



Peter W. Schulze (ed.)

MULTIPOLARITY

The promise of disharmony



campus

Multipolarity: The promise of disharmony

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Foreword

Peter W. Schulze

*“Europa kann seine Stabilität nur gewinnen,
wenn es sicherheitspolitisch zwischen Lissabon und Wladiwostok
für seine Staaten eine Struktur mit gemeinsamen Regeln formt”.*

*[“Europe can only obtain stability if it constructs a security architecture
for its states between Lisbon and Vladivostok, based on common rules”.]*

Egon Bahr (1998, 84)

The current international order is in transition, driven by the interplay of its main actors: Washington; Moscow; Beijing; and less significantly, the European Union. Other emerging powers are also challenging the present arrangement and if successful, they will eventually create a multipolar global order. The transient international order is currently characterised by chronic instability, regional and global turmoil, and a dramatic decline in its ease of governance. The central question is whether the emerging multipolar order can provide security and welfare for the international community. Or, will we see policies based on protracted narrow definitions of national interests, undermining opportunities for trust and confidence-building among the driving forces of the transformation process? Are we bound to reawaken memories of the bipolar, Cold War era, with its proxy wars that instrumentalised domestic and regional conflicts for external purposes? The chances of reforming and democratising the United Nations are rather slim. Mutual trust and consensus over the essential challenges facing the world's chief international actors are missing. This book is devoted to the questions of what the multipolar world order could lead to, and how it could affect the international system's major powers.

As *Richard Sakwa* concludes, the leading actors themselves are also exposed to drastic changes. According to Sakwa, the international system today is a binary order, with *secondary institutions* of international society at the top, including the United Nations and other institutions of economic, financial, legal, environmental, and social governance, while at a lower level are competing *orders*, whose relations are governed by the primary institu-

tions of international society. Within this framework, Sakwa examines the contest between two putative post-Cold War orders. On one hand, the *transformative* order outlined by Mikhail Gorbachev—to which successive Russian leaders have been committed—is now joined by China and a few other countries in anti-hegemonic alignment. On the other hand, the US-led liberal international order became radicalised in the post-Cold War era in the absence of a serious peer competitor.

Richard Falk explores the United States' response to world order challenges with a special concern for the rise of China and the qualitative decline of democracy in many important countries. On one level, the new situation at the global level pits China, as the master of soft power, on a collision course with the United States, the master of hard power. This collision course is threatened by the outbreak of wars between states that possess or seek nuclear weapons, by ecological decline, and by demagogic styles of leadership.

Jia Qingguo argues that the international community is rightly worried about the future of the international order if the US refuses to play an ongoing leadership role, pointing to dire consequences: a looming trade war; the potential collapse of the international non-proliferation regime; and the failure of initiatives that address global challenges like climate change, cyber security, arms control, and pandemic disease. In this respect, the Trump presidency amounts to a game changer. Washington no longer subscribes to the view that the US needs to maintain the international order in order to protect its own interests. Despite its economic and industrial strength and enhanced international reputation, Jia Qingguo denies that China can step into the role of world leader in the near future.

Sergey Karaganov and *Dmitry Suslov* say the collapse of outgoing international orders requires creative participation in the building of a new, balanced world order. Both authors assume the hegemonic position of the US—along with the attraction of its prevailing ideological scheme, institutionalised international liberalism—will steadily evaporate. They define Russia as a major supplier of global security, as is borne out by its policies in the Middle East and Central Asia, and by its efforts to prevent the expansion of Western alliances in Europe. The chapter recommends that Russia formalise this status politically and revive its commitment to international law. In geopolitical terms, the authors argue Russia's most promising option "in the coming years would be a further pivot to the East to create a comprehensive partnership in Greater Eurasia". In order to achieve this, Russia, China, India, Japan, and other actors in Asia and Eurasia should develop Greater

Eurasian and Indo-Pacific partnerships as compatible and cooperative—not adversarial—projects. Only if these goals are successfully accomplished can Russia turn again to Europe and improve relations with leading European countries.

