



History:

Collection: 2026

Received: April 14, 2026

Status: Published

Identifiers:

ID: 5-26/DTN

Year: 2026

Volume: 15

First Page: 171

Last Page: 178

Correspondence: Zaighum

Javaid, 935 Ferguson Dr, Milton
ON L9T 6V7, Canada. +1 (647)
285-5959, zjkayani@gmail.com

Funding Statement: The authors declare that no specific funding was received for this study.

Ethics Approval Statement:

Ethical approval was not required for this study, as it did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or identifiable personal data.

Consent for Publication

Statement: The author has reviewed and approved the final manuscript and consents to its publication in accordance with journal policies.

Additional information is available at the end of the article.



Analytical Review Article

**EMERGENCE OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER
POST-2026 CONFLICT**

Taha Nazir¹, Zaighum Javaid^{2,3}

1. Director Advanced Multiple Inc., Canada. Thomson Reuters - ID N-5730-2015 | orcid.org/0000-0002-5308-6798 | <https://tahanazir.com>
2. Chief Executive, Media South Asia Canada Inc., Canada.
3. Host, community radio programs WTOR 770 AM Toronto ON and CFCR FM 90.5 Saskatoon SK Canada.

Abstract

The global system is transitioning from a largely unipolar structure to a multipolar world order, accelerated by geopolitical developments after the 2026 conflict. While the United States continues to hold significant influence, its relative dominance is increasingly challenged by the rise of China and Russia. This article explains the drivers of this transition, compares strategic positions, and outlines implications for global stability in a clear and structured format.

Running title: Iran war aftermath, US-China rivalry, middle powers rise, unipolar decline, BRICS expansion, Global South influence, new world order

Keywords: multipolar world order, post-2026 conflict, global power shift, great power competition

Data Source: Archives, Biographies, Databanks, Encyclopedias, Libraries, Metadata Registries, Reports, Repositories, arXiv, Crossref, OpenAI, Wikipedia, World Health Organization, Zenodo.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declares all potential conflicts of interest and affirms that any such interests have been appropriately disclosed in accordance with standard ethical guidelines.

AI Tools and Assistance Statement: Artificial intelligence tools were utilized to support content structuring, data analysis, and evidence synthesis. All outputs were critically reviewed and validated by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, and conclusions of the work.

Introduction

For decades after the Cold War, the global system was dominated by the United States, shaping international institutions, security frameworks, and economic systems. However, structural shifts in global power distribution have gradually reduced this dominance. The 2026 conflict highlighted the limitations of unilateral influence and accelerated the transition toward a system where multiple powers shape global outcomes simultaneously.

MAP 1
Major Chinese Infrastructure Projects



Methodology

This study employs a qualitative review methodology, synthesizing literature from international relations journals, policy think tanks, and global economic reports. Databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and institutional repositories were consulted. Inclusion criteria focused on post-2026 geopolitical developments, power transition theories, and global governance analyses, while exclusion criteria removed outdated or non-analytical sources. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in power redistribution and institutional change.

From Unipolarity to Multipolarity

The transformation from a unipolar to a multipolar system has occurred gradually over time. In the early post-Cold War period, the United States held unmatched global authority. Over the last two decades, however, emerging powers have expanded their economic and military capabilities, creating a more balanced distribution of power.

Table 1: Evolution of Global Order

Phase	Characteristics	Dominant Feature
Unipolar (1991–2010)	U.S. dominance	Centralized global leadership
Transitional (2010–2025)	Rise of competing powers	Strategic competition
Multipolar (Post-2026)	Multiple power centers	Distributed influence

This transition reflects a shift toward a more complex and negotiated global system.

Drivers of the Multipolar Shift

Several factors have contributed to the emergence of multipolarity. Economic growth in Asia has redistributed global production and trade, while advancements in military capabilities have enabled new powers to assert influence. Additionally, dissatisfaction with Western-led institutions has encouraged the development of alternative political and economic frameworks. The 2026 conflict further accelerated these trends by demonstrating that no single power can fully control global outcomes. As a result, the international system is increasingly defined by shared but contested leadership.

U.S. Relative Decline

The concept of U.S. decline refers to a relative reduction in dominance rather than absolute loss of power. The United States remains a leading military and economic power, but its ability to act unilaterally has been constrained by rising competition and internal challenges.

