

# From a Unipolar Order to a Better Multipolar International Order

by Zhang Weiwei

Zhang Weiwei, professor of International Relations at Fudan University, in Yangpu, Shanghai, China, addressed the opening panel of the May 24-25 [international Schiller Institute conference](#), “A Beautiful Vision for Humanity in Times of Great Turbulence.” He is director of the China Institute at Fudan, and is one of the most prominent thinkers in China, author of many books, including the best-selling trilogy on his country, whose last volume, published in May 2016, is *The China Horizon: Glory and Dream of a Civilizational State*. Prof. Zhang spoke on panel one, titled, “Strategic Challenges and the Emerging New Order.” This is the edited transcript of his remarks, with subheads added.



The Schiller Institute  
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Thank you, Madame LaRouche, for this kind invitation to speak at this important forum. Hello everyone; greetings from Shanghai and China.

I will first make a general observation on the shifting global order, and then I will try to briefly present three what I call “case studies” to illustrate some positive things from Asia, from China, to reshape the global order.

First, concerning this shift from unipolarity to multipolarity. To my mind, this world of multipolarity is already there. If you look at the total GDP of the BRICS members vis-à-vis the G7 members, the BRICS are already bigger than the G7. So, this is already there. But the point is, this multipolar world order is still to come. So, we all should contribute our bit to create this kind of new order: a more just, more democratic, more pro-development, more peaceful, more cooperative order. That’s not easy, but we should try, and try hard.

In this regard, I’m thinking of the role of China, Russia, and the United States. If you look at Russia, for

instance, its military operation in Ukraine is very controversial; yet, its declared objective to undermine or overthrow the unipolar world order is widely understood, and even supported by many countries, especially in the Global South. So, I call Russia revolutionary.

China’s role is, I would say, as a reformer in the sense that we think that order is something we can make use of for its good part, while at the same time, we try to minimize its possible defects. So, China is a reformer. But China and Russia have in common one objective: We want to create a new world order, and we are forward-looking.

The United States during the time of [President] Joe Biden, who was the representative of this unipolarity, defended that unipolarity. Yet with [President] Donald Trump in power, obviously he feels that this order creates too much of a burden for the United States; holding up the U.S. economy and causing de-industrialization. So, if China is a reformer and Russia is a revolutionary, the United States today is what I would call an abandoner of that order.

But the difference between the United States and China and Russia, is that the United States is looking backward. Donald Trump looked to 19th-Century commercialism, and then to the old Yalta system of big power and the divide-and-rule of global affairs. This is something we should try to resist.

So, this is my overall observation of the shift from unipolarity to multipolarity; from a unipolar order to a better, multipolar international order.

## Case Study: China and ASEAN

Now, at this time of great turbulence, I try to tell you some good news from Asia and China for this possible new world order. I will present three cases for your ref-

erence.

The first is about Asia versus Europe. I remember back in the year 2022-23, the Munich Security Conference issued a report describing the world as “lose-lose.” In all fairness, we should say that it’s a lose-lose for Europe, in part because of the role played by the United States, by the European Union (EU)—which unfortunately lost its independence.

But in Asia, particularly in China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), I call this region obviously a win-win for the past four decades at least. This win-win could provide a kind of model, so to speak, for the rest of the world, for the EU, and the United States. Because this win-win success rests on three pillars: The first pillar is development. It’s about a free trade area, free trade zone. People’s livelihood first. Whatever you do, focus on improving people’s living standards. So now, this region is experiencing the world’s fastest economic growth. In the case of China, it’s 5% a year, which is more than 30% of the global growth. In other words, out of every additional \$100 increase in the global economy, \$30 comes from the Chinese economy.

The second political security pillar is that China respects ASEAN’s neutrality. ASEAN is always in the driver’s seat for different initiatives, such as ASEAN+5, ASEAN+10, ASEAN+3 security dialogues. China also accepted the ASEAN nuclear-free zone.

