

THE SHIFTING SANDS OF GLOBAL WORLD ORDER

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THE ESSAY

"The international order is undergoing changes of a magnitude not seen since 1945.", remarked Kaja Kallas, a top European Union diplomat, in a conference in April 2025. This statement refers to the seismic changes that currently underscore the global world order. Since the end of world war two, the international order was of a bipolar nature. The international community was divided between the soviet union bloc and the western bloc led by the united states. After the disintegration of the USSR, the world has remained Unipolar with the US calling all the shots. Although in the recent past, that order has witnessed key shifts. The shifting sands of the global world order are primarily led by the relative decline of the US hegemony and the rise of China as an upcoming super-power. Additionally, there has been a rise in multiple regional powers

like Russia, Turkey and India having ambitions of becoming a global superpower. The shift from petrodollars economy to a cultural hub of the middle east and the rise of regional alliances such as the SCO and BRICS have also played a key role in the shifting sands of the global world order. Thus this essay discusses the shifting sands of the global order from a unipolar to a multipolar world order and how Pakistan stands to be impacted by it.

Before delving into the factors playing a key role in the changing world order, it is pertinent to understand the concept of world order. A world order is a system controlling events through a preferred system of power and authority. This system has been largely led by the United States since the disintegration of the USSR, where the USA emerged as the sole superpower in the world.

It is pertinent to develop a historical context before diving

into the reasons behind the evolving intricacies of the world order. In the years between 1945 till 1991, the world was divided between two camps: The pro Soviet Union camp and the pro western camp led by the United States. The camps were divided on ideological basis of socialism and western-led globalisation. In 1991, the USSR was disintegrated resulting in the emergence of a US-led global world order. It was the start of a unipolar world order. However, in the recent past the unipolar world order has been challenged by the rise of other forces.

Firstly, there has been a relative decline in the global hegemony of the US around the world. This was witnessed by the hasty US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The US was viewed as the biggest and strongest military superpower of the world. The 2001 "war on terror" was the start of the two decade long occupation of Afghanistan by the US forces. This occupation meant

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the US maintained a strong presence in the south-east Asian region to deter China and Russia gaining a foothold in the region. The abrupt US withdrawal gave a direct opportunity to US and Russia in trying their influence in Afghanistan. The Chinese plan to integrate Afghanistan into their BRI project and the Russian 'INSTC' project in Afghanistan are evidence of Chinese and Russian designs in Afghanistan. Therefore, the US withdrawal was a starting point of declining US influence in the world and a changing world order.

Secondly, the rise of China in the global sphere as a competitor to the US is another factor behind the changing world order. In economy, political, and social arenas the US has led the world. This dominance of the US has been challenged by China in the recent past. The exponential popularity of the Chinese app 'TikTok' in the US, to their popular e-commerce sites such as 'Shein' and 'Temu' have dominated the

US markets. In scientific and technological advancements, China is up head to head against the US. This can be seen by the Chinese AI app 'Deepseek', which rivaled the OpenAI ChatGPT of the US, which was regarded as a marvel in the world of artificial intelligence. Thus, the rise of China is another reason behind the altering global order.

Moreover, the rise of multiple regional and military powers globally has also contributed to the shifting global world order. The US was the sole hegemon due to its extraordinary military might and economic prowess. While the US military is relatively still the largest force and arms supplier in the world, its power is being rivaled by many globally. China and Russia have emerged as one of the biggest arms suppliers of the 21st century, with sophisticated ammunition such as the Russian S-400 and Chinese JF-17s. Additionally, states like Turkey and India are other regional competitors.

in the global arms supply market. The emergence of various military and economic powerhouses in the world the proof of the changing world order.

Further, the middle east is looking beyond an oil economy and thereby threatening the petro-dollar model of US economy.

The global oil trade played a major role in cementing the dominance of the US dollar around the world. As the middle east stands at the crossroads of diversifying its economy beyond oil, the petrodollar model faces a threat.

