

# Redefining the Global Agenda: Old Guard versus New Players



**Moderator**

**A. Craig Copetas**  
Editor at Large, TRT World

**Speakers**

**Karin von Hippel**  
Director-General of the Royal  
United Services Institute

**Stephen Chan**  
Professor, SOAS University

**Gülnur Aybet**  
Senior Advisor to the President  
of the Republic of Turkey

**Pan Wei**  
Professor, Peking University

**Kingsley Makhubela**  
CEO, Brand South Africa

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# **Redefining the Global Agenda: Old Guard versus New Players**

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# **Redefining the Global Agenda: Old Guard versus New Players**

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This is a report on a public session titled “Redefining the Global Agenda: Old Guard versus New Players”, held as part of the TRT World Forum 2017. The views, themes and discussion points expressed in this conference report are those of participants and speakers present at the TRT World Forum 2017, and do not reflect the official view of TRT World Research Centre.



# forum

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- How are emerging powers influencing and reshaping the established global order?
- Are emerging powers a “threat” to the status quo of established powers?
- What opportunities will new global institutions, like the BRICS and China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, provide?
- What challenges lie ahead? What impact will proposals of solidarity between developing nations have on sustainable development?

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# Summary

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The panel 'Redefining the Global Agenda' discussed issues surrounding the established current world order and explored the players in the international arena that have the potential to change and shift the power equilibria. One of the first questions of debate was on defining the established global order to explore the subject more appropriately on a common ground. Participants discussed how countries experiencing significant economic growth in the last decade were regarded as the new players of the international arena. In this regard, the powers that constitute the first circle when it comes to bringing peace and stability and combatting conflicts in different regions around the world were considered to be the leading powerful nations in the world. The phenomenon of problem solving in the face of political and socioeconomic challenges was elaborately discussed by shedding light on poverty, social exclusion, global security and creating a more equitable world.

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The moderator, Craig Copetas began the panel discussion by highlighting current global affairs and in particular focused on the industrialisation of anti-terrorism, which has led to the foundation of the established economic order being shaken. The question of whether there is a correlation between intentionally instigating demolition and rebuilding for the sake of an investment opportunity was raised.

The first speaker, Kingsley Makhubela emphasised that the root causes of extremism should be addressed. He said there existed a 'security dilemma' and proposed taking away the resources that are used to prepare for waging wars. Karin von Hippel made the case that despite being the principle defender of a liberal rules-based international order, the United States has been hesitant to interfere in Syria due to its past disastrous experience in Iraq. They now regret not having intervened because of unfortunate shockwaves such as the refugee crisis and the emergence of DAESH (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). Gülnur Aybet critically analysed the US and EU's relationship with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and highlighted how Turkey's security interests are undermined.

Pan Wei addressed the moderator's comments about China not being democratic enough, strongly putting forward the view that Chinese people do not like to be labelled as undemocratic but see themselves as a more successful democracy than many other countries. The final speaker, Stephen Chan claimed the big question now was to ask what a post Western world would look like? Who is going to replace the old guard since Donald Trump is not ready to become the guardian of the international order? The panel emphasised the inherent problems in viewing change and reform from a Western lens and questioned whether the inclusion of new powers into the strategic agenda would see the liberal, world order, descend into chaos.

Institutions that form a part of the old order were raised as a main concern because whilst the world is changing, institutions do not make real reforms and are cruising on autopilot. The periods of post-World Wars were emphasised by the following claims; after World War II, possible wars were prevented, however during the post-Cold War period the world order failed to embrace existing diversity. The question of achieving greater equality was responded to with strong notions that the Security Council of the United Nations should be reformed. Future prospects were discussed including the potential for a unipolar world that could disseminate equality in fair trade and in which openness and exchange could be promoted extensively.



