



The US Role in a Changing World Order

The global balance of power is changing. The era when the United States could dominate the world after the Cold War has ended. New economic powers have emerged, and influence is increasingly spread across multiple regions. This shift does not necessarily mean the United States is declining or that the world is becoming unmanageable. But it does mean that trying to dominate every region of the world through military power is not realistic or necessary, and often makes things worse for American security.

The path to long-term security and prosperity lies in focusing on core interests, avoiding unnecessary wars, and leading with diplomacy and restraint. In a more multipolar world, American strength will come from restraint abroad and investments at home, rather than trying to control every outcome around the world.

What are the United States' core interests?

The United States has several enduring interests, including defending the US homeland and its citizens; maintaining economic stability and access to global markets; and preventing the spread and use of nuclear weapons. Many global challenges are important, but not every conflict is a vital US interest. A more disciplined foreign policy means focusing American resources where they matter most.



"Most problems around the world can and should be solved by the US."



"The United States cannot and should not try to solve every problem in the world, especially through military force."

Does global stability require US dominance?

Efforts to preserve Washington's role as the only real rule-setter in every important region of the world have drawn the United States into costly wars and open-ended military commitments, with no benefit to American security. Recent decades have shown that rather than producing stability, US military involvement can make the world less stable, as we are now seeing in Iran. A refusal to acknowledge the core interests of other powers also makes conflict more likely. In a more multipolar world, stability is more likely to come from regional balances of power, active diplomacy, and cooperation among states rather than from a single dominant power laying down the law.



"If the United States isn't the dominant power everywhere, the world will fall into chaos."




"Trying to dominate every region tends to create new conflicts, weaken US security, and drain American resources."

Is the "rules-based international order" under threat?

The phrase "rules-based international order" is widely used in Washington, but many countries view it as unclear and applied unevenly. In practice, the system often appears to reflect the preferences of Western powers rather than universally accepted rules. For the United States to maintain legitimacy and leadership, it should emphasize consistent following of international law rather than relying on arbitrary rules that many countries see as politically motivated.

 "If the US doesn't enforce the rules-based order, the world will become lawless."

 "Global stability depends on good-faith efforts to resolve clashing interests peacefully and the consistent application of international law."

Is the world becoming "multipolar"?

Economic growth and technological development in countries like China, India, and others are shifting the global balance of power. This trend cannot be reversed through military confrontation or attempts at economic isolation. Periods of change and uncertainty can become dangerous when countries treat competition as a zero-sum struggle or divide the world into opposing groups. Forcing countries to choose sides risks deepening divisions and making cooperation harder. To avoid these risks, the United States should focus on managing competition responsibly while preventing escalation into conflict.

A more multipolar world is also an opportunity for the United States. Since America no longer has the resources to dominate every region, US allies will need to carry more of the burden of maintaining order in their regions, helping reduce the costs to American taxpayers.


 "Multipolarity means America is losing and our rivals are winning."

 "A more multipolar world is inevitable. The challenge is managing it peacefully and taking advantage of the opportunities it presents."

How should the United States manage rivals in the emerging global order?

Treating every global issue as part of a geopolitical contest increases the risk of arms races, proxy wars, and economic division. The United States should compete where necessary but prioritize compromise and cooperation wherever possible, particularly on global challenges like climate change, pandemics, financial stability, and reducing nuclear risks. This requires the United States not to exaggerate the threat that its adversaries pose to its way of life or to the international order, especially given Washington's own track record of inconsistent support for international law and norms. Even in rare situations where we must compete with a country almost as powerful as the US, the rivalry can be managed through careful balancing and economic competition. Diplomacy should be the first tool of American statecraft, not a last resort after military options are exhausted.


 "Great-power rivalry means the US must confront competitors everywhere."

 "While our interests may not always align, cooperation with rivals should be the baseline, inevitable competition with states that truly match US power should be diverted as much as possible to the commercial arena, and unavoidable conflicts compartmentalized."

How should the United States behave in a changing world order?

A changing world presents an opportunity for the US to thoughtfully adjust its role, prioritizing American wellbeing and stability. We should start by accepting the reality of a more multipolar world, rather than trying to achieve the unrealistic goal of permanent global dominance. We should work towards a more inclusive international system that takes the interests and perspectives of the Global South – rising powers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – into account. This is key for solving global problems and maintaining US influence in an increasingly multipolar world. We should take the opportunity to solve most problems peacefully, using military force only as a tool of last resort when vital US interests are at stake.

 "The US must remain the world's dominant power and reclaim the leadership role of the past."

 "The world is changing, and US domination is no longer possible or desirable. While remaining engaged on the global stage, we must deal with the world as it is, prioritizing American interests and global stability."