. However, the League's inability to prevent World War II underscored its inadequacy, prompting the establishment of the United Nations, featuring Bretton Woods institutions as a more pragmatic global structure addressing prior shortcomings.

The Cold War era dominated subsequent decades, significantly influencing both the United Nations and international power dynamics. Efforts to circumvent the Cold War's bipolar framework emerged, exemplified by the non-aligned movement and the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. These were all attempts to bypass the cold war: rivalry either based on non-alignment or based on "Neither East nor West" policy or similar approaches that had taken place. But more or less it was clear that there were frameworks and contexts both for action and theory. Those who try to work outside that context faced serious challenges. The Iran-Iraq War highlighted the constraints imposed by this ideological struggle, as global powers supported Iraq to counter Iran's deviation from the bipolar framework.[5] The Cold War's eventual dissolution, precipitated by factors including the Afghan conflict and internal flaws within the Soviet system, signified a profound shift from established mental paradigms, albeit not an instantaneous departure.

The year 1990 marked a significant juncture, characterized by a widely held expectation of a protracted transitional phase. This phase was envisioned to potentially commence with a period of unipolarity, centered around U.S. dominance. The misperception of a new world order's emergence stemmed partly from the Persian Gulf War, where a coalition,

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[4]Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 169.

[5]"US and British Support for Hussein Regime," Global Policy Forum, https://archive.globalpolicy.org/iraq-conflict-the-historical-background-/us-and-british-support-for-huss-regime.html.

including Security Council members, was assembled to counter Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. This misperception found expression in President Bush's announcement of a new world order. This assertion, as further explored in this paper, bore substantial implications for both the global community and the United States. The misperception in the United States that the new world order had emerged, was to the extent that President George H.W. Bush, in the General Assembly announced the emergence of a new world order. That was an important flaw and as will be described later in this paper, it had immense cost both on the international community and the United States itself.

In summary, historical junctures, dominated by Western-centric perspectives, have molded the international landscape, necessitating a recalibration of frameworks to accommodate evolving global influences.

The Role of Theory

The evolution of globalization, particularly in trade, dates back to the early 20th century, yet its more intricate manifestations and cognitive implications emerged subsequently. The recognition extended beyond trade, encompassing diverse realms including security. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus the end of the bipolar global order, endeavors aimed at shaping a new world order or institutionalizing advantages were pursued to ensure their enduring presence. Conceptually, three prominent frameworks emerged:

(1) From the liberal tradition, we had the idea of the "end of history" that was the conceptual framework for a new American world order.
(2) From the more realistic frame of mind, we had a "clash of civilizations": the prediction of the state of the future and how it had to be dealt with.
(3) From a very practical point of view, we had a new conservative movement which was based on one major assumption and had a very direct impact on practice.

The third approach did not merely anticipate future scenarios but advocated a proactive agenda. It posited that the primacy of the United States after the end of the Cold War was not going to be permanent and the emergence of China and other global players was an eventuality that could not be escaped. Therefore, its prescription was to institutionalize U.S.

predominance by bringing everything to the realm of security. That is why attempting to securitize anything became the cornerstone of U.S. policy to create the next world. The United States possesses a distinct advantage in terms of military power and a dominant position in the realm of security affairs. Consequently, by adopting a strategy of securitization, the United States could potentially establish itself as not only the leader of the Western world but also the global leader. However, the various European perspectives on shaping the emerging global order, particularly in the context of norm-setting, revealed that U.S. predominance was not universally acknowledged.

A retrospective analysis of U.S. presidential administrations after the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War reveals a consistent inclination towards employing military force. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations frequently resorted to military interventions, such as in Haiti (Operation Uphold Democracy, 1994), Somalia (Operation Restore Hope, 1992–1993), Libya (2011), Yugoslavia (1999), Kosovo (1992–1995), and Iraq (1991). These interventions were driven by a desire to institutionalize and extend what was perceived as short-term dominance, providing it with lasting influence. This pattern continues today, as the United States persistently seeks to securitize its adversaries, including nations like Iran and China, and even extending to efforts to label the coronavirus as the "Wuhan virus" or the "Chinese virus." This stance, while viewed by some as simplistic, aligns with the broader conceptualization of entrenching U.S. power. The overwhelming expenditure on military hardware underscores the U.S. commitment to maintaining its military preeminence. The U.S. alone allocates approximately 600 billion dollars to defense, eclipsing the combined military budgets of the next ten countries combined. This power disparity has incentivized the U.S. to pursue a strategy of securitization, a trend that began in the 1990s.

The European perspective contrasted with the U.S. approach, primarily prioritizing "norm-setting." In the aftermath of the Cold War, European nations found themselves devoid of substantial opposition, enabling them to navigate a normative path with a focus on international law, organizations, and cooperative frameworks. These endeavors gained momentum due to the diminished ideological rivalry and the fostering of normative consensus. Notably, issues such as human rights, environmental concerns, and social development became focal points of global discourse

and were addressed through international conferences convened by the United Nations.[6] Nevertheless, divergences emerged within the Western framework. The European stance on issues like criminal responsibility, exemplified by the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against U.S. resistance, highlighted the potential for Western allies to deviate from U.S. preferences. This event served as a cautionary signal for the United States to maintain its military and security prowess, a domain where it retained absolute advantage.