Alexey Gromyko takes up the concepts of Greater Europe and Greater Eurasia. He explores the various models of international relations that have existed since 1945, emphasising the increasing complexity of the contemporary world and promoting the idea of constructive polycentrism reliant on modern international law with the UN and its Charter at the core. Gromyko dwells on the EU's inability to conduct independent foreign policy as a consequence of its undeclared lowest-common-denominator principle. Regarding Russia, he points to numerous external threats that have been aggravated by the broader challenges faced by Europe, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. External conditions have hampered Russia's goals for economic modernisation and social development. Gromyko concludes that Russia's goal to establish itself in the twenty-first century, not only as a European, or even a Euro-Asian power, but as a power of the three oceans, is impossible to achieve unless Wider Europe becomes a reliable and stable region. Without this precondition, Russia's "turn to the East", as a long-term diversification of its economic and political policies, will be fraught with significant risks.

Raffaele Marchetti investigates the predominant macro-political trends at the international level and examines the three main world order arrangements that could emerge in the coming decades. World order one: The West vs. the rest; world order two: Eurasian integration and US solitude; and world order three: Enlarged West vs. China. These options derive from the current distribution of power at the international level and from how current trends enable us to extrapolate possible future developments. Each involves the four major powers in the world to come: China; the European Union; Russia; and the US. The international system will most likely pivot on the interaction between the declining hegemon, the US, and the emerging power, China. Many see the relative decline of the US and the growth of China as setting the two on a collision course. Marchetti points to significant balancing dynamics between the two countries, primarily their economic interdependence.

Adrian Pabst claims that the liberal world order, which came into existence after World War Two and expanded at the end of the Cold War, is in retreat. Brexit, alongside other political insurgencies, marks a popular revolt against the economic and social liberalism underpinning globalisation, mass

immigration, and multilateral free trade. Trump's election undermines aspects of the Atlantic alliance and weakens the West's commitment to multilateral cooperation, international law, environmental protection, the promotion of democracy, and the defence of universal human rights. The demise of democratisation and the rise of strongmen in countries as diverse as China, India, Russia, Japan, and the Philippines pose the most significant threat to the institutions of the liberal world order since the slide into dictatorship during the interwar period. As part of a wider shift from a values-based foreign policy to an interest-based contest among great powers, the Western-dominated, liberal, post-1989 world order is giving way to a multi-order whereby the international system, with the UN and other international organisations at its apex, will endure, but will also witness competition for hegemony among great powers.

Winfried Veit believes Africa will be a major force influencing the future world order, mainly due to its dramatically increasing demographic weight. Europe will be most affected by developments in Africa, due to its geographic proximity, historic links, migration, and terrorist threats. Possible scenarios for the coming decades include Africa as a destabilising force, or alternatively as a booming *young* continent, or either way as a Chinese zone of influence. This thesis poses the question of whether Europe's security and wellbeing is more threatened by the challenges of unrelenting migration from the south than by security threats to its east.

Walter Schwimmer views the story of European unity as both one of success and one of crises and disagreements. Brexit is not the only problem. The EU lacks a strategy for the future and currently has to tackle a *poly-crisis* including the repercussions of the global financial crisis, problems in the eurozone, internal disputes over common values, the threat of terrorism, and a deterioration of relations with Russia that is not only due to the Ukraine conflict. Schwimmer is convinced there is no Europe without Russia and no Russia without Europe. Recalling the Meseberg declaration of June 2010, he considers a flexible and leanly structured "European Security Council". The future of Europe must involve unity in diversity, mutual understanding, and a concentration of efforts towards peace.