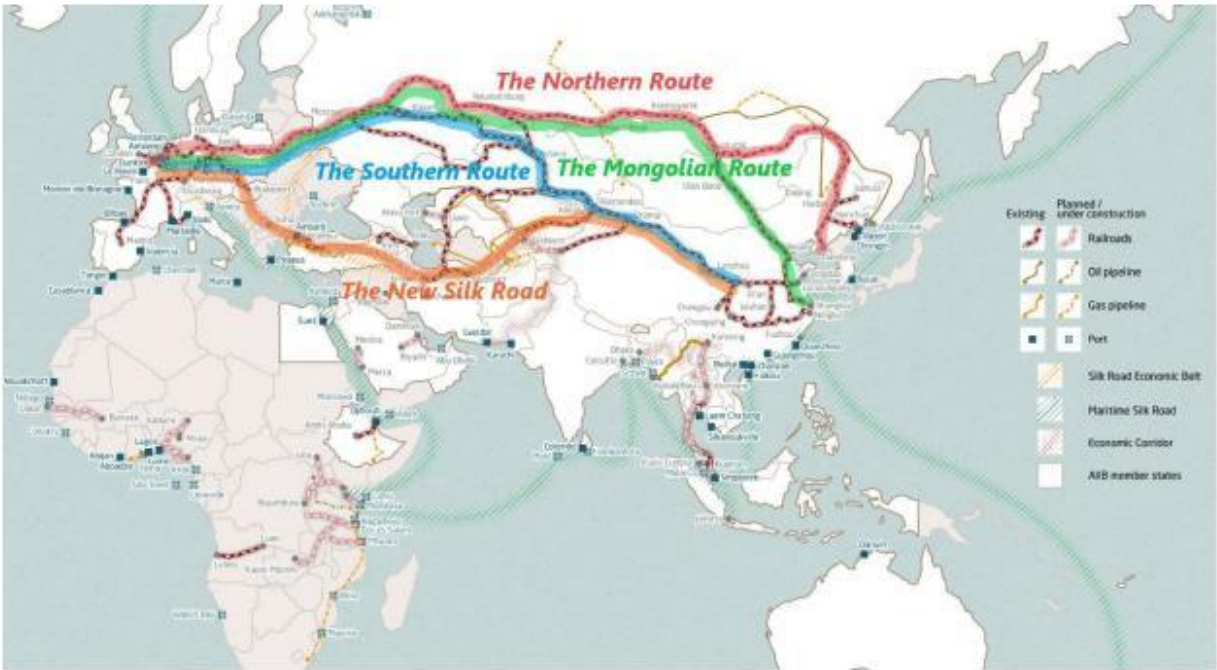
Table 2: Key Challenges for the United States

Area	Challenge	Impact
Military	Global commitments	Reduced flexibility
Economy	Rising competitors	Relative slowdown
Politics	Domestic polarization	Policy inconsistency
Influence	Declining credibility	Reduced soft power

The 2026 conflict highlighted these limitations, particularly in sustaining long-term geopolitical influence.

China’s Strategic Positioning

China has positioned itself as a central actor in the emerging multipolar system through economic expansion and global connectivity initiatives. Its strategy focuses on infrastructure development, trade integration, and technological advancement. By strengthening partnerships across Asia, Africa, and Europe, China has expanded its global influence without relying heavily on direct military confrontation.



This approach highlights China’s emphasis on economic power as a primary instrument of global influence.

Russia’s Strategic Role

Russia plays a complementary role in the multipolar system, relying on military strength and energy resources to maintain its influence. It uses strategic interventions and energy exports as tools of geopolitical leverage.

Russia’s role demonstrates the importance of hard power and regional influence, balancing China’s economic strategy and contributing to a diversified global power structure.

Comparative Power Structure

The emerging multipolar order is characterized by diverse strengths among major powers, rather than uniform dominance.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Major Powers

Dimension	United States	China	Russia
Economy	Advanced, globalized	Rapid growth, trade networks	Resource-based
Military	Global reach	Expanding capabilities	Strong regional power
Strategy	Alliance-based leadership	Economic integration	Strategic intervention
Influence	Institutional dominance	Development partnerships	Security leverage

This comparison illustrates how different forms of power interact to shape the global system.

Conceptual Figure — Multipolar Order Model

Multiple Power Centers → Strategic Competition → Regional Alliances → Global Balance → Multipolar System

This model shows how power is distributed across several actors, creating a dynamic and evolving international system.

Implications for Global Order

The emergence of multipolarity has significant implications for global governance and stability. Increased competition among major powers may lead to geopolitical tensions, but it can also create opportunities for balance and cooperation. Traditional alliances are becoming more flexible, and regional powers are gaining greater importance in shaping outcomes.

At the same time, global institutions face challenges in adapting to this new reality, as decision-making becomes more complex and less centralized.

Future Prospects

Future research should focus on the evolution of multipolar governance models, the role of emerging technologies in shaping power dynamics, and the impact of climate change on geopolitical competition. The development of new international norms and institutions capable of managing multipolar complexity is a critical area for investigation.

Recommendations

Policymakers should prioritize strengthening multilateral cooperation to mitigate the risks associated with multipolar competition. Institutional reforms are necessary to ensure equitable representation and effective decision-making. Investment in economic resilience, technological innovation, and conflict prevention mechanisms can enhance stability. Additionally, fostering dialogue among major powers is essential to prevent escalation and promote collective security.

Conclusion

The emergence of a multipolar world order following the 2026 conflicts marks a fundamental transformation in global power dynamics. While this shift offers opportunities for greater inclusivity and balance in international relations, it also introduces significant challenges, including heightened competition, institutional strain, and increased risk of conflict. The transition underscores the need for adaptive governance frameworks and renewed commitment to multilateralism. Ultimately, the success of a multipolar system will depend on the ability of global actors to manage competition responsibly while fostering cooperation in addressing shared challenges.