Norm-setting efforts extended across various domains, including security. The Chemical Weapons Convention[7] and the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) exemplified significant norm-setting milestones. The extension of the NPT demonstrated Western influence, despite a division between non-aligned countries and the West regarding the duration of the treaty's validity. In 1968, when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT) was initially signed, its proponents did not envisage an indefinite commitment to the global categorization of states into "nuclear-haves" and "nuclear-have-nots." The underlying belief among signatory nations was that this division would have a finite duration, culminating in the eventual relinquishment of nuclear arsenals by established nuclear powers. This expectation was reflected in the treaty's original stipulation of a 25-year lifespan. However, during the NPT review and extension conference held in 1995, the Western bloc succeeded in diverging from the consensus held by the non-aligned countries, comprising 118 member states, who had argued that any extension of the treaty must be contingent upon a clear timeline for disarmament. This pivotal juncture occurred amidst the backdrop of the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a perceived new global order. Interestingly, out of the 118 non-aligned nations, 90 eventually aligned with the Western stance, advocating for the indefinite extension of the NPT.

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[6]For example: World Summit for Social Development (1995), Earth Summit (1992), Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COP) (2015), Millennium Summit (2000), International Conference on Financing for Development (2002), and United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20, 2012).

[7]CWC was adopted by 65 countries on September 3, 1992, and entered into force on April 29, 1997.

The trajectory of globalization, coupled with norm-setting and securitization, encapsulated a multifaceted framework for shaping the new global order. As the international community engaged in this transformative process, normative and security dynamics coalesced, steering the discourse towards cooperative frameworks and strategic agendas alike.

The fluid nature of international relations exposes actors to the risk of miscalculation, often arising from an enduring "Cold War mentality." This phenomenon has affected both medium-powers and superpowers, yielding significant consequences:

- The disintegration of Yugoslavia serves as an example of how strategic miscalculations by medium-sized powers can have profound consequences. Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav leader, misjudged the United States' stance following the Cold War's end. He believed the United States would tolerate his territorial ambitions, partly based on a U. S. State Department declaration that Yugoslavia was not a vital national security interest. This misjudgment, rooted in a failure to grasp the complexities of the transitional period, led to Milosevic's downfall and Yugoslavia's disintegration, with a tragic humanitarian crisis, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- Saddam Hussein's ill-fated decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990 serves as another prominent example of strategic miscalculation. Despite his tactical acumen in timing the invasion during a European holiday and the Day of Ashura in the neighboring Iran, his actions were influenced by misinformation from the U.S. ambassador, April Glaspie. She implied that the United States would not intervene, characterizing the conflict as a matter between Iraq and Kuwait. This misjudgment led to Saddam Hussein's demise and triggered a long-standing regional crisis spanning the past three decades.

- Another instructive case of miscalculation pertains to Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. In contrast to individuals who exhibited aggression and assertiveness, Gaddafi erred on the side of excessive defensiveness. His miscalculation ultimately resulted in both the disintegration of Libya and his personal downfall. This example underscores that miscalculations need not solely manifest as adventurous undertakings; they can also

materialize in the form of excessive submission, with equally catastrophic consequences.

- Miscalculations made by superpowers have also been a subject of discussion. For instance, the first U.S. president after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, George H.W. Bush, announced the emergence of a "new world order." Additionally, his son famously declared "mission accomplished." However, the consequences of miscalculations by major powers are often more devastating than those of medium-sized powers. Beyond the colossal waste of resources, costing trillions of dollars and countless lives in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, these miscalculations have yielded long-lasting repercussions, including the proliferation of extremism. The global landscape, marked by the ascent of extremism in both the developing and Islamic world, as well as in the Western sphere, can be traced back to these miscalculations. Occupation invariably breeds resentment, providing fertile ground for extremism to flourish. Prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, many close observers of the region, rather than distant perspectives, had predicted that the outcome would be the surge of extremism.[8] This prediction materialized, alongside the rise of non-state security actors.

The U.S. pursuit of a new world order led to military interventions to perpetuate its vision, a misjudgment with far-reaching implications. The "War on Terror" following interventions in the Middle East fostered extremism, with subsequent administrations struggling to alleviate its aftermath. The United States political establishment conceded in Baker-Hamilton Report to the futility and indeed dangers of this strategy.[9] Despite attempts by Presidents Obama and Trump to alter the course, the persistence of this challenge endures.

In summary, miscalculations in international relations, stemming from a persistent "cold war mentality," have impacted medium-powers and superpowers alike. The consequences of these misjudgments have led to disintegration, conflict, and the emergence of extremism, posing enduring challenges to global stability and security.

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[8]Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000).

[9]James A. Baker *et al.*, *Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

Competing Theoretical Perspectives (Cognitive Transformation)

The underlying dilemma contributing to the unfortunate circumstances discussed earlier stems from a critical "problem of understanding."[10] While ulterior motives and financial gains may play a role, the primary factor leading both global powers and medium (regional) powers astray has been a combination of miscalculation, misunderstanding, and cognitive rigidity. This mindset is rooted in perceptions shaped by a bipolar orientation, characteristic of the Cold War mentality. The inability to adapt to evolving realities and to formulate prescriptions and predictions beyond this outdated mindset has been a critical factor.

This perspective contends that while actions may have been strategically significant, their outcomes proved tactically astute yet strategically calamitous. The crux of the strategic failure lays in an erroneous cognitive map, stemming from an obsolete worldview — a world order that no longer exists. These actors crafted assessments grounded in a bipolar paradigm, a perspective that had ceased to accurately reflect the global landscape. Consequently, misperceptions stemming from this antiquated framework engendered dire consequences.

The implication of this analysis underscores the compelling need for a cognitive remapping and recalibration. To navigate the dynamics of the changing world, it is imperative to embrace a cognitive shift that aligns with the actualities of the contemporary era. This cognitive transformation is crucial to rectify the distortions engendered by outdated perceptions and to effectively engage with the evolving global landscape.