Jacopo Pepe argues that with the decline in transatlantic centrality, different geopolitical and geo-economic macro-structural trends across Eurasia, which both predate China's Belt and Road initiative and transcend it, are leading to a different kind of order that can be defined in the somewhat contradictory terms of *fluid hegemonic multipolarity*. Neither a Western-style ar-

chitecture nor a new hegemon, be it China or another, will be ascendant in the wake of US power. Instead, Pepe argues the continent will return to the structural status quo ante of half a millennium ago, when mutually dependent civilisations with different socioeconomic and value systems—in those days both nomadic and sedentary populations—existed in a fluid, self-sustaining, but less stable equilibrium.

I argue that the diffusion of power among new actors has questioned Washington's leadership and simultaneously weakened international rules and institutions like the United Nations. With the hegemonic role of the US practically over, the transition into the emerging order is confronted with a complex abundance of locally, regionally, and internationally interwoven clashes that are fundamentally different from the conflicts of the bipolar era. Under such circumstances, creating stability and security has become more difficult and risky for leading international actors. I emphasise that a balance of deterrence has been the crucial structural factor in the international system since the era of bipolarity. Because of this, the objectives of great powers can only be achieved through soft power and a restrained use of hard power intervention. Against a backdrop of transformational change and internationally systemic threats, I discuss leading US, European, and Russian reports that present core arguments for governments on how the changing nature of power is influencing relations between and within countries for decades to come. I focus on US National Intelligence Council (NIC) reports, a recent study by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), and the EU's 2016 view of global developments. What all three reports share in common is reflection on how EU, US, and Russian experts view global developments as they make political recommendations. No report presents a precise prognosis for the coming decades but all share a vision of the future for the sake of their respective national and regional administrations, highlighting necessary decisions and likely challenges in light of ongoing international transformation.

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Multipolar prospects amid multiple challenges: Resurgent nationalism and declining US leadership

Richard Falk

Point of departure

This chapter explores the United States' response to world order challenges with a special concern for the rise of China and the qualitative decline of democracy in many important countries. In one sense, this new situation at the global level pits China, as the master of soft power, on a collision course with the United States, the master of hard power. This collision course is threatened by the outbreak of wars between states that possess or seek nuclear weapons, by ecological decline, and by demagogic styles of leadership. The new global situation seems inclined to rest its hopes for the future on a weak, consultative form of multilateralism and geopolitical prudence.

Yet this picture is clouded by nationalist retreats from global leadership roles, especially by the US. Such a dangerous set of circumstances has resulted from many causes, above all, irresponsible and negligent responses to the final phases of the Cold War, the Soviet collapse, and the 9/11 attacks. The current depolarised drift with regard to world order is neither sustainable nor desirable, prompting a search for alternative futures, including benign forms of bipolarity.

First stage of world order after World War Two: Peace diplomacy

Three goals dominated American-led efforts to re-establish world order after the end of World War Two. The primary goal was to avoid any recurrence of major warfare. World War Two had been the most devastating war in history when measured by casualties and costs, a reality dramatised by the atomic bombs dropped on Japanese cities and the anticipated post-war advent of

nuclear weapons at the disposal of several states. The United Nations was established to reinforce this resolve with the core commitment of its Charter being the prohibition of all international uses of force except in cases of self-defence against a prior armed attack. Such a norm had truly revolutionary potential, provided it was respected and implemented.

The second goal, given a slightly lower priority by Western political leaders, yet still of utmost importance, was to take steps to prevent the onset of another Great Depression. In this regard, although combined with other strategic objectives, the rapid reconstruction of Europe was regarded as indispensable and was facilitated by the Marshall Plan, which provided major economic assistance to Western European governments, especially Germany, recovering from a devastating defeat and shocking political experience. The international dimension of this resolve to stabilise the world economy led to the formation of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, later supplemented by the WTO, with the overriding goal of using monetary and trade policy to maintain economic stability and promote economic growth in the face of various pressures.