Moderator, Editor-at-Large for TRT World, Craig Copetas, kicked off the discussion for the session "Redefining the Global Agenda: Old Guard versus New Players"

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# Introduction

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Our world is in constant flux and can no longer privilege the few, while ignoring the majority. The emergence of new global powers - with their own interests and demands - challenges the inertia of the current international status quo. It can no longer be ignored. The economic indicators all point to BRICS countries, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, surpassing the 'old guard' whose global socio-economic domination was often taken for granted. These 'new players' are hungry, dynamic and co-operating with each other to reshape the foundations of the international economic order. This reimagining of our world order is putting pressure on post-war organisations, like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the United Nations (UN) whose structural realities are outdated, archaic and obsolete. However, with prudence and understanding, both 'old guards' and 'new players' need to form partnerships and, together, build a new global order that reflects these new realities.

Consequently, this session began by providing a general outline of the term 'global agenda.' It did so by deconstructing it, mainly, through a political and economic lens as well as by acknowledging critical global developments and transitions. The term 'redefining' was used to emphasise the transformative era the world is currently undergoing. Truly, it is a fundamental shift in the international and regional balance of power. To address these, and other critical related issues, our esteemed speakers, representing differing viewpoints, discussed ways, means and consequences of this shift. In this context, as a consequence of (regional) economic development and political stabilisation, the question of whether new players in the international arena are able to speak more authoritatively was discussed in detail. Furthermore, other speakers touched upon the challenges hegemonic powers have been facing, especially in the preceding decade, as their monopoly on power has shrunk. Still, other scholars have examined the inherent dis-functioning of international organisations and the efforts to reform them. Finally, this report is a general summary of how the 'Global Agenda' is being redefined, which, in total, contains the following four main themes: 1) key challenges facing the established global order; 2) learning from other countries' histories; 3) shifting the world order; and 4) the globalism discourse.

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# Key Challenges Facing Established Global Order

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There are many reasons why the old guard is increasingly being seen as powerless and outdated. From the global challenges that it has failed to adequately respond to, or its various foreign-policy mishaps including military interventionism, the 'old guard' has not contributed to peace and stability, in the post-1945 period. For instance, concerning military intervention, the US - while posing as the leader of world's 'liberal-rules-based-order' has, controversially, not always contributed to ending war. Karin Von Hippel pointed to the US' role in Syria, as an instance where President Obama did not want to interfere robustly. His rationale was that doing so would prevent the disintegration of the Syrian state - similar to what occurred in Iraq. However, by not interfering in Syria - out of that fear, a similar level of disintegration occurred. In fact, arguably much worse, since not enough was done to stop the Assad regime's atrocities. In this particular case, a weak resolve by the US led to the Syrian civil war festering and DAESH being able to grow, incubate and plan attacks elsewhere.



Karin von Hippel, Director General of RUSI, talking about why the US is hesitant to interfere in Syria due to experiences in Iraq.

One of the biggest impacts of the Syrian civil war, has been to cause the largest refugee crisis the world has ever seen. Positively, this has also led to global public awareness about the refugee crisis, their rights and our collective responses as members of the international community. Yet, responses of certain countries have been negligible, when they refuse to take on their global responsibility, which is leading to a rapidly growing crisis. Europe has not done enough. Contrarily, whilst Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon have taken the brunt of the refugees, housing millions, the support the EU has promised has not been forthcoming. More needs to be done before these metaphorical dams burst - unleashing a massive wave of people streaming across Europe in hopes for sanctuary. As this crisis continues to build, the rhetoric surrounding refugees and migrants in Europe and the US has become negative. The powers commonly deemed to form the old guard are no longer welcoming others. Though the response, from a relief perspective has been particularly limited, the multicultural members are spending a lot of resources in building stronger military power. The system has identified itself as being unable to adequately address the challenges that currently exist.



Senior Advisor to the President of the Republic of Turkey, Gülnur Aybet, criticised the Western institutions specifically NATO which still lives in a 90s reality.

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# NATO and US

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One of the most heavily criticised transnational alliances formed in the post-World War II era, is NATO.