Characteristics of the Transitional Period

Lack of Understanding

A central characteristic of the current transitional period is the absence of a clear understanding regarding its duration and endpoint. This lack of a definitive timeframe has persisted for nearly three decades, with the transitional phase spanning from 1990 onwards. Attempts to hasten the

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[10]Mohammad Javad Zarif and Sasan Karimi, "Iran and the Cognitive Challenge in Various Perceptions of Strategic Alliance in International Relations," *Journal of Country Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2023), p. 461.

transition towards a new, polarized world order have yielded grave errors. It is prudent to refrain from premature predictions about the culmination of this transitional period, particularly when contemplating a polarized world order. Assertions have proven to be excessive and grievously flawed. The prospect of an entirely novel world order characterized by radically different rules appears remote in the foreseeable future. For this reason, it may be important to note that many characteristics of the post-Westphalian orders are being challenged by two fundamental trends: emergence of non-state actors as significant global players leading to what Rosenau described as post-internationalism[11]; and the demise of loyalty to traditional poles of power, in what looks more and more like a network rather than polar system.

Turbulence

The second hallmark of this transitional period is marked by turbulence and intensified competition. Everyday existence witnesses ordinary competition, encompassing states, entities, and global players. However, the nature of competition during the transitional phase bears millennial implications. Such competitions typically align with short or medium-term goals and repercussions. In contrast, competition within the transitional phase extends over decades, mirroring the extended lifespan of newly established systems. The preceding bipolar global structure of the cold war endured for approximately 50 years (1945–1991). The current transition obscured by the inherent turbulence characteristic of this phase.

Competition during this transitional period is notably fierce. Previous instances of transition incorporated instances of warfare. In the current transition, while major power conflicts were notably absent, regional and proxy disputes persisted. Turbulence within the contemporary transition is defined by ongoing rivalries, manifesting in securitized relationships. Conventional frameworks predicting harmonious interactions between the United States, Russia, and China envision peaceful coexistence. Yet, divergent interests suggest a potential for conflict, even if not on a grand scale.

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[11]James Rosenau and Mary Durfee, *Thinking Theory Thoroughly: Coherent Approaches To An Incoherent World* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

In this context, the United States seeks to counterbalance what it perceives as a disadvantageous outcome of China's peaceful emergence. China, in turn, aspires to navigate its ascent within a peaceful climate. While a major conflict remains unlikely, the current trajectory introduces a degree of uncertainty. Consequently, turbulence remains a defining attribute of this transitional period, encompassing both high and low-intensity manifestations at various levels. In essence, turbulence characterizes the landscape during this transition, manifesting an overarching theme throughout the phase.

Fluidity

The third defining feature of the transitional period is its inherent fluidity. In the context of the Cold War era, a discernible set of rules and block structures facilitated the prediction of future developments and guided actions grounded in those prognoses. However, the transitional phase presents a distinct challenge, rendering the outcome of actions significantly harder to foresee. Given the prevailing state of "becoming," every entity endeavors to incite revolutionary changes aligning with its interests, amplifying the uncertainty surrounding the future. Amid this milieu, some entities seek to transpose their military supremacy into the transitional period, attempting to sustain their dominance within the erstwhile world order. As highlighted earlier, the United States' annual engagement in warfare from 1990 to 2003 aimed to maintain preeminence, constituting a reactionary and at times aggressive approach.

Concurrently, other actors pursue a revolutionary stance during this transitional phase, each striving to optimize their standing in the forthcoming era. This dynamic, characterized by varied revolutionary trajectories, underscores the fluid nature of the current period. From a practical perspective, practitioners are compelled to harmonize with emerging realities, while from an academic standpoint, intellectual vitality becomes paramount. Those individuals whose mindset crystallized during the Cold War must continually reassess their suppositions. Clinging to presumptions can precipitate catastrophic

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outcomes. As advocated by critical theorists, engaging in an ongoing dialogue — a perpetual process of scrutinizing assumptions and laying aside preconceived notions — is imperative. Amidst this dynamic, the peril posed by inflexible mindsets becomes evident.

Indeed, rigid mental frameworks, predicated on obsolete Cold War paradigms, have contributed to disastrous consequences. A pertinent illustration is evident in John Bolton's approach to international agreements, leading the United States to withdraw from numerous accords, a decision later met with regret. This underscores the inherent danger posed by unyielding mindsets that fail to adapt or transform in response to contemporary realities.

The fluidity of international environment underscores another significant development; the more prominent role of agents in the structure/agent dichotomy. As structures of the bipolar world lose their rigidity and become more fluid, the agents assume a greater degree of impact on the development of global trends. This may yet the most important characteristic of the transitional period, even undermining the Westphalian concept of international relations as relations between sovereign states. As individual human beings assume a greater role in shaping global future through various means from non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, non-state actors, technology companies and a multitude of others with great influence over global developments, we may need to re-evaluate our conceptual framework in understanding and describing our new world.

Shifting Coalitions

The fluid nature of the transitional period significantly shapes the nature of coalitions, constituting the subsequent defining characteristic. The era no longer sustains permanent and enduring permanent alliances. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, commencing with the unraveling of the Eastern Bloc, has reverberated across various dimensions, manifesting in the fracturing of alliances such as NATO. The once perceived cohesion of entities like the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has yielded to fragmentation. A notable departure from traditional norms was Turkey's procurement of weaponry from Russia — a NATO member resorting to dealings with a former adversary, underscoring the dissipation of alliance coherence.