Review Typology and Reporting

Review designs were classified into standard categories (scoping, umbrella, rapid, qualitative, and mixed-methods), with reporting aligned to established guidelines (PRISMA-ScR, PRIOR,

PRISMA-RR, ENTREQ, and PRISMA/MMAT) to ensure methodological rigor and transparency.

Editorial Statement:

This is research-based manuscript, prepared and structured in a scientific manner. Modern AI-assisted tools used to access current and authentic info. The digital archives, bibliographic databanks, online libraries, research articles, academic repositories and encyclopedias employed.

Preprint Notice:

This manuscript is shared as a non-peer-reviewed preprint on platforms such as Zenodo, SSRN, and Research Square to support scholarly discussion. The content is research-based and developed using publicly available and verifiable sources. Readers are encouraged to interpret the material as preliminary and subject to revision.

Legal Disclaimer

This manuscript is provided for academic and informational purposes only and does not constitute professional advice. While based on publicly available data and presented in good faith, no warranties are made regarding its accuracy or applicability. The author assumes no liability for any outcomes arising from its use, and readers should consult qualified professionals before making decisions.

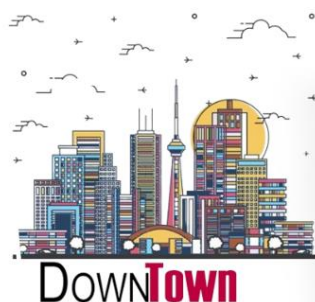
Peer Review Statement: This manuscript has not undergone external peer review, as it represents a structured synthesis and analysis of existing evidence. The methodological approach adheres to established standards to ensure rigor, transparency, and scientific validity.



References:

- Atlantic Council. (2026, February 25). The state of great power competition in the Gulf. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/the-state-of-great-power-competition-in-the-gulf/>
- Center for Global Governance Innovation. (2025, May 7). Transforming the United Nations for a multipolar world. <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/transforming-the-united-nations-for-a-multipolar-world-order/>
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2026, February 24). The arrival of the multi-order world and its geopolitical implications. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/research/2026/02/the-arrival-of-the-multi-order-world-and-its-geopolitical-implications>
- CISS Pakistan. (2025, December 31). The emerging world order in 2026: Fragmented, militarised, and unequal. <https://ciss.org.pk/the-emerging-world-order-in-2026-fragmented-militarised-and-unequal/>
- CNN. (2026, March 5). How the Middle East war could hurt the global economy. <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/03/05/economy/economy-impact-middle-east-war-intl>

- Deutsche Welle. (2026, April 12). What could come after a rules-based world order? <https://www.dw.com/en/is-rules-based-world-order-over-superpowers-multipolar-order-trump-global-south/a-76742441>
- Eurasia Review. (2026, April 10). The fault lines of a new Middle East: The 2025–2026 US-Israel-Iran war and the reordering. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/23032026-the-fault-lines-of-a-new-middle-east-the-2025-2026-us-israel-iran-war-and-the-reordering->
- European Council on Foreign Relations. (2026, February). After the rupture: Middle powers and the construction of new order [PDF]. <https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/After-the-rupture-Middle-powers-and-the-construction-of-new-order.pdf>
- Geopolitical Economy. (2026, February 25). US unipolarity vs China’s multipolarity: Whose vision will shape the global order? <https://geopoliticeconomy.com/2026/02/26/us-unipolarity-china-multipolarity-vision-global-order/>
- JPMorgan Chase. (2026). World rewired: Navigating a multi-speed, multipolar order [PDF]. <https://www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmorganchase/documents/center-for-geopolitics/jpmc-world-rewired.pdf>
- The New Arab. (2025, December 22). The key trends set to shape the Middle East in 2026. <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/key-trends-set-shape-middle-east-2026>
- World Economic Forum. (2026, January 21). Davos 2026: How middle powers are reading the global moment. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-how-middle-powers-are-reading-the-global-moment/>
- World Economic Forum. (2026, March 24). UN chief says Middle East conflict should accelerate shift to renewables. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/03/un-middle-east-conflict-shift-renewables-climate-nature-news/>
- Anadolu Agency. (2026, April 1). Experts warn Mideast conflict is fracturing global order, raising nuclear risks. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/experts-warn-mideast-conflict-is-fracturing-global-order-raising-nuclear-risks/3884072>
- The Awareness News. (2026, April 10). The end of the unipolar world: Is a new global order taking shape? <https://theawarenessnews.com/2026/04/11/the-end-of-the-unipolar-world-is-a-new-global-order-taking-shape/>



© 2025 DownTown News. This publication is released under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. You are permitted to: Share: Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. Adapt: Remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, including commercial use. These freedoms cannot be revoked if the licensing terms are followed. License Terms: Attribution: You must provide appropriate credit to *DownTown News*, include a link to the CC BY 4.0 license, and indicate if any changes were made. Attribution must be given in a reasonable manner that does not imply endorsement by DownTown News. No Additional Restrictions: You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that restrict others from exercising the permissions granted by this license.

For full license details, please refer to the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).