

Topic: Unipolar, Bipolar or Multipolar: New Direction of World.

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2. Crunch paragraph

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A multipolar world cannot exist without recognizing the status and participation of developing countries." When the late former Chinese premier said those words, he perhaps had already envisioned that the world order would not always be what it was during his time in office. As the PM of China from 1987 to 1998, he had great insight into the shift of the world from bipolar to unipolar. As matters have progressed into the 21st century, the world order has experienced many changing dynamics. The status quo of the default stage was the unipolar world order; the USSR had disintegrated and it would be some time before it got back on its feet, and the war on terror had begun with US in the lead. This unipolarity was then challenged by China which sought to shift the world from unipolar to bipolar again. It would attempt to do so by asserting its economic and political dominance. Its role as a peacemaker and a military might also gives credence to its stance. However, there is a wave of unshaking around the world which seems to move towards multipolarity. India has amassed enough economic and political clout to claim to be an international power, and Russia has resurged like nothing any analyst had ever anticipated. Rising powers of Africa and South America are vying for greater role in global politics, and regional organizations are expanding. These same regional powers are challenging the ~~monopoly~~ monopoly of the global north, and there is a vigorous wave of de-dollarization throughout the world. In this regard, multipolarity does seem like the new direction of the

world. More and more countries seem to opt for this bearing. However, unipolar and bipolar orders continue to dominate the globe for now and it appears improbable that they are going away anytime soon.

The status quo of the world is unipolarity, and this was brought on by the disintegration of USSR. At that time, the world actually got a superpower. By 1991, all the Soviets which had joined Russia declared independence at the end of a nearly five decade-long cold war. This war had left Russia economically weak, its political structure collapsed and social fabric in tatters. USA had emerged not only as a victor, but as a superpower, ushering in the era of unipolarity. Then China challenged this and turned the world into bipolar order on the heels of its economic ~~of~~ superiority. In recent times, multiple nations are rising up to be the contenders as an important player in the global politics and changing the world into multipolar order.

The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 was perhaps one of the most important event in the latter half of the 20th century. No one had in living memory seen such a large union ruled by autocratic authoritarian figures collapse without a war. When Gorbachev assumed power in USSR in 1985, the cold war was all but over and all that remained was a formal announcement. His policies of Glasnost (transparency) and

Perestroika (reforms) not only laid bare the deep divisions among the Soviet ~~block~~ bloc but the latter is also said to have been the direct cause of disintegration of eastern block in 1991. Thus announcing the end of cold war and establishing USA as leader of unipolar world.

The unipolar direction of the world was further consolidated in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers. The USA declared war on Afghanistan for providing safe haven to the masterminds and several countries decided to join it in the leadership of US. American President George Bush Jr. is famously reported to have said, "You are either with us, or against us." This did not leave ~~room~~ a lot of room for several countries and they had to join a war ~~sp~~ which was to span two decades and cost nearly \$1.5 trillion. This, once again, was a stark reminder of the unipolar direction of the world.

Then, in the second decade of the 21st century, a challenger came forward in the form of China. China's meteoric rise is a case study to be implemented. Once the most impoverished nation of the world, China since late 1970s lifted almost 800 million citizens from poverty, which is the largest global reduction in inequality in modern times. (The New China Playbook: Beyond

Socialism and Capitalism (2023). China's GDP of a massive amount of \$17.73 trillion is second only to that of US and catching up fast, according to the World Bank. This economic competition with the US, coupled with BRI, is the most glaring indicator of a bipolar direction of the world at the moment.

The strategic tug of war between US and China is also a clear manifestation of bipolar direction of the world. The last time the world saw such posturing, it was between USA and USSR pre-1991. China has been claiming the territory in the south China sea ~~and~~ in a region it demarcates as Nine-Dash line while building islands on seven different locations dubbed 'The Great wall of sand' to substantiate its claims. On the other hand, US has formed alliances such as QUAD and AUKUS specifically to keep a check on maritime activities of China. This strategic back and forth ~~is~~ also shows that the world ~~is~~ in a bipolar direction.

The reversal of roles of China and US that we have in recent times, is ~~un~~ unforeseen. Both the countries have assumed the duties formerly of the other. China, once content with silent observation and distant acknowledgement, has become active in the global political arena and announced its entry with a bang by

playing a crucial role in the Saudi-Iran rapprochement. On the other hand, by design or due to circumstances, US had not taken any action to mediate between the two countries ~~to~~ since severing of ties in ~~2016~~ 2016. This involvement of China as a mediator in a global conflict is a ~~big~~ manifestation of the bipolar direction of the world.

The increasing political influence of China around the globe is an extremely subtle and interesting phenomenon. China has extended its sphere to almost all of the world in one way or another, just like US has. But instead of military, Chinese influence comes only from its economic prowess. China of today has become an integral part of the economic eco-system, with partners and dependents in all the continents. Even US, the main competitor, owes China \$1.8 trillion in sovereign debt, according to 2023 report of US Federal Reserve. This political influence of China based on its economic might makes it a far ~~greater~~ greater counterpart to the US, and thus keeping the world in a bipolar direction.