This dissolution of steadfast coalitions is emblematic of the ongoing transitional phase. The concept of steadfast and enduring coalitions has lost its moorings and is no longer tenable. The present milieu pivots towards the notion of "coalitions of convenience," "issue-based coalitions" and even global issue networks defying traditional alliance and coalition-building altogether. These ad hoc alliances arise based on specific issues or concerns, delineating a pragmatic and adaptive approach. Such coalitions often transcend conventional lines, witnessing cross-membership arrangements that bring together divergent actors. For instance, the discourse surrounding environmental challenges witnesses the alignment of developing nations, including OPEC members, with developed countries, highlighting a paradigm shift in coalition dynamics.

As the transitional period unfolds, coalitions assume a transitory essence, tailored to address specific issues. This malleability stands in stark contrast to the rigidity of prior coalitions. The establishment of inflexible coalitions during this transformative phase appears implausible. Acknowledging this dynamism is imperative; interests, alliances, and the positioning of actors are susceptible to constant fluctuations. In this dynamic landscape, the notion of enduring and static coalitions is no longer viable.

Consequences and Domains of Globalization

The dynamics of the transitional period extend to the realm of globalization, which is marked by shifting characteristics and ramifications across different dimensions. Analyzing this phenomenon entails examining three distinct perspectives:

(a) Conceptual Point of View. Globalization, which in some extents is a natural progression, encountered attempts to assert hegemony and impose specific aspects, particularly pertaining to power, culture, and values. Such endeavors, though not intrinsic to globalization, triggered reactions manifesting as intensified searches for identity, accentuated localization, and amplified regionalization. The reaction to forced globalization engendered a resurgence of identity consciousness, prompting entities to assert their distinctive traits in the face of imposed global norms.

(b) Action-Reaction Cycle. This characteristic underscores the rise of extreme nationalism and destructive nationalization within certain Western societies, notably exemplified by the United States. In this context, former President Trump's address at the United Nations General Assembly underscored a reactionary stance advocating for singular pursuit of national interests: "For decades, the same tired voices proposed the same failed solutions, pursuing global ambitions at the expense of their own people. But only when you take care of your own citizens will you find a true basis for cooperation. As President, I have rejected the failed approaches of the past, and I am proudly putting America first, just as you should be putting your countries first. That's okay — that's what you should be doing." This sentiment, while rooted in the discourse of national sovereignty, emerged as a response to imposed globalization, reflecting a departure from practical realities of a globally interconnected world.

(c) Practical Point of View. Globalization's practical facets entail an end to information monopolies. Unlike the past, disseminating information does not necessitate media empires or imperial dominion. Although media empires still persist, their monopoly over information and dissemination has significantly diminished. This transformation democratizes access to information dissemination, ensuring a wider range of voices are heard, irrespective of imperial control.[12] Emotions, too, are experiencing globalization. The spread of emotions is no longer monopolized, impacting the conduct of warfare. The inherent challenges of waging prolonged wars arise from the global emotional response, precluding enduring conflict. This influence ensures that conflicts, particularly involving powerful nations, assume a short-term nature due to the destabilizing effects of sustained emotional resonance. Globalization has precipitated a host of challenges transcending national and regional boundaries, necessitating comprehensive global responses. The environment presents a formidable challenge requiring global cooperation. Denial and skepticism notwithstanding, the universal acceptance of environmental degradation as a global concern underscores the

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[12]Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen, eds., *The Globalization of News* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), p. 5.

imperative for a collective response transcending localized efforts.[13] Poverty's global impact demands concerted global efforts for alleviation, given its systemic and cross-border consequences.[14] Health crises, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, accentuate the global nature of contemporary challenges. The interconnectedness of healthcare necessitates collaborative global responses to mitigate threats.[15] Migration patterns, driven by poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, extend repercussions to distant regions. Addressing the challenges associated with immigration mandates global cooperation.[16] Terrorism is a worldwide problem, illustrated by the events of 9/11 when even the most powerful nation, the United States, was unable to protect its citizens. This incident exposed the fear and insecurity felt by Americans due to the government's inability to ensure their safety. Terrorism is a global challenge because security in one part of the world cannot coexist with devastation in another. This leads to a crucial proposition that governments and scholars find challenging: security has become a globalized concept. In this globalized security paradigm, the traditional notion of deterrence, which involves instilling insecurity in opponents, becomes problematic. If one's security depends on their opponent's security, creating insecurity in the opponent does not guarantee one's safety. Despite these challenges, politicians continue to engage in bargaining and posturing, often benefiting arms producers, but it is essential to recognize that true security cannot be achieved at the expense of others' insecurity. This phenomenon combined with the end of monopoly, which does not merely apply to media and news outlets, but even to organized use of violence, including even with weapons of mass destruction, provides grounds for collective pondering and global cooperation. The combination of small smart lethal weapons with advancements in artificial intelligence, both of which in the hands of individuals, creates the dangerous spectacle of private wars of mass destruction. Challenges such as drug trafficking and organized crime also transcend national confines,

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[13]Lois Jensen, ed., *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* (New York: United Nations, 2022), pp. 52–57.

[14]Ibid., pp. 26–27.

[15]Ibid., p. 6.

[16]Ibid., p. 18.

primarily influenced by global markets. Resolving these issues requires comprehensive global strategies and coordinated efforts to address underlying systemic factors.

In sum, the transformative nature of globalization, its conceptual nuances, and the evolving dynamics of global challenges underscore the necessity for collaborative global action during the transitional period. As the world grapples with shifting paradigms, recognizing the interconnectedness of challenges and the imperative for united responses remains paramount.