The third goal was to include Germany and Japan in arrangements designed to achieve a peaceful and prosperous world order, as well as a geopolitical atmosphere that would oppose and contain the Soviet Union and resist Marxist penetrations of Western economies. This was interpreted so as to pursue a peace diplomacy that was not punitive in the way the treatment of Germany—widely believed to be a contributing factor on top of German extremism and ultra-nationalism—after World War One was. At the same time, the nature of World War Two demanded some demonstrable justice in regard to the criminality of the defeated countries and the just cause of the victors. The solution was found in the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, which held surviving German and Japanese leaders individually responsible for war crimes, a kind of symbolic way of achieving closure on patterns of unacceptable behaviour, although flawed by exempting the crimes of the victors from scrutiny. In this way, the individual accountability of a small number of individuals accused of terrible crimes was combined with non-punitive collective policies towards the defeated Axis powers.

All in all, with the United States abandoning its traditional isolationist foreign policy, taking the lead role as architect of the post-war international order, there was a widespread sense that a reasonably benevolent approach had been adopted in Washington, which generated hope in the future of international relations. At the same time, these constructive arrangements

were soon threatened by the looming rivalry with the Soviet Union, viewed as an expansionist and ambitious international actor, especially due to its approach to Eastern Europe and policies taken in territory of the three divided countries of Germany, Korea, and Vietnam.

Second stage of world order after World War Two:

The Cold War

Whereas peace diplomacy emphasised the unity of the coalition established to combat fascism, and was bound together by a rhetoric that expressed a universal dedication to peaceful relations and human rights, the geopolitical landscape was dominated by the US-Soviet rivalry, which soon evolved into a full-blown ideological, diplomatic, and military confrontation taking on menacing proportions after the Soviet Union acquired its own nuclear weapons. The central focus of tensions was Europe, particularly the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the division of Germany, although the divisions of Korea and Vietnam would lead to the worst wars fought during the Cold War era.

This Cold War atmosphere produced a bipolar global order, and dimmed hopes that the nascent UN could function effectively to prevent war. In a sense, this eventuality had been foreshadowed by vesting veto rights in the five states which had prevailed in World War Two, greatly undermining the role of the Security Council in contexts of war and peace, producing gridlock and disillusionment, and reviving dependence on the security logic of balance-of-power geopolitics in the now far more threatening context of bipolarity and nuclear weaponry. The marginalisation of the UN reflected both the practical need to overcome the deficiencies of the League of Nations—which had failed to gain the participation of several major states through the exclusion of geopolitical considerations from its constitutional framework—and the sense that cooperation among dominant political actors was not sustainable in the absence of a common enemy, as had been the case during the struggle against fascism and Japanese imperialism.

The Cold War coincided with the most significant transformation of the second half of the twentieth century, the collapse of European colonialism and the subsequent rise of the global south. This prioritised economic, social, and political development, and the idea of catching up with the West with respect to several modernist metrics of success.

The interplay of the Cold War with widely shared fears of a hot war led to a global pattern that was relatively stable in the north, but quite volatile in the south. The two superpowers felt they could compete for ascendancy in the global south without raising the risk of a collapse in geopolitical stability to imprudent heights. Despite some close calls, especially in Europe but also in the struggles for control of divided Korea and Vietnam, the West's dual objectives were upheld: Soviet—and Chinese—containment, without the outbreak of a direct war. At the same time, the collapse of colonialism and universal endorsement of self-determination as an inalienable *legal* right achieved a rollback of Western hegemony.

Mishandling unipolarity

The Cold War ended abruptly and surprisingly, preceded by Gorbachev's softening of its ideological dimension and his offering to the world of a taste of *normative globalisation*: nuclear disarmament, conflict prevention, and common security, as well as the internal reforms signalled by glasnost and perestroika.¹

The failed response: Unipolarity

With the Cold War over, a unipolar moment appeared to be the most accurate way of understanding the geopolitical structure of world politics after this painless termination of bipolarity, which fortunately occurred without a major war (Krauthammer 2002a, 5–17).

