

A World in Disorder

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For much of the post–Cold War era, the world was told it lived under a rules-based international order, one anchored in international law, multilateral institutions, and shared norms of restraint.

That claim now rings hollow. The question confronting the international community today is no longer whether this order is under strain, but whether it still exists at all. The evidence suggests a threshold has been crossed from global order into global disorder.

This is not an abstract debate. It is being answered daily through military interventions,

diplomatic breakdowns, and the open defiance of international legal frameworks. The fragility of this system was already visible during the Iraq crisis, particularly in efforts at the

United Nations to build consensus. Even then, it was evident that the so-called international order lacked an impartial enforcement mechanism. There was law, but no universally binding authority to uphold it.

Fragility, however, is different from collapse. What is unfolding today is something far more profound. Over the past two years, the deterioration of the global system has accelerated dramatically.

What was once obscured by diplomatic language and procedural ambiguity is now openly declared. Major powers, led by the United States, no longer feel compelled to conceal their military, political, financial, or media backing of wars and conflicts. What was once deniable is now asserted openly.

The human consequences have been catastrophic, including mass civilian suffering and actions that much of the world recognizes as genocide. In this context, the moral claims of those who once portrayed themselves as guardians of law and human rights stand exposed as selective and deeply hypocritical.

Even more striking is the erosion of the legal and normative framework itself. The rulings and proceedings of the International Court of Justice are ignored without embarrassment. The International Criminal Court is defunded, delegitimized, and its arrest warrants dismissed. A point has been reached where the military abduction of a head of state can be defended publicly, while international law remains entirely impotent. When the President of the United States declares, "My own morality is international law. There is no international law," it is not merely rhetorical excess. It reflects a worldview in which power supersedes law and force replaces legitimacy.

This shift carries far-reaching consequences. The state that once claimed to underwrite global order has become a primary driver of disorder, and this confrontation is no longer limited to traditional adversaries. It increasingly encompasses allies, regions of influence, and even domestic society.

Three major shifts illustrate this transformation. First, confrontation has been brought home. For decades, U.S. conflicts were largely externalized in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or East Asia. Today, coercive politics have returned to the Western Hemisphere. Venezuela is openly targeted. Military rhetoric now spans Latin America, and even Mexico is threatened under the language of security cooperation. This represents a revival of domination rather than diplomacy. Second, the treatment of allies has fundamentally changed. Longstanding partners in Europe, North America, and Asia are subjected to public pressure, humiliation, and transactional demands rather than consultation and mutual respect. India is told its leadership must personally satisfy the American president. Ukraine's president is publicly mocked and instructed to return with mineral concessions. NATO commitments are treated as conditional, Greenland is discussed in military terms, and allies are coerced rather than engaged. This is not alliance management but raw power politics applied indiscriminately.

Third, while Western-led institutions weaken, alternative centers of power are consolidating influence. The G7 no longer reflects global economic realities. By contrast, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization represent the majority of the world's population and an increasing share of global growth. China is expanding its influence through technological and energy leadership, from renewable infrastructure to electric vehicles. Russia and China, aware that direct military confrontation would consolidate U.S. domestic unity, are instead allowing structural, economic, and institutional forces to erode American primacy.

The result is a United States facing pressure on multiple fronts: adversaries abroad, strained alliances, weakened global institutions, and an increasingly divided domestic society. Internally, political and economic fault lines are widening. Protests against concentrated executive and corporate power are growing. Courts and state governments are resisting federal overreach, including efforts to deploy military force domestically. This convergence of domestic resistance and global confrontation marks a uniquely vulnerable moment in U.S. history.

History offers a cautionary lesson. Declining empires often resort to coercive force in a final attempt to preserve dominance. Such actions rarely stabilize power; they accelerate decline. The last use of power is seldom a renewal. Today, military threats, legal defiance, and coercion of allies are not extending American hegemony. They are signaling its erosion and hastening the emergence of a multipolar world.

That multipolarity is already taking shape. Power will be distributed unevenly across regions, institutions, and economic networks. Some states will lead, others will form blocs, and many will seek influence through non-military means. The transition will be contested, unstable, and legally unmoored. One conclusion is unavoidable: the age of unilateral hegemony is over.

The challenge now facing the international community is stark. How can a world be navigated where norms are openly violated, alliances are transactional, and domestic fragility intersects with global confrontation? This period of disorder will not last forever, but its outcomes will define the next global system. One lesson stands clear: power without law does not produce order. It produces resistance, fragmentation, and ultimately decline.