Positive-Sum Scenarios

An aspect of significance, which tends to be more readily apprehended than the complex matter of deterrence, pertains to the realm of mutually beneficial interactions, referred to as win-win situations. It is apparent that the contemporary global milieu is marked by a transition beyond the confines of zero-sum games. Within the framework of zero-sum dynamics, a premise persists that gains by one entity are inevitably accompanied by corresponding losses incurred by others, most notably exemplified by the occurrence of armed conflicts. In the context of warfare, triumph is often measured in terms of relative losses, rather than actual substantive gains. The discernment of "winning" in this context conveys a notion of having suffered lesser losses, as opposed to substantial gains. Moreover, there is a conspicuous lack of well-defined criteria for determining the extent of lesser losses. For instance, the United States expended a substantial sum of seven trillion dollars within the Middle East, subsequent to 1990, with the intention of consolidating its global preeminence.[17] The initial facet of global dominance necessitates the provision of security measures reminiscent of rudimentary state responsibilities extended to its citizens.

The situation necessitates a choice, wherein a zero-sum game, characterized by an adversarial Cold War mindset, becomes implausible. Notably, win-lose outcomes present a diminishing prospect, rendering the arena for interaction conducive either to negative-sum or positive-sum scenarios. The adoption of a zero-sum perspective is often predicated on the mistaken

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[17]Z. Byron Wolf, "Trump Keeps Saying the US Has Spent $7 Trillion in the Middle East," CNN, April 24, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/24/politics/us-spends-7-trillion-middle-east-trump-fact-check/index.html.

belief that the United States and the West emerged as victors of the Cold War. A more accurate appraisal, however, discerns the Cold War era as culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, thereby indicating a scenario wherein losses were experienced universally without any singular victor. This event consequently precipitated the collapse of the prevailing international order. The previous global order, though arguably lacking in equitable attributes, offers limited insight into whether the subsequent order will engender greater justice and fairness. What remains apparent, however, is that the race to usher in a new global epoch has led to collective losses. The prevalence of a zero-sum mentality underscores the pressing need for a paradigm shift toward a positive-sum framework, wherein the pursuit of individual gains at the expense of others is regarded as incompatible with collective progress.[18]

Over the past two centuries, the prevailing paradigm characterized by zero-sum rivalry has engendered global conflicts, suffering, underdevelopment, and failed to guarantee security for any participant. In the current milieu, marked by a preponderance of zero-sum interactions, the feasibility of engaging in positive-sum endeavors becomes exceedingly improbable. This reluctance to embrace positive-sum paradigms emanates from the enduring influence of the zero-sum approach, perpetuated through its alignment with perceived realism concerning human nature and the global environment. This persistence thus perpetuates a climate wherein negative-sum dynamics persist unabated. The absence of prolonged periods of global tranquility over the preceding decades attests to this reality. Instances of paradigmatic contemplation, characterized by fleeting instances of positive-sum thinking, have been documented sporadically. Diplomatic overtures, despite their initial discordant nature, have eventually culminated in converging upon positive-sum principles. One such exemplar was the concept of "Dialogue Among Civilizations," propounded by President Khatami and presented to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998. This was during a period dominated by the fervent pursuit of a unipolar world order. Despite the conservative inclination towards institutionalizing the United States' military dominance within a unipolar framework, the proposition for dialogue resonated within the General

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[18]Patricia Andrews Fearon, "Zero-Sum Mindset & Its Discontents," Ph.D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 2022, pp. 128–169.

Assembly. Consequently, a panel of 18 individuals, representing diverse global perspectives, produced the publication *Crossing the Divide* in 2001. The processes of globalization are giving birth to a new paradigm of global relations: equal footing; re-assessment of the "enemy"; dispersion of power; stake-holding; individual responsibility; and issue-driven alignments. The current reality is a mosaic of the old and the new. The elements of the new paradigm are already there, but to a certain extent we are blinded by the old paradigm, which prevents us from seeing what is emerging.[19]

A resolution that was adopted that year by the General Assembly of the United Nations called "Global Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations" adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly. While it was officially adopted in November, in fact it had been discussed and agreed upon in June, before the 9/11 tragedy:

> Dialogue among civilizations is a process between and within civilizations, founded on inclusion, and a collective desire to learn, uncover and examine assumptions, unfold shared meaning and core values and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue.[20]

This was a brief moment of history where the international community came to the realization that a paradigm shift was not just necessary, but an emerging reality that had and has its extremist enemies. The adoption of the "Global Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations" by the United Nations General Assembly serves as a pivotal moment in history. Characterized by inclusive engagement and a collective aspiration to scrutinize assumptions, uncover shared values, and integrate varied perspectives, this dialogic process extends both inter- and intra-civilizational domains. This moment exemplifies a departure from exclusionary practices, with recognition that the amalgamation of new and old paradigms often obscures the emerging patterns.

Another fleeting historical juncture emerged with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which transpired over 12 years amid

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[19]Mohammad Javad Zarif, "Reflections on Terrorism, Dialogue and Global Ethics," *Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2002), p. 11.

[20]"Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations," United Nations General Assembly, November 9, 2001, http://www.un-documents.net/a56r6.htm.

the zero-sum dynamics surrounding the Iran-U.S. nuclear issue. The contention, originating from the United States advocating for a complete cessation of Iran's centrifuge activities, juxtaposed with Iran's assertion that such matters fell beyond U.S. purview, epitomizes the zero-sum dynamics at play. Commencing with Iran's possession of 200 centrifuges when the zero-sum dynamics were initiated, the subsequent resurgence of negotiations in 2012 corresponded to Iran's acquisition of 20,000 centrifuges.[21] This asymmetric progression underscored a substantial net loss of 19,800 centrifuges for the United States.

