

Dr. Chandra Muzaffar

The Importance of Chinese and Russian Engagement in Southwest Asia for the Region and the World

This is the edited transcript of the presentation of Chandra Muzaffar to Panel 4, “The Necessary Philosophical Foundations for the New Paradigm,” of the Schiller Institute’s April 15-16 Conference, “Without the Development of All Nations, There Can Be No Lasting Peace for the Planet.” Dr. Muzaffar is a Malaysian political scientist, Islamic reformist, and activist. He is the founder and President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST). Subheads have been added.



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Peace be with you! The agreement reached between Saudi Arabia and Iran, through the efforts of the Chinese government, could well be a turning point in global politics, a turning point in international relations. We know that all three parties involved—the Chinese government, the Saudi government, and the Iranian government—have started implementing this accord. There have been meetings in Tehran, in Riyadh, and in Beijing. What they’re trying to do now is to implement some of the major dimensions of this decision that has been made.

A Wider Rapprochement Beyond Saudi Arabia and Iran

It is significant because it would mean that the animosity between these two very important nations in the Muslim world, Iran and Saudi Arabia, may subside. And if this change takes place, there is a certain degree of understanding that develops, then I think it will impact upon a huge segment of the Muslim world because of the importance of these two nations. And there are proxy wars, semi-proxy wars, in a number of countries in the Arab world and even outside the Arab world, which are linked to Saudi Arabia and Iran. That may also decrease. And there may be some attempt to establish closer links between countries like Saudi Arabia and Syria, Syria and Türkiye, between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. These things may happen. We don’t know. But there is a possibility.

It is also possible that eventually this rapprochement

engineered by China could lead to a better understanding within that whole region of the relations between Israel and the Arab world, Palestinians in particular. That may happen. We don’t know. There are these possibilities.

There hasn’t been any moment in recent history in West Asia and North Africa that has been more hopeful, in terms of creating an atmosphere of understanding, of amity amongst the different nations.

But it is not just China. I think we have to look at what is happening in terms of yet another big power. This

is Russia. Like China, Russia has become an important player in that region. In fact, Russia has had a much longer relationship with this region than China. Don’t forget the important role that Russia, at that time the Soviet Union, played in the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt, one of the major developmental projects in the world, which has served millions and millions of people for decades.

And Russia, which had engineering and financial aspects of that project, has also had good relations with Syria for a very long while. [Former Syrian President] Hafez Assad, the father of Bashar Assad, was very close to the Soviet Union. And as we know in recent times, when the Syrian government was under tremendous pressure—the threat of regime change, all sorts of forces, jihadist rebels, all of them involved, and you had people in Washington and Britain and Türkiye and others backing all these groups—the government of Bashar Assad depended upon Russia to help stabilize its position, and the Russians played a big role from 2015 onward. So, Russia has also been part of that region and has been increasingly important in the politics of West Asia and North Africa.

Allowing Nations To Decide Their Future

What is significant for us, those of us who are looking at the politics of the region, is that these two big powers, China and Russia, are different from the United States of America in their dealings with the countries in that region in two different ways.

They are different in the sense that they do not seek to hegemonize the region. To give you an example, if you look at this recent accord between Saudi Arabia and Iran, actually the peace plan was based upon an understanding that the two leaders in the region—Saudi leader King Abdullah and [Akbar Hashemi] Rafsanjani, the leader of Iran at that time—a number of years ago, they had developed an understanding and they had worked out a peace deal. What China did was to revive that peace deal. They were not imposing their will upon Saudi Arabia and Iran. They revived the deal, and that deal became the basis of that accord that we are now witnessing.

So you see, it's a different approach. It is not imposing one's will, but it's allowing the people themselves to decide, and you [are] facilitating the process. This is what the Chinese did.

In the case of Russia, quite apart from its involvement in the developmental projects in both Egypt and Syria, we know that when Syria was under threat, the regime, the government was under tremendous pressure, they increased, they escalated their military involvement. It's true; [Russia] sent troops and fighter jets and all the rest of it. But the moment the government was able to stabilize its position, they reduced their troop deployment, they reduced the military involvement, which again shows a certain sensitivity to the integrity, the territorial sovereignty of Syria.

Upholding the Sovereignty of Nations

This, I think, is something that we have to keep in mind: that in dealing with other nation states, it is so important to uphold their sovereignty, the sovereignty

of the other parties, the other states. And both China and Russia seem to be sensitive to this. This, I think, is a very important principle in international relations, recognizing sovereignty, protecting sovereignty—dealing with states, helping them when help is needed, but by recognizing sovereignty, upholding their sovereignty. At the same time, if you look at what they have done—in the case of China's peace plans, and in the case of Russia—assistance of a different kind, military assistance, but both taking into account the will of the people.

This, I think, is critical. And I hope that if this continues, if they continue to deal with countries in the region that way, both Russia and China, they'll be able to make a major contribution to that region. Don't forget, this region has been the cockpit of conflict in the world for such a long while, and it may bring about a tremendous change, a transformation, where all these countries that are part of that region would be able to concentrate upon economic development, social change. They'd be able to bring about an atmosphere which would be very different to what we have seen for so many decades.

This is what the people need. This is what the people have been waiting for. That's why it is so important that this rapprochement succeeds. It is so important that these two countries, China and Russia, understand the sensitivities of the region and the people, and function in such a manner that they would enhance the independence and integrity of the states in the region and their own development. And at the same time, they would contribute toward a new world order and a different international atmosphere.

Thank you very much.

Liam Murphy

Africa Without Colonialism

This is the edited transcript of the presentation by Liam Murphy to Panel 2, "The Scientific Mission of the One Mankind" of the March 11, 2023 Schiller Institute conference, "To End Colonialism: A Mission for All Youth." Mr. Murphy is a member of the La-Rouche Youth Movement. Subheads and embedded links have been added.

Watch the entire March 11 Schiller Institute conference [here](#).

The question I want to focus on



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today is the question of, if a post-colonial world is possible; and what are the possibilities that exist within a post-colonial world? Specifically, in the frame of what is possible in Africa.

I want to ask my audience here, first: Do you believe that a post-colonial world is actually possible today? OK—well, there are a lot of people who don't think it's possible. I want to say that not only do I think it's possible, but in many ways, we are actually already here. But the