**A New World Order**

**The balance of power and polarity has shifted towards multipolarity where power is distributed among USA, China and Russia.**

[Sher Ali Bukhari](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/sher-ali-bukhari)

March 25, 2024

In global politics and international re­lations, polarity is defined as the dis­tribution of power among states, ac­cording to eminent international scholar Kenneth Waltz. It is, therefore, said in the rise and fall of great pow­ers, the structure and polarity of global politics has remained in flux. Historians argued that the world before World War 1 and World 2 was constituted of multipolarity, the confluence of great powers during which Great Brit­ain emerged as a hegemon.

However, the balance of power greatly shifted towards the US and USSR follow­ing the end of World War 2, setting the stage for the Cold War. Again, during the Cold War, the system was bipolar where majorities had to align themselves with either the USA or USSR for the protec­tion of their core national interests. In­terestingly, nuclear deterrence was the primary reason for thwarting the Cold War into a hot war, although major con­flicts and wars broke out in the Third World, famously in the Korean peninsu­la (1950-53) and Vietnam (1955-1975).

[Around the world in culture](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/around-the-world-in-culture)

Moving forward, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) contributed to the vanquishing of the USSR, marking the end of the Cold War. The USA emerged as the sole superpower and embarked on the agenda of a liberal world, marked by the spread of democracy and the growth of free markets and globalization. Conse­quently, many liberals argued the age of unipolarity under American leadership was a peaceful era in human history.

However, the flip side of the story is that America used her unbridled mil­itary and economic might to destroy countries like Afghanistan (2001), and Iraq (2003) and was involved else­where in the Middle East, allegedly in the name of spreading democracy. Fur­thermore, the USA tried to impose its political, economic, and cultural values on non-western countries, strengthen­ing the notion of the Clash of Civiliza­tions by Huntington.

[Promise and responsibility](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/promise-and-responsibility)

Meanwhile, unsurprising, three impor­tant events happened during that period that shook American supremacy around the globe. First, China, under President Deng led the opening up of the Chinese economy, has achieved a growth rate of double-digit, leading to the second big­gest economy in the year 2010. The sec­ond, the economic recession of 2008 undermined the very principles of free market and free trade, reflecting visi­ble flaws in the Washington Consensus, an American model of economic growth. Lastly, the resurgence of Russia, under President Putin as a great power that re­sisted American plans for NATO expan­sions in Ukraine and Georgia.

These events marked the end of the un­ipolar moment in the year of 2017 when Trump entered into White House, as per analysis of eminent international schol­ar Pro. John Mearsheimer. The balance of power and polarity has shifted towards multipolarity where power is distribut­ed among USA, China and Russia.

[BBC admits possible 'mistake' in coverage of genocide case against Israel](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/bbc-admits-possible-mistake-in-coverage-of-genocide-case-against-israel)

Here two schools of thought emerged that forecast the impact of multipolar­ity on global politics and international relations. Let’s first talk about the liber­al school of thought, it’s explicitly argued that the age of multipolarity would ush­er the age of greater peace, cooperation, free trade, globalization and cultural harmony among states and non-state ac­tors, leading to a peaceful world.

On the other hand, the realist school of thought argues that the age of multi­polarity would lead to the back of great power politics among great powers and increase security competition among great powers. Consequently, in the eco­nomic realm, the power of free trade and globalization would decline and the rise of protectionism would occur. Mean­while, the role of international institu­tions would dwindle and unilateral pow­ers of state would take place.

Despite the great divergence of opin­ion between two leading schools of thought, as we are approaching in year 2024, so we can figure out which school of thought has been prevailing. Why is it of utmost importance to assess which school of thought dominating? Because we can’t revise and revitalize the for­eign policy of Pakistan without clearly grasping the prevailing outlook of glob­al politics.

[Police continue crackdown on profiteers](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/police-continue-crackdown-on-profiteers)

Let’s back to the question. In my hum­ble opinion, the realist school of thought has been emerging as a triumph due to the following reasons. First, since Trump’s presidency and followed by President Biden, UAS has embarked on containment of China to flatten its eco­nomic and military might in the Indo-Pacific region. Under the umbrella of In­do-Pacific strategy, the USA envisioned QUAD, AUKUS and is consolidating its military might in the Indo-Pacific region while vowing to defend Taiwan. Resul­tantly, there is great security competi­tion and power politics between the USA and China, leading to the start of Cold War 2.0, as per John Mearsheimer.

Second, following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24th February, the rivalry between Russia and the West is back into business. West has under­gone economic coercion of Russia by imposing heavy sanctions on the Rus­sian economy while supporting militar­ily, economically and diplomatically to Ukraine so it could defend its sovereign­ty against Russia. The inclusion of Fin­land and Sweden into NATO while main­taining 20pc of Ukraine’s territory are perfect recipe for greater war between the West and Russia.

[Health minister reviews projects of hospitals](https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Mar-2024/health-minister-reviews-projects-of-hospitals)

Third, the age of free market and free trade is dwindling due to ever-increas­ing rivalry among great powers. This results in the declining role of global­ization which questioned the very log­ic of economic interdependency and peace. It is, therefore, surprising USA, who previously championed free trade, now embarked upon a trade war with China and Russia.

Finally, we have witnessed the limit­ing role of international institutions in managing conflict and ushering in peace and cooperation. For instance, UNO has failed to implement a ceasefire in Gaza, following the 7 October attacks due to American blockage of resolutions of ceasefire via Veto Powers.

These grim trends depict one thing: Multipolarity is largely in disorder in the contemporary era. Therefore, it holds vi­tal lessons before Pakistan’s foreign pol­icy. The country needs political and eco­nomic stability at home for gearing up robust foreign policy. Pakistan should also avoid camp politics and opt for max­imum strategical engagement with great powers to maintain regional peace and balance of power in the South Asian re­gion while fully participating in regional forums of SAARC, BRICS, SCO and ECO for the protection of its core national inter­ests. In that way, Pakistan can achieve its true potential and national goal of geo-economics while navigating the choppy waters of the age of multipolarity.

**Sher Ali Bukhari**
The writer is a UET alumni with keen interest in Pakistan’s foreign policy.