Evidently, the adoption of a zero-sum posture yielded an outcome characterized by negative-sum dynamics. Recognizing the counterproductive nature of such a stance, both parties embarked on a shift towards a more constructive approach, centered around a shared objective: the peaceful utilization of Iran's centrifuges for nuclear power. Departing from the rigid stances of "no centrifuges" and "non-interference," this collaborative endeavor sought to harness centrifuges for peaceful ends, contingent upon rigorous monitoring. The transition from a negative-sum stance to a positive-sum orientation permitted both entities to attain a semblance of victory.

Acknowledging the import of the paradigm shift, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 substantiates a transformation in perspective, explicitly affirming a departure from conventional paradigms. This resolution conveys a desire to cultivate new relations, indicative of the acknowledgment that prior dynamics were detrimental. It thus underscores a pronounced shift from negative-sum to positive-sum paradigm, accommodating Iran's nuclear program within parameters assuaging Western concerns.

Regrettably, these fleeting instances of paradigmatic change are overshadowed by the enduring influence of the old paradigm,

> Over the past two centuries, the prevailing paradigm characterized by zero-sum rivalry has engendered global conflicts, suffering, underdevelopment, and failed to guarantee security for any participant.

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[21] "Iran Nuclear Deal: What It All Means," BBC, November 23, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655.

typified by vested interests perpetuating exclusion, hostility, and the cultivation of adversarial relationships. Following the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the trajectory veered drastically from the paradigm of "Dialogue Among Civilizations" towards the "War on Terror," signifying a paradigmatic regression. This shift is demonstrative of the persistence of outdated paradigms despite the introduction of newer frameworks. The withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA, aligning with the precepts of the older paradigm, prompts contemplation regarding the efficacy of such actions in enhancing security. The monumental expenses incurred, both in monetary terms and in terms of lives lost, coupled with the proliferation of failing states, exemplify the ramifications of this departure from positive-sum inclinations.[22] The emergence of extremist entities, such as ISIS, underscores how resentment and extremism find fertile ground in contexts marred by occupation, injustice, and displacement. The imperative for a paradigm shift is unequivocal, transcending mere necessity to attain the status of inevitability.

Diversification of Power Dynamics

A distinctive global transformation is unfolding, characterized by a proliferation of power sources and centers, introducing new actors onto the international stage. Traditionally, power dynamics have revolved around material factors. Military prowess, though historically pivotal, no longer singularly determines state power. While military might retain relevance, it no longer holds a monopoly. The era of "gunboat diplomacy" has given way to a broader spectrum of determinants beyond sheer military capabilities. The contemporary international landscape emphasizes the relevance of military power without conferring an exclusive stronghold. Economic strength, exemplified by GDP, assumes a paramount role in state power.

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[22]Nader Kabbani, "The Middle East Faces Major Development Challenges: Most Countries Are Not Prepared to Meet Them," Issue Brief, Middle East Council on Global Affairs, July 2022, https://mecouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/MECGA_Issue-Brief-_Kabbani_Final-v2b-1.pdf; Robert I. Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 1–29; Julia Renner-Mugono and Siegmar Schmidt, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022).

Although GDP is an indicative factor, it does not stand as the sole criterion for assessing global significance. While economic potency has gained prominence, it coexists alongside other dimensions, delineating a transition to a new era. Technological ascendancy constitutes an increasingly influential dimension of power. Notably, technological prowess possesses the potential to reshape global power dynamics. Noteworthy is the transformation whereby nations, such as China, have progressed from replicating technological innovations to pioneering novel advancements.[23] The terrain of technology stands as an integral component for future power hierarchies.

Parallel to material power sources, the rise of "ideational power" significantly contributes to the evolving power landscape. Ideational influence is manifested through identity projection, distinct from chauvinism and extremism. Identity signifies an authentic sense of self, which engenders respect from others. A solid identity fosters mutual respect, as it emanates from an unwavering self-awareness, obviating the need for emulation. The attainment of legitimacy comprises a potent form of power, encompassing internal acceptance by citizens and global recognition. In a globally interconnected world, legitimacy derives from harmonizing information, emotions, and global acceptance, emerging as a valuable commodity in the pursuit of power. Groups or nations that inspire and serve as models for emulation wield a distinctive form of power. The influence stemming from acting as a source of inspiration amplifies their significance on the global stage. Diplomacy's potency endures, taking on a contemporary dimension in the form of consensus building. Multilateral collaboration supersedes unilateral actions, as even predominant actors seek validation through consensus. The evolution towards multilateralism underscores the necessity for collaborative efforts in garnering legitimacy.

Unilateralism does not provide legitimacy: even when the United States was to act unilaterally, it tried to portray it as acting multilaterally. In the first Persian Gulf war, the United States created a coalition in order to evacuate Iraq from Kuwait. In the 2003 war the United States created a

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[23] Antonin Bergeaud and Cyril Verluise, "The Rise of China's Technological Power: The Perspective from Frontier Technologies," Centre for Economic Performance, The London School of Economics and Political Sciences, 2022, p. 19, https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1876.pdf.

"coalition of the willing" in which very few contributed militarily to the United States. That is there were some countries whose forces in Iraq needed protection by the United States. So, from a military perspective the United States was not gaining anything from their presence but actually spending military assets in order to protect them. But why did they do that? As nobody can gain legitimacy unilaterally, it requires multilateral coalitions and groups to gain legitimacy. The United States pushes countries to support its resolution draft in the Security Council, even to the point of issuing a statement on behalf of GCC without its members knowing it.[24] That is the importance of legitimacy to the coalition and that is why diplomacy and consensus-building in a globalized world becomes an important instrumental power.