This is evidenced by growing oil trade in local currencies for example between China and Saudi in Yuan. Another example is the 'MBS Vision 2030' of Saudi which plans to transform the oil rich state into a cultural and traditional hub. Thus, a threat to US Petrodollar economy is proof of a changing world order.

Furthermore, the world has seen a rise in growing regional

alliances and the global south solidarity. The unipolar world order was dominated by the US and its western allies. A prominent example is the G7 bloc. This has been challenged by growing alliances of the global south such as the SCO and BRICS. These blocs are made up of emerging economic powerhouses with the aim of breaking US and western hegemony in the world. The aim of these blocs is to strengthen bilateral trade and strategic arrangement among the member states, all of them part of the global south. Therefore, these regional alliances are a testament of the changing global order.

Moreover, there have been growing calls for de-dollarization and an end to US led global institutions around the world. The global trade takes place in US dollars through the international transaction system "SWIFT". This makes the US dollar the most powerful currency in the world and gives the US its edge in the world. However, this system has now faced growing

calls to be replaced. An example is the Chinese "CIPS" model, an alternative to US' SWIFT. Additionally, the establishment of the New Development Bank by BRICS offers an alternative to the US-led International Monetary Fund (IMF) to its members. Thus, this proves the changing world order away from the US-led unipolar one.

Lastly, the failure of the United Nations to maintain world peace construes the end of a rules based order. The United Nations was established to maintain peace among nations. It laid down a rules based order known as international law to prevent states from acting belligerently. The unipolar system led by the US shielded the US and its allies from scrutiny and consequences. An example is Israel, the closest US ally, acting as a rogue state and destabilising the entire middle east. Despite this it faced no consequences at international forums. In comparison, Russia faced sweeping condemnation and sanctions from around the globe.

for it's war in Ukraine. This selective working of global forums like the UN have resulted in calls for a more inclusive and multipolar world order. Thus, proving that the present world order is shifting.

So far the essay discussed the reasons for the changing global order. It will now briefly discuss the characteristics of the shifting order.

The New world order is defined by a multipolar and inclusive world order. It calls for an end to US dominance and authority. The new world order is envisaged as an system of multiple powers with no single bloc having authority over another. This world order is also a show of global south solidarity. Powers like China, Russia and India have ambitions to lead the new order. Thereafter bringing an end to a world where the sole authority lies with the US. The initiatives like BRICS and SCO are

a proof of these grand ambitions.

The emerging world order also focuses on geoeconomics as a tool of dominance rather than the traditional geostrategic powerplays. This shift can be seen in the policies of the flagbearers of the new world order such as China. **The BRI** policy of China which aims at regional connectivity and integration is a prime example. Another example is the 'IMEC' corridor by India and Saudi Arabia. These economic projects showcase that the quest for leading the emerging world order is fought on economic fronts rather than the military front. These examples are a proof of the shift from the old world order which focused on military conquests alone.

The essay will now briefly shed light on the affects of the changing world order on Pakistan.

In the shifting sands of the global world order, Pakistan stands to gain access to new markets and regional integration with old and new allies. A country of 250 million and rich in resources, the emerging multipolar and global world order can lead to its economic betterment. It will give Pakistan access to new markets and increase its economic prospects. For instance, if Pakistan becomes a member of **BRICS** it stands to gain entry to **African Markets**, the largest continent in the world. It also offers prospects of better regional relations with its neighbours and beyond. For example, the completion of the **Iran - Pakistan gas Pipeline**. Thereafter the emerging world order provides a host of opportunities for Pakistan including the chance to become a self-sufficient state.

In sum, the global order is undergoing monumental

shifts. The western dominated international order led by the United States has seen its zenith. The US hegemony is threatened by the rise of multiple regional powers seeking a sway in the world order system. The global south and its rising significance poses a cardinal challenge to the US and its allies. While the US still maintains its hold over the international order, the ever-present frustration with its exclusionary system of policies worldwide is causing steady but repeating shifts in the current world order. Thereby, slowly moving the international order from a unipolar to a multipolar one. How long the consequences and impacts of this shift take to materialize stands to be seen.