In retrospect, it appears the US suffered from a paralysing version of triumphalism after the Soviet collapse, typified by various narratives of its vic-

1 As the whole world learned these two Russian words, I was told by Shakhnazarov at the time that Gorbachev wanted to do for Russian communism what Franklin Roosevelt had done for capitalism, saving the system, not destroying it. Momentarily partnering with Reagan, reaching a briefly encouraging climax at the Reykjavik Summit, afterwards came the collapse of the Berlin Wall and soon thereafter, the fall of the Soviet Union. American triumphalism followed with an embrace of neoliberalism throughout the Bush and Clinton presidencies, and a strong conviction that democratic and capitalist states do not make war against one another.

tory, most influentially, perhaps, by Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (1992).² Some found the American-led response to Iraq's attack and annexation of Kuwait promising, especially the peacekeeping consensus at the UN, and the proclamation by George H.W. Bush of a *new world order* based on the renewed potential for cooperation among the permanent five members of the Security Council, and a more robust role, in keeping with Charter intentions, for the UN. Unfortunately, these hopes were transitory.

The Gulf War of 1991, although mandated by the Security Council, seemed accompanied by excessive uses of force, and ended with the imposition of a harsh sanctions regime on a defeated and devastated Iraq. This rejection of the lesson of World War One was exhibited by imposing a punitive peace that inflicted massive suffering on Iraq's civilian population over the course of the next twelve years, preceding the initiation of a war of aggression against the country in 2003, certainly one of the proximate causes of ongoing regional turmoil.

The Bush Sr. presidency quickly showed its lack of commitment to the emergence of a new world order beyond its opportunistic usefulness in 1991 for the mobilisation of an anti-Iraq consensus in support of military action. The idea that this was the beginning of more serious forms of collective global governance in the aftermath of the Cold War was just not part of the American political imaginary. Instead, the efficiency of the military operation at the core of the Gulf War was predominantly interpreted as restoring US confidence—previously lost by way of a traumatic defeat in Vietnam—in its war machine to prevail quickly and at acceptable costs. The White House also made it clear that the new world order was only intended for this one instance and did not represent an American commitment to accept UN authority in future situations inconsistent with its own assessment of national interests. The American Secretary of State at the time, James Baker, made it clear that his boss in the White House had made a mistake at the time by associating the new world order with UN peacekeeping rather than with the triumph of capitalist constitutionalism over Soviet branded state socialism.

Bill Clinton's presidency was no more capable of shaping an imaginative international response to the new realities of international life. It promoted the Baker version of the new world order under the banner of encouraging democratisation around the world, as well as by placing the efficiency of

2 Ahmet Davutoğlu (2018) repudiates the end-of-history interpretation of the Cold War's political outcome, demonstrating instead that it resulted in an acceleration of historical change.

transnational capital high on its list of policy priorities (Falk 1999). Its goal was to facilitate the transnational flow of capital and it contributed to a perverse shift of ideological emphasis from Keynesian to neoliberal economics. This shift is significantly responsible for the various dimensions of inequality that now afflict the internal public order of many states, giving rise to the present era of freely elected autocrats, and the severe qualitative decline in democracy worldwide.

The tragedy of these responses to the end of the Cold War was the lost opportunity to exert two major forms of constructive US leadership: proposing serious international negotiations seeking nuclear disarmament, in keeping with the Article VI commitment of the Non Proliferation Treaty; and strengthening the UN by firstly adding permanent non-Western members to the Security Council as a reflection of the new geopolitical landscape and secondly by proposing restrictions on the use of vetoes to circumstances of self-defence. This openness at the end of the Cold War was the great lost opportunity to establish normative globalisation with an accompanying advantage of a much-diminished polarisation of international relations with respect to global policy generally and in relation to the security agenda in particular. What occurred in the 1990s was a degree of depolarisation, yet without normative enhancement through institutions and cooperative protection of the *global* interest, producing instead two disappointing post-Cold War approaches: a governmental focus by both liberals and conservatives on giving market forces a free hand in transnational arenas of trade and investment; and a neoconservative upsurge that advocated taking advantage of unipolarity so as to spread American influence and values, if necessary by force, especially in the Middle East, striking quickly while this temporarily favourable situation lasted.³