The convergence of diverse power sources necessitates a reevaluation of prevailing paradigms that revolve around military and material criteria. The emergence of ideational influence, encompassing identity projection, legitimacy, inspirational impact, and skillful diplomacy, augments the complexity of contemporary power dynamics.

Diversification of Power Actors

Contemporary global dynamics witness a shift away from the sole dominance of states as international actors, ushering in a diverse spectrum of entities exerting influence across the transnational arena. This transformation is particularly marked by the emergence of numerous alternative power centers and entities, altering the traditional state-centric view:

(1) Economic Actors: Notably, economic influence is no longer confined to nation-states alone. Multinational corporations, transnational entities, technology-driven actors, and even crypto currencies are shaping contemporary global economic interactions. This is indicative of a paradigm shift where the centrality of central banks may be challenged by emerging financial instruments.

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[24]Nick Wadhams, "Unified Gulf Council Backs Extension of Iran Arms Embargo," *Bloomberg*, August 10, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-08-09/unified-gulf-council-calls-for-extension-of-iran-arms-embargo#xj4y7vzkg; Andrew Hanna, "US: Snapback Sanctions Go Into Force," United States Institute of Peace, September 21, 2020, https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/sep/21/us-snapback-sanctions-go-force-0.

(2) Media and Cultural Entities: Media, cultural industries, and prominent personalities wield global influence, transcending geographical boundaries. Hollywood, Bollywood, Iranian movie industry, French movie industry, and other cultural hubs assert their presence on a global scale, while social media empowers celebrities to navigate global affairs and emotions, becoming significant global players in their own right.

(3) Educational and Academic Circles: The evolution of distance learning post-COVID underscores the influence of educators and academics in global spaces. The geographical limitations of classrooms dissolve as professors engage with students worldwide, extending the reach and impact of educational actors beyond local confines.[25]

(4) Religious and Ideological Forces: Religious and ideological actors influence global narratives, ranging from advocating for peace to propagating extremism. This diversity reflects a heterogeneous landscape where differing perspectives vie for attention and acceptance.

(5) Demagogues and Information Channels: The digital era has enabled demagogues to wield global influence, disseminating information and inciting emotions across the world. The proliferation of information challenges the monopoly of states over controlling narratives.

(6) Non-State Actors: A striking development involves non-state actors participating in security dynamics. Entities such as ISIS and the Taliban exert control over territories, providing governance and security services. This phenomenon redefines the nature of security engagement beyond the confines of state actors.

Furthermore, a transformative shift in power centers is evident:

(1) Economic Power Redistribution: Economic power centers are shifting from West to Asia, with China, Japan, India, and Indonesia predicted to assume prominent roles in the global economic hierarchy. While the West remains influential, a more equitable distribution of economic power signifies an evolving landscape.[26]

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[25]Barbara B. Lockee, "Online Education in the Post-COVID Era," *Nature Electronics*, Vol. 4, No. 5/6 (2021), p. 5.

[26]John Hawksworth and Danny Chan, The World in 2050: Will the Shift in Global Economic Power Continue? (London: PWC, 2015), p. 22.

(2) Erosion of Western Monopoly: The monopoly of the West in global affairs is diminishing. Developments of global significance no longer emanate solely from Western domains, challenging the erstwhile centrality of Western powers in international narratives.[27]

(3) Global Challenges and Collaboration: Global challenges necessitate collaboration and transcend the confines of major power dynamics. The West's inability to address contemporary global challenges independently underscores the necessity of cooperation across multiple actors and regions.

(4) Disintegration of Western Unity: Disintegration within Western powers, as evidenced by divergent securitization and norm-setting efforts, contributes to the evolution of the global landscape. The conceptual framework of international relations, once dominated by Western ideas, is gradually expanding to include non-Western perspectives.[28]

(5) Emergence of Post-West Era: The recognition of the "post-West" era acknowledges the shifting power dynamics. The West is no longer an exclusive guardian of global affairs, and the complexities of the global landscape extend beyond major powers' direct control.[29]

This transformative landscape redefines the contours of global influence, challenging established paradigms of state-centric power dynamics. The rise of non-state actors, the redistribution of economic power, and the recognition of a post-West era all reflect an evolving international landscape in which multiple actors influence outcomes beyond traditional state boundaries.

End of Hegemony

A significant challenge lies in the development of failed or failing states, exemplified by cases such as Somalia and Afghanistan, often stemming

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[27]Munich Security Conference, *Munich Security Report 2020: Westlessness* (Munich: MSC, 2020), p. 6, https://securityconference.org/assets/user_upload/MunichSecurityReport2020.pdf.

[28]Hooman Peimani, "Disintegration of the EU and the Implications for ASEAN," Asian Development Bank Institute, May 2020, p. 2, https://www.adb.org/publications/disintegration-eu-and-implications-asean.

[29]Tobias Bunde, Randolf Carr, Sophie Eisentraut, Christoph Erber, Julia Hammelehle, Laura Hartmann, Juliane Kabus, Franziska Stärk, and Julian Voje, "Munich Security Report 2020: Westlessness," *Munich Security Conference*, February 2020, p. 26.

from interventions driven by hegemonic interests. Addressing these situations incurs substantial costs, with the economic burden of upholding hegemony proving insurmountable for any dominant power. The associated economic expenses then translate into political costs, as public opinion within the hegemonic nation consistently reflects aversion to intervention-related expenditures. The endeavors of hegemons are burdened by arduous tasks: initial interventions often result in the management of fractured states, leading to the responsibility of "nation-building." Yet, this enterprise abroad is intricate, involving intricate considerations of local dynamics, historical rivalries, and cultural sensitivities. These complexities render the task of nation-building onerous and ineffective, as evidenced by protracted conflicts and civil strife within intervened regions.