Gülnur Aybet, Professor of International Relations, stressed the irrelevant role NATO plays, as opposed to when it was founded. Noting that during the Cold War, it had a clear and concrete purpose, and following this there were extensive speculations about whether or not NATO would die out. However, it still remains an inter-governmental military alliance between several North American and European states, abiding by a collective defense principle. Moreover, three of the countries in NATO hold status as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Looking back to the period of the 90s, the alliance had its shining moment and engaged in operations to assure collective security, humanitarian interventions and was putting wars to an end. Aybet went on to strongly assert that, currently, NATO along with many other Western institutions, is undergoing 'fatigue and look back to the period of the 90s, when it had a relevant role to play'. She pointed to this as being an example of a Western institution reflecting an outdated power dynamic state, still assuming the importance of its political role in shaping the global agenda, when it does not have the will, nor the means to live up to that responsibility.

Furthermore, NATO's relationship with Turkey can be described as an instance where a global alliance is misreading a new and emerging player. This shows a lack of understanding about the changing nature of global powers. It can be argued that there is an expectation about the roles certain countries and allies like Turkey ought to have, which is derived from the way the order was set up. This can be linked to the strategy of the US being able to balance bigger powers when the liberal world order was set up after 1945 and the Soviet Union or China posed a threat. This strategy was also extended to Russia, where the ethos was to attempt to balance powers, as it was difficult to control them. In the case of Western nations that established the post-1945 liberal world order, it can be argued that they are still looking to maintain power, resulting in confusion in how best to accomplish that. Having to identify local actors and allies is difficult and a dramatic shift away from previous tactics such as employing proxy fighters on the ground, commonly employed during the Cold War era.

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# The question of Western Democracy and Reform

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When suggesting a structured counterbalance to the old world order, many options have been discussed. The esteemed panelists agreed that it is not possible to do everything at once. And, instead of a radical shift in the way the global agenda is handled, reformation and small changes are crucial. Stephen Chan proposed a reformation of the Security Council of the United Nations, as if greater equality and participation is to be made possible, that can be regarded as a clear step forward in ultimately being able to make strategic decisions to do with life, death, war and peace. Referring to other significant major shifts in the world, examples such as the rise of the G20 were discussed, as a shift in the way world affairs were deliberated. Rising above the tools of the G7 and the G8 – Chan argued the same type of reform that was bold enough to be considered change making, should be introduced in the case of the UN Security Council.

The current role of the US, especially after the election of Trump, which is coinciding with the rise of the far-right in Europe, can be viewed as a reaction to the declining liberal world order and its values. The way in which values have been promoted over the last fifty years is being questioned, leaving many emerging nations with the question: ‘Are values promoted to exert control, or are they promoted to share them?’ In the case of the West, they established the values pillar, however this is being challenged continuously by other key players.

Institutional reform is considered to be one of the main solutions to change the way people view the world. With the clash of confessional thought, being an evident religious clash internationally, Chan sees the solution in challenging values that each country holds very close to their hearts.

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# Learning from Other Countries' Histories

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The world is facing new threats every day. States, NGOs and international organisations are struggling to deal with challenges that are making life difficult for humanity. In order to find adequate solutions for these threats and problems, the fundamental causes of those occurrences have to be traced. Although it is more of a challenge to shed light on the grounds of this period being an age of uncertainty, some of the main causes have been identified as follows: poverty, social exclusion, a global security dilemma and the shift to the far-right. In this context, it has been ascertained that we, collectively as humanity, are failing to address the phenomenon.

By reframing what are conventionally viewed as military challenges combined with the perpetual violence seen in today's world, Kingsley Makhubela argues these are all in actuality socio-economic challenges. Without removing resources from preparing for war and addressing the root causes of what makes people have the propensity to resort to violence, it is not possible to see the potential for change. Moreover, Makhubela highlights that there are very few long-term benefits of building a huge military establishment. In a prescient cautionary note, the 34th President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower conveyed the following during his 'Military-Industrial Complex' Speech in 1961: *"We now stand ten years past the midpoint of a century that has witnessed four major wars among great nations. Three of these involved our own country. Despite these holocausts America is today the strongest, the most influential and the most productive nation in the world. Understandably proud of this pre-eminence, we yet realise that America's leadership and prestige depend, not merely upon our unmatched material progress, riches and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment. We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted*



The CEO of Brand South Africa, Kingsley Makhubela, addressed the root of extremism as follows: poverty, social exclusion, the growing divide between the poor and the rich and the shift to the far right.

*influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.*" Unfortunately, his stern warning against unbridled militarisation seems to have been ignored.

Although the majority of the impacts are felt by those who are running the military system, major powers that regard themselves as hegemon are unable to understand the fundamental factors pushing people to violence. This gap creation between the major powers investing in these resources and the reality of the marginalisation of subsections of society is related to a multitude of social and economic challenges. The United States has been involved in multiple wars in the 20th and 21st century, examples would be the Second World War, Vietnam War, Korean War, and Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Obviously, the main arguments of the US have been to bring global peace, security and democracy, but when the loss and suffering is taken into account, it could be viewed that things have not gone as planned. In the end, there are multiple countries and regions whose population would prefer to remain living in the period before the US intervened. Therefore, new players in the international arena should continuously be aware of what has occurred in other countries' histories in order to prevent poor decisions that lead to similar results.

Currently, we are living in a world where weapon systems are being developed in large numbers and at an alarming rate. The false assertion that wars feed themselves could be justified as insecurity is a phenomenon that remains, following the events of the past century. With the increase of insecurity and uncertainty, more politicians are choosing to spend more state resources investing in the weapons industry. To sum up the given arguments; war marginalises growth and creates perpetual insecurity preventing the creation of a new global order.

Another lesson that should be learnt from the old global order is that it has responded with positive elements to assure peace and prevent conflicts in the post World War II period. Nevertheless, what has been disregarded is that this world order failed to embrace and understand diversity that exists among ethnic and religious groups. To back up the mentioned argument, one could refer to conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Libya, Rohingya and even Syria. In order to adopt a balanced perception, it would be more adequate to allege that hegemon do not always play a negative role. Their intentions to interfere in conflicts is regarded as having multiple objectives and reasoning – certainly not always altruistic.

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# Shifting the World Order: The Potential of New Players

