

America's Fading World Order

A recent Pew poll asked Americans to look 30 years into the future and this produced some interesting results. The American public foresees “a country in decline economically, politically and on the world stage”. [1] In contrast, inhabitants in South Asia are living with America's waning global fortunes. According to a survey by the ASEAN Studies Center at the Iseas-Yusof Ishak Institute, 60 percent of respondents said that America's “global power and influence” have either deteriorated (45.6 percent) or deteriorated substantially (13.5 percent). [2.] So is America's world order really fading?

Leaving aside public perceptions, notable thinkers have started to pen articles about the demise of America's global prestige. David Klion writing in this month's *Foreign Policy Magazine* wrote an article titled “The American Empire Is the Sick Man of the 21st Century”. In it, he describes how foreign powers influence the American government to shape their own foreign policy agenda. Standout examples: the Jewish state's ability to exploit American institutions to expand the contours of its territory, and Russia's interference in America's domestic politics to aid Trump's election victory. [3]

Perhaps the most colorful explanation about the weakness of American primacy on the global stage comes from Richard Haass. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Haas talks at length about the demise of American supremacy and steps the country must take to resurrect its decaying world order. [4] Haas attributes “costly overreach” in “trying to remake Afghanistan, invading Iraq, and pursuing regime change in Libya” as one of the principal reasons behind the decline in America's global primacy. [5]

Aside from opinion polls and expert opinions, it is strikingly clear that there is widespread dissatisfaction with America's global order. Starting with the domestic order, civil society is polarized along multiple fault lines and the country's political system is broken. Partisan politics—routinely practiced amongst Republicans and Democrats—has brought to a halt a number of important pieces of legislation. To circumvent the deadlock, US President Trump has resorted to executive powers to get funding for his signature project—building of the wall along Mexico.

America's international order mirrors the chaos and logjam at home. President Trump has opted for reckless unilateralism to pull the US out of the Paris Climate Accords [6], renege on the Iranian nuclear deal [7], withdraw from the INF nuclear treaty [8] and lay the basis for the deletion of the two-state solution between Jews and Palestinians. [9] This has undermined American prestige and outraged global opinion.

Equally, key international institutions acting under the tutelage of America have failed to provide leadership at times of acute crisis. IMF's failure to identify the global financial crisis in 2008, and the impotence of the UN to halt the slaughter of Syrians at the hands of Assad, are just some of the epitaphs on America's decaying liberal order. [10, 11]

Revisionist states—Russia and China—have taken advantage of the crumbling international order to accelerate the transition of the world from unipolarity to multipolarity. Russia's division of Georgia, annexation of Crimea, forays into Ukraine through proxies, and the unveiling of new advanced nuclear weapons has posed grave challenges to America's liberal order.

China's economic powerhouse, its military ascendancy in the South Asian Sea, the One Belt, and One Road Initiative have tested American primacy to the extent that Asian Pacific countries friendly towards the US have openly contemplated whether security and trade under Chinese hegemony would be better than America's version.

Disappointed with America's management of world affairs, allies too have taken stabs at America. President Macron of France warned, "Europe can no longer rely on the US to provide its security" and reiterated that Europe must guarantee its own security. [12] Germany a committed lynchpin of American security on the continent expressed reservations about America's commitment to Europe. Merkel has talked at length about "creating a real, true European army". [13].

Additionally, Europe's embroilment over trade relations with the US illustrates with great vigor the demise of transatlantic relationship. Even the once special relationship between Britain and America is on the rocks. Trump has attacked Prime Minister May over her criticisms against his far right views, and he has vehemently derided May over brexit. [14, 15].

The eruption of global protests against globalization and liberal trade practices is another blow to America's global primacy. The waves of protests in Europe and the US amidst the global financial crisis, and the revolt of the Arab populations—dubbed the Arab Spring—have exposed the fragility of America's grip on world affairs. America's globalization drive confirms the obvious: the inequality between the super-rich and the rest has increased at an astonishing rate and has permanently polarized nations.

The tidal wave of unrest continues today in the form of brexit, France's yellow vest movement, the rise of the far right in the West, the revolt of the masses in Algeria and Sudan. Dissatisfaction amongst the populations of the West and the global commons against America's world order is at an all-time high, and is yet to reach a crescendo.

Perhaps the greatest indictment against America's world order is Washington's inability to use military might to shape stable political solutions. America has spent circa \$6 trillion on prosecuting its global war on terrorism (GWOT) and in the process; at least 500,000 people have been killed. [16]

Consider two pillars of America's war on GWOT: Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq is a total mess and teeters on the brink of fragmentation. Afghanistan shot to pieces poses an enormous challenge for the US to define an honorable exit after 18 years of humiliating occupation. Uncle Sam has been forced to negotiate a "peaceful exit" with five former inmates from Guantanamo Bay. [17]

Elsewhere peace on the Korean peninsula remains elusive, as North Korea repeatedly pokes fun at American peace overtures. In South America, Maduro of Venezuela continues to flout American threats to remove him from power and shows no signs of stepping down.

The collapse of America's world order is in full swing. Whether it falls abruptly or tapers off slowly remains to be seen. One thing is for certain, the world is transitioning to a pre-1945 world where multiple great powers will compete for dominance. It is hoped that in this competition for primacy, the Muslim ummah will compete with her state the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly guided Caliphate) and fulfil the words of Allah (swt). **هُوَ الَّذِي** "He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may be averse." [TMQ: Al Tawba: 33].

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