The process of attempting to establish authority and stability exposes hegemons to myriad challenges. These obstacles encompass resistance from local populations, deep-rooted resentments, and the emergence of extremist ideologies. Consequently, the pursuit of hegemony incurs substantial repercussions, encompassing political, military, economic, and even legitimacy-related costs. As former President George W. Bush astutely noted before entering the White House, "Humility in international affairs will earn respect abroad, but arrogant actions will earn resentment."[30] However, despite such insightful reflections, the actions of global powers have sometimes contradicted these principles, inadvertently contributing to the creation and rise of entities such as ISIS and Taliban.

The financial and strategic burdens associated with hegemony have rendered it untenable. Consequently, unfulfilled expectations in the Western world have fueled extreme nationalism in Western Europe and two competing trends within the United States that occasionally intersect. A parallel development entails the aspiration of certain regional powers to establish regional hegemony, an endeavor motivated by the vacuum left by waning global hegemony. As exemplified by conflicts in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Lebanon, regional players that once confined their ambitions to

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[30] "October 17, 2000 Debate Transcript," Commission on Presidential Debates, October 17, 2000, https://www.debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/october-17-2000-debate-transcript/.

national roles now seek to exert influence on a larger scale.[31] Nonetheless, this pursuit of regional hegemony is laden with challenges, as it contradicts the realities of the contemporary global landscape.

This evolving context has prompted a departure from hegemonic inclinations. The decline of global hegemony is intrinsically linked to the lack of desired outcomes resulting from hegemonic actions and tendencies. In many instances, these endeavors have engendered results directly contrary to their intentions. In a world marked by diverse power dynamics, the costs of exercising hegemony have escalated economically and politically. Such costs are compounded by the reluctance of populations within hegemonic nations to endorse actions that yield minimal benefits while incurring substantial burdens. Likewise, populations in recipient nations often exhibit resistance and resentment toward the imposition of hegemonic influence. In the face of an array of global actors, the feasibility of exercising hegemony has diminished significantly. Efforts to assert dominance are undergoing a waning trajectory, although some elements, particularly within the United States, may still harbor hegemonic aspirations, in line with the adage "old habits die hard."

Conclusion

The world has undergone tremendous change since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. In the ensuing transitional period, cumulative developments have occurred, thus making any return to polarity, in whatever form of unipolar, bi-polar or multi-polar, inconceivable. While the United States will remain the most powerful global military power for the foreseeable future, and while its sum-total of various sources of power will remain greater than any other competitor, it is evident that at

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[31]Raymond Hinnebusch, "State De-Construction in Iraq and Syria," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (2016), pp. 560–585; Samuel Lottes, "Conflicting Interests: A Power Vacuum Remains in Libya," *McGill International Review*, October 5, 2017, https://www.mironline.ca/conflicting-interests-power-vacuum-remains-libya/; Mohammed Ghobari and Yara Bayoumy, "Thousands Stage Anti-Houthi Protests Across Yemen," *Reuters*, January 23, 2015, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKBN0KW1F120150123; Tom Perry and Laila Bassam, "Power Vacuum Adds to Risks for Crisis-Hit Lebanon," *Reuters*, November 9, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/power-vacuum-adds-risks-crisis-hit-lebanon-2022-11-09/.

great cost to its own taxpayers and to the global community at large, it has failed to establish a hegemonic dominance, nor will it or any other power be able to do so in the foreseeable future.

Moreover, while the sum of economic powers of the United States, China, and European Union may probably exceed half of the global sum, the emergence of a multipolar world will face two distinct challenges from states and non-state actors. Experience has shown that states are no longer prepared to commit allegiance and loyalty to a single power or bloc and tend to engage in issue-based coalitions with seemingly opposite poles. The patterns of interactions resemble networks, with varying nodes, which are not necessarily similar in size or attributes, but defy exclusivity of connections with one or another node.

The second challenge is even more fundamental, questioning the state-centric nature of the global community. The emergence of a new layer of actors, with global significance and reach, which operate outside the control of any State, cannot be neglected. Thus, the post-Westphalian international system may be losing its pivotal characteristic of being international, with states acting as monopolies of power. The last vestige of state monopoly was in the realm of organized use of massive violence in the form of international armed conflict. The non-state actors go beyond traditional culprits, including transnational corporations, global non-governmental organizations, transnational organized criminals, terrorist and extremist groups, and transnational religious and ideological organizations. They now include private military and security corporations, individual experts and small companies in artificial intelligence who can act like weapons of mass destruction in cyber-warfare to more deadly small intelligent weapons powered by artificial intelligence.

States, particularly the major powers and most significantly, the United States, are taking measures to bring the pioneers of this unchartered territory under their sovereign control, certainly not for the sake of humanity or global peace. Yet, the nature of this enterprise evades total sovereign control, thus creating a new layer of global actors with destructive capabilities way beyond many states.

The result of all these factors may contribute to a new global situation, where emergence of a new polar world from the ashes of the cold war and transformative developments of the transitional phase becomes improbable at least in the foreseeable future. Those used with post-Westphalian balance

of power or polar systems may despair, calling the coming world a chaotic system. We contend that this is not necessarily so. A post-polar global order may have already emerged, while the world was waiting for the new poles.

Finally, these cumulative developments, emanating primarily from the collapse of rigid international order and the fluidity of the transitional phase, have placed human agents in the center of global developments. That gives great power and places huge responsibility on human beings, who can shape the emerging post-polar order, with networks of states, various non-state actors and individuals managing global developments. Chaos is not necessarily the outcome of this mode of interaction.