Mishandling mega-terrorism after 9/11

The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were apparently the work of a non-state actor, heralding two broad developments that affected the structure and processes of world order: firstly, the re-securitisa-

³ For such advocacy see the Project for a New American Century's *Rebuilding America's Defenses* report (Kagan et al 2000) and the *Clean Break* report by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (2006).

tion of international relations that re-established the primacy of politics over economics as determining the trajectory of geopolitical behaviour; secondly, the response to the attacks being categorised within the war paradigm rather than the crime paradigm, which had always been relied upon in past government responses to terrorism (Falk 2018).

In one respect, the war on terror was an extension of unipolarity, especially given the political logic articulated by George W. Bush, to the effect that, “you are either with us, or with the terrorists” (2001). Even more so than during the Cold War, the war on terror has seen no legitimate space given to traditional international law doctrine and the sovereign right to opt for neutrality so as to remain disengaged from an ongoing war. Beyond the obligatory solidarity with the counter-terrorist side, there is a sense that territorial sovereignty can be legally breached if a foreign government is unable to eliminate terrorists from its soil. There are no safe havens if the world becomes the battlefield.

These developments had drastic effects. The structure of international humanitarian law and the constraints of the law of war were gravely weakened, if not cast aside. These normative orders had evolved to regulate interstate warfare but they did not fit neatly into the logic of a warlike conflict between a state and a political movement without a territorial base, armed forces, or a statist identity.⁴

The moral polarisation associated with a view of terrorism and its perpetrators as *evil* is quite different from regarding one’s international enemies as continuing to be members of international society, as is exhibited by UN membership. If the adversary is evil, it has no claim on rights or reciprocity of duties, and diplomacy is inappropriate. The fact that torture was practiced as a matter of policy, and those detained were denied prisoner-of-war status in accord with the Geneva Conventions is illustrative of this counter-terrorist logic, although it also produced legalist and pragmatist critics (for a range of views see Yoo 2006; see also Sands 2005; Danner 2006).

In this regard, the immediate decision of the Bush Jr. presidency to treat the 9/11 attacks in terms of war rather crime has led to numerous concerns

⁴ ISIS made the disastrous mistake in 2014 of claiming to establish a territorial caliphate in Iraq and Syria, which was substantially destroyed by 2018. The tactical mistake was to expose itself to a form of conflict in which military superiority could control the political outcome. It was not so much the proclamation of a new caliphate, but reliance on a Westphalian claim to exert sovereign control over delimited territory that needed to be defended against a technologically superior adversary.

about civilisational decline and the abandonment of international law and common humanity (Weber 2017). The names Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are often invoked to epitomise what went wrong in responding to 9/11. As with the general tenor of world order, an opportunity existed to devise a regime of common security adapted to regulating non-state violent political crimes. This would have created greater reliance on overtly cooperative arrangements among national police forces and a stronger set of capabilities entrusted to Interpol.

The 9/11 response, by way of a series of controversial international wars that did not achieve their goals despite massive military commitment, weakened international law, the UN, and multilateralism generally (Falk 2007). Re-securitisation also led to internal security initiatives that impinged on human rights and diminished the quality of democratic life in a series of important countries, creating a lethal trade-off between security and freedom in previously liberal societies.

At the same time, the rise of China, India, Brazil, the return of Russia to the global scene, and the emergence of a number of strong mid-sized powers have induced calls for policymaking and problem-solving procedures that improve upon the veto-prone Security Council. Economic power has been more dispersed, making the old mechanisms, principally the Bretton Woods institutions and the G7, unable to gain as much traction for their policies as in the past. The G20 was established as a more representative venue for global economic policy but lacks institutionalisation and effective authority to implement its recommended policies. This has created a confusing situation characterised by inadequate international regulation, and states increasingly relying on national economic policy at the risk of trade wars and regressive forms of protectionism. The result has been a weak form of multipolarity with regard to agendas for trade, investment, and development. In relation to global security, what seems to be emerging is an amalgam of military unipolarity so far incapable of producing any impressive political results and a helpless global passivity with respect to atrocities and massacres, typified by responses to the Syrian war that has been raging since 2011. In Syria, it is questionable whether a government persistently guilty of crimes against humanity, yet still a member of the UN, retains the privileged legitimacy of receiving military support that would be illegitimate if provided to insurgents.