However, since ~~the start of~~ 2021, a spectacular shift has been seen in the world order and many analysts believe, in light of recent developments,

that multipolarity is the new reality of the world. The most important development in this regard has been the Indian ambition of becoming a regional and global hegemon. From border skirmishes with China and Pakistan to increasing tilt towards west for military and civil technology to hosting a G-20 conference in 2023, India is vying for the spot of regional leader. Not only that, its announcement of \$20 billion dollar project called the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor is one of its most ambitious missions to-date to assert its dominance and raise a competitor to China's BRI. This shows the multipolar direction of the world and India playing its part.

~~The~~ Russia's bid to counter the influence of the global north is an important indicator of multipolarity. The astonishing resurgence of Russia after the fall of USSR in 1991 is nothing short of miraculous. Since then, and specially under the leadership of Putin, Russia has rebuilt economic structure and political power and is countering the whole of global north. The start of the Ukraine war in 2022 is a case study in how Russia, faced with crippling sanctions, has faced the full economic and military might of NATO and is still sustaining itself. Apart from that, it has also developed relations with African countries through gifts of wheat shipments and has been able to keep most of the world neutral. This awakening of the bear is not only a sign that it might someday

reach its old glory, but also signifies a multipolar direction of the world in future.

The rising powers of Africa and South America is as big a sign as any of the multipolar direction of the world in the future. While the rest of the world was immersed in events of Europe and Asia, African and South American economies were bettering themselves and turning into vibrant ones. The inclusion of Egypt and Ethiopia from Africa in the BRICS platform during its meeting in 2023 was a watershed moment for the continent as it now has three rising economic powers with huge potential. Argentina from South America was also invited but it pulled out at the last moment due to financial issues. Regardless of that, the rise of regional powers in the stereotypically poor global south is a harbinger of multipolarity of new direction of the world.

The expansion of regional cooperation organizations is an important indicator of the new multipolar world. The greater number of membership of these organizations will make regional players that much more stronger. The recent expansions of BRICS into BRICS+ by adding six new members and addition of Pakistan, India and Iran into Shanghai Cooperation Organization which is influenced mostly by China and Russia is a major development in this regard and promises to encourage more countries to reform their economies. Since the future of the world is economic and so is the nature of these organizations, this progress is ushering in a multipolar direction of the world.

Multipolarity looks more and more like the new direction of world by the visuals of regional powers of south coming together to challenge the policies of the global north. It has been a long time since the global north has had its monopoly over the economics and politics of the world. The decision of regional powers of south to depend less and less on the west is a seismic change in the affairs of world in that this action will neutralize the influence of global north. This will cause global south to freely reach its potential proportional to its capabilities and population not bound by the shackles of any external influence, and it will also make the global north reevaluate its oppressive and repressive policies towards global south. Consequently moving the world in multipolar direction.

One of the biggest trends of new direction of the world is the conscious efforts of nations to move away from dollar, also called dedollarization. This is perhaps one of the most significant steps to break free from the yolk of unipolarity. The first step was the reversal of petrodollar, a system created by USA and KSA to trade oil only in dollars. The announcement of Saudia that it would accept now a number of new currencies as payments, most importantly Chinese Yuan, is the signal the world needed of the era of multipolarity. Apart from that, in its 2023 session, BRICS+ has already begun a process of formulating a framework to trade in local currencies, which is a major milestone. This will cause a gradual decrease in the hegemony of dollar/US and give rise to multipolarity.

The rising new direction of multipolarity has many ways forward. It also needs a lot of effort to replace the existing unipolar direction of world. Multipolarity promises a lot of development for the world, especially global south. The announcement of BRI and now IMEC are great examples of planned development of regional countries. With this development comes increased connectivity as well, as indicated by planned construction of a high speed internet cable from Europe to India in IMEC. This will most certainly improve connectivity among states along with development.

If multipolarity is to establish itself as the new direction of world, it has to cater to the countries on the peripheries. The global north and unipolarity has neglected the development and progress of any country apart from themselves. Multipolarity has to include the often neglected countries of Africa and South America into the folds of prosperity to sustain itself. This will win it not only the support of a large part of globe, but will also give it the necessary authority and credibility to remain the new direction of the world for a foreseeable future.

Multipolarity brings with itself the chances of uplift for many. Be it economic, political or military, quite a number of nations will benefit from the power in the hands of many instead of in the hands of one. Already we can see the mega infrastructural projects taking shape in various parts of Asia and Africa under the BRI. These countries have benefitted from the upgrades and it has also caused economic uplift for many. BRICS has, by 2023, financed 96 projects worth a combined \$32 billion for the economic uplift projects in member countries. This means that multipolarity will work more towards the interests of people as the rise of new regional powers will ultimately prove beneficial for multipolarity and will keep unipolar ambitions of other states in check.

Adopting the new & multipolar direction will mean less dependency on, and influence of, the western block. With an increase in regional powers, countries of global south will align themselves with their regional powerhouse to serve their national interests. They will also look less towards west for dictation on policy formulation and will have autonomy over it. Multipolarity will also increase a sense of solidarity among global south and will create problems for the global north. This was made apparent when France was denied entry into BRICS by member countries even after repeated requests. This will unite the global south against policies of global north which are causing them harm.

Multipolarity is the future of the world, it seems. It is not logically possible ~~to~~ in this age to stifle the progress of a nation and stop it from development. However, it also seems unrealistic that, given the relation between China and USA, that unipolarity of its idea will go away any time soon. In this scenario, the new direction of the world seems to be uni-multi-polar, where China and USA continue to fight for the title of global hegemon in manifestation of Thucydides Trap, whereas the rise of regional powers continues all over the world which act as swing states from one side to another.