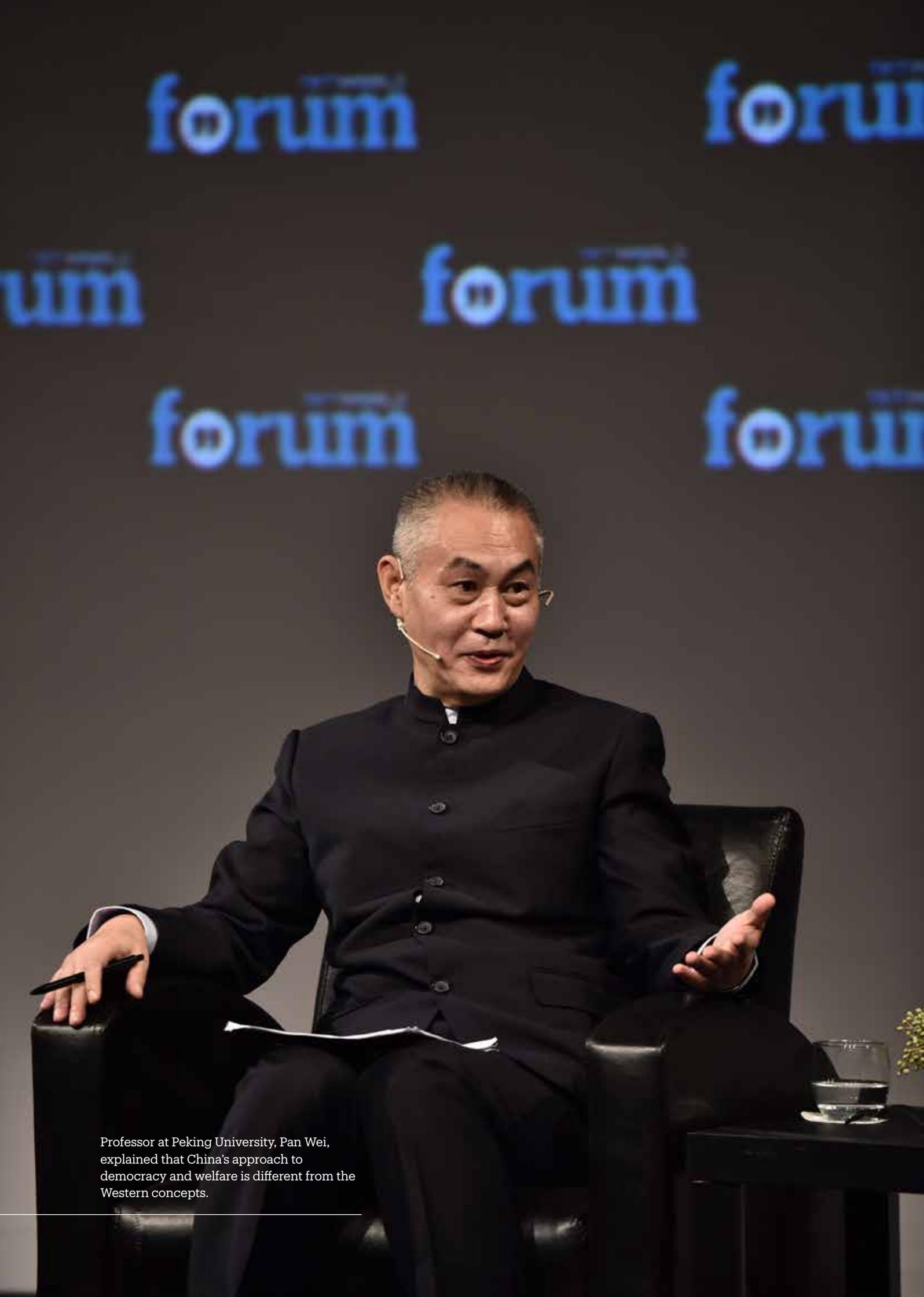
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With regards to the potential of new players in the international arena, it has been generally predicated that there is a shift in the focus points of developing countries. For instance, when referring to the biggest impact of the Syrian conflict, it is considered to be a fact that one of the largest refugee crises broke out as a result. Turkey raised awareness and took serious actions by accepting, providing accommodation and adopting policies to integrate Syrian refugees into society. Regardless of Turkey being a neighbouring country of Syria, it has adopted an open door policy and the country has proved that there are other ways to make use of its potential and become a prominent actor in the international arena. Gülnur Aybet argues that when countries, such as Turkey, promote their values in their moral hinterland, it is not to exert control but to genuinely share those values.

In the shifting world order, what has to be done is to suggest a structured counterbalance to the world order. New players should avoid doing everything abruptly. Stephen Chan, a political science and international relations Professor at SOAS university is in favour of reforming the Security Council of the United Nations in order to achieve greater equality and participation and to make strategic decisions that have to do with life, death, war and peace, because it will only then be possible to step forward and address other issues. What also has to be emphasised is that the G20 for example is becoming more important as it stands for a major shift in global agendas. When institutional reform is pointed out, this also stands for a serious change in how people view the world. Therefore, new players are obliged with taking into account the effects of institutional changes on societies.



Professor at SOAS University, Stephen Chan, stated the necessity of reforming the United Nations Security Council.



Professor at Peking University, Pan Wei, explained that China's approach to democracy and welfare is different from the Western concepts.