Then, another pillar is the civilizational dialogue, which is very important. We emphasize Asian wisdom, Chinese wisdom, ASEAN wisdom, peaceful solution to disputes, strategic patience—two steps forward, one step backward—it is not a big deal. Strategic patience. We can do that. So, all these are played out in the end in this region and become a win-win scenario.

If we compare this with the EU versus the United States as a major player, it’s almost, for the United States, the famous philosophy of NATO—keep America in, keep Russia out, keep Germany down. It’s not the right way from an Asian perspective with regard to this whole region of Europe. European security must take into consideration Russia’s legitimate security concerns. So, this is my first case.

### **Case Study: BRI**

The second case is obviously China’s BRI—Belt and Road Initiative. There is already \$1 trillion in-

vested; and over 5,000 projects across the Global South. That shows both hard power and soft power from the Global South—notably from China. For the hard power, China provides a total solution for infrastructure and many projects in the Global South. For instance, we created, really from zero to completion, petrochemical industries for quite a few countries, like Sudan, Southern Sudan, Kazakhstan, etc. Within three years, going from oil drilling, to refineries, to petrochemical industries. So, with this kind of manufactured industrial capacity, we help these Global South countries through the BRI Initiative.

More importantly, behind this initiative is China’s idea, which I think is very good, for the new global order to come; it’s called, “Discussing Together, Building Together, Benefiting Together.” In other words, a country or a company is, on its own initiative, joining the BRI. No one compels you or forces you to join this initiative. In other words, this is win-win-win for all the parties concerned. That’s my second case.

### **Green Deal, Anti-Desert, Oasis Plan**

The third case is more exciting, perhaps for many countries in the West. It’s about China’s Green Deal. The good news is, by now China has successfully achieved and completed it. In other words, the Green Deal, as we know, gets a lot of fanfare, especially with the EU and Western countries, yet not much has been achieved. In China, it’s done.

Today China’s Green energy costs less than traditional energy. And also, the greenhouse emissions, for the first time for a country as large as China, have gone down. It’s really a miracle. Greenhouse emissions have gone down. Don’t forget that China is the largest manufacturing power in the world, with 25% of global manufacturing, up to 30% very soon. Yet, despite this increased productivity, industry, and other manufacturing sectors, China’s greenhouse emissions have gone down. This is mainly due to the rise of renewable energy—solar power, wind power, and others. China is now the largest producer of EVs [electric vehicles], solar panels, and renewable energy.

Another concrete, very important example, because Madame LaRouche mentioned this again and again, this very great idea of the Oasis Plan. I think it was already raised back in the 1970s.

Now, a good project has been more or less successfully done in China. It’s called the Taklamakan Desert

Project. This desert is in [China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region](#). It's huge; almost as large as Germany; the size of three South Koreas. Yet, it has been encircled with a green belt, so the sandstorms no longer move outside this green belt. And within this green belt, China has built a lot of reforestation and other ecological restoration projects.

For instance, I can give you some examples: China has built 1.2 to 1.3 million solar panels which have been installed in this region. They are called photovoltaic farms, which make use of the sunshine to produce electricity. Also, with these kinds of solar panel farms, what you have in the shaded area is that you can grow drought-resistant vegetation. This is very important. This green economy is now there. Desert into farmland; desert into green energy production centers are already there. Also, water management systems—all kinds of ways to save water and create vegetation species which can be grown with less water. This is very positive.

If you look at the crises in West Africa and the

Middle East, a lot of these crises have to do with the shortage of water, desertification, etc. But now, with solar power, desalination—which calls for a lot of power generation—but now with solar panels, with this renewable energy, we can do that. We have the technology, we have the technical know-how.

So, I think if we can achieve peace and development in that region of West Africa and the Middle East—which I know is very difficult—but if we can one day, hopefully earlier, restore some kind of peace and common objectives for development, China at least will have the technical knowhow, we have the political will, we have different good practices and technologies to put this green Oasis Plan into operation. Of course, we need the preconditions we have all worked very hard on, to restore peace in that region—especially in the Middle East and West Africa, now the Middle East in particular.

This is my brief presentation. I hope to end my speech with this slightly more positive note for everyone. Thank you very much.