Resurgent nationalism and the decline of democracy

Amidst the complexities of geopolitical leadership's failure to produce a safer, more sustainable, and more equitable structure of world order based on increasing respect for the global rule of law and the need for both procedures and political will to meet the challenges of climate change, several regressive tendencies have emerged. As new wars have raged, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, and parts of Africa have been ravaged by the effects of global warming, large numbers of refugees and migrants, and the global reach of anti-Western political extremism, a generation of ultra-nationalist leaders has been elected, exemplified by Donald Trump in the United States and the related phenomenon of Trumpism around the world. This tendency has been accentuated by nationalist reactions to the threats to identity and sovereignty posed by minimally regulated forms of neoliberal capitalism.

Such trends have weakened international capabilities and approaches to multilateral problem-solving, and produced a pronounced decline in the role of multilateral institutions, beginning with the UN but embracing virtually the entire institutional framework of the international liberal international order (well-depicted by Ikenberry 2011).

What has emerged from these world order developments is a set of circumstances that can be best described as an anaemic form of multipolarity. The weakness arises from the combination of US withdrawal from leadership on public order issues—a role it has played for at least the last 70 years—with the gravity of current public order challenges associated with climate change, nuclearism, global migration, *new wars*, and world trade. At present, there is no alternative candidate capable and willing to fill the leadership role vacated by the United States, and thus able to compensate for the weakness of the UN arising from its predominantly statist and geopolitical operating procedure. The impact of resurgent nationalism creates further obstacles to cooperative problem-solving, shifting interaction among sovereign states towards *transactional* bilateral relations, which tend to emphasise power disparities and accentuate inequalities within a win-lose logic of statecraft. Such a regressive orientation, destructive of any hope for the gradual development of a global community, is particularly pronounced in Trump's approach to world order and economic policy.

Alternatives to anaemic multipolarity

Anaemic multipolarity is inherently unstable, given the increasing tensions and harm resulting from contemporary global challenges which have been insufficiently attended to. Either a creative alternative will emerge or there is likely to be a series of regressive trends and events associated with a deterioration of general conditions arising from one—or more—unmet challenge. The most plausible positive alternatives, under these conditions, are multilateralism with benevolent leadership or bipolarity with benevolent leadership.

Multilateralism with benevolent leadership

China has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to extend influence through soft power, together with the greatest surge in economic growth in history. China seems to have a mature appreciation of the need for global problem-solving and management of global warming, nuclear policy, and the world economy. Whether it can assert the kind of leadership that the United States showed in the period after World War Two is an unanswered question. As a global leader, China would experience several drawbacks: the lack of a widely spoken language beyond its borders; the lack of a globally traded currency; the absence of experience in global, as distinct from regional, diplomacy; and an ideology that lacks adherents, even if China's actual practice is rather flexible under the heading of *market socialism*.

The United States is at its lowest point yet, so far as global leadership and influence is concerned, at least with respect to the last hundred years. This imperils structures and procedures for cooperative problem-solving that have evolved over many years, structures which at their best, although less than what was needed and desired, were still contributions to a more orderly global scene. Part of American decline is exhibited by its naked and almost obsessive reliance on *hard* power capabilities and coercive diplomacy in a period of international relations when military superiority has less leverage. The US is no longer the principal agent of change and geopolitical discipline that it once was.

It seems possible, almost likely, that the Trump presidency will in one way or another be rejected by means other than global catastrophe, that is, by electoral dismissal, impeachment, or resignation. It also seems that a pro-