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Last, but not least, great stress has been laid on the importance of China as an economic global power by Pan Wei, who is a Professor at the School of International Studies at Peking University. He asserted that China operates differently from the West in the sense that it regards the people's welfare instead of only having the power to elect leaders. For China, the two most important domestic values are peace and development. In this context, the proposed principles by China are as follows, first of all major powers should agree not to impose their own social values on others which is the most important lesson the world has learned from the post-Cold War era. In addition, China is attaching importance on tightening its belt to work on infrastructure, as it believes that the most important difference among underdeveloped and developed countries is infrastructure. Therefore, according to China, by investing in its infrastructure, it will be able to support states in pursuing international trade. All in all, China's proposal is that all major countries work together to build infrastructure in the underdeveloped world. Since China has been able to experience a huge increase in its economic power in a violent world, it has the capacity to put forward this very initiative. Within this context, putting forward such an initiative is what new players ought to achieve in order to open the floodgates for underdeveloped states in a new world order.

To sum up, China is not an enemy to the liberal world order. Despite its economic influence, the country is often isolated from the actions and coalitions that exist within the current world order. For example, China is currently not recognised as a market economy within the standards of the World Trade Organisation. The country is also suffering from both a high-tech embargo as well as an arms embargo. Positive developments in this world cannot be boiled down to the advancement of liberal or market mechanisms, the end goal should be that the private sector and public sector work together to promote peace and development in the world. In order to reduce the bias among each other, conflict should not be fostered among civilisations. Social values should not be imposed. This is not to say that China attaches different meanings to democracy and liberty, but it is mainly about priorities. There are different priorities for the Chinese - it wants to see the welfare and well-being of the common people.

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# The Globalism Discourse

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In an in-depth discussion about the future of the global agenda, globalism - as a group of ideologies advocating for globalisation must be highlighted. Referring to the definition provided by Joseph Nye, this refers to an explanation of a world that is characterised by networks of connections spanning multi continental distances. Stephen Chan argues that despite being named as a discipline of international relations, there is not a huge sense of international, in the way countries view and accept one another's actions and philosophies. This links back to Huntington's Clash of Civilisations as a model of international relations that is criticised for writing the rest of the world out of history and instead focusing on a Western-centric world. In order to counter dominant ideas around every civilisation viewing their way of thinking as the correct way, the option to reduce conceit over views must be dismissed and different ways of thinking must be mixed. Without this, shared objectives, let alone peace will not be attainable.

By doing so, this transcends solely political actions and foreign policy and comes back to balancing different confessional beliefs, different theologies and approaches to God and the universe. These are the topics and rhetoric that are debated, discussed and often become points of contention in today's world. Linking this to decisions made by politicians around international relations and policy, we are left to ask whether this twin track is ever thought through. In order to negotiate effectively with the other side, you need to know what they are thinking, what they want and what they are aspiring to. Seeking the solution in ultimately breaking out of current mindsets and opening up to a true exchange between theological values are the moral underpinnings in order to talk about reform and change.

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The case of positive change and reform is embodied in the example of post-Apartheid South Africa. Changes were introduced through the formal process of reform and lessons can be taken from this in order to occur within the new global order. Taking the G20 as a prime example in today's world, it is evident that the G7 countries are determining the welfare of all other countries around the world. This has gradually expanded to include twenty countries. Subsequently there is an increasing opinion that more countries should have a voice within that forum.

Connecting the theory of multiculturalism and globalism alongside the current traditional structures in place such as NATO, which rely specifically on one world view is increasingly necessary in order to envision a different future. Many social scientists are arguing that investing in resources to manage the diversity is crucial to preventing potential conflict. The system that currently exists fails to understand and reflect the multiculturalism that is required in the governance of today's world.

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# Conclusion

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In sum, the inherent problems in viewing change and reform from a Western lens must be questioned, including whether the presence of new powers into the strategic agenda would see the liberal world order descend into chaos. Institutions that form a part of the old order were raised as a main concern because the world is changing. They have been criticised for not making real reforms and instead seen as cruising on autopilot. The period of post-World Wars were emphasised by the following claims; after World War II, possible wars were prevented, however during the post-Cold War period the world order failed to embrace existing diversity. The question of achieving greater equality was responded to with strong notions that the Security Council of the United Nations should be reformed. Once the answers to these questions about reform are discussed with the right players, old and new, the potential for a unipolar world that could disseminate equality in fair trade and in which openness and exchange may have the potential to be promoted extensively.