

# **America Leads West's Decline: An Opportunity Muslims Must Take Advantage Of**

By Abdul Majeed Bhatti

Translated from Al-Waie Magazine Issue 418, Dhul-Qi'dah 1442 AH / June 2021 CE

A lot has been written about the decline of the West over the years but the topic has not been taken too seriously and in some cases even dismissed by eminent Western scholars like Robert Kagan in his book, "The world America made". [1] However, the present Covid-19 crisis has added renewed impetus to the debate. Coronavirus has not only struck at the heart of Western civilization revealing deep structural flaws—both in Western societies and the international system they preside over—but the virus threatens the very essence of Western dominance. Writing in the Observer, the famous columnist Simon Tisdall raised the following question about the current Covid-19 crisis "Is this one of those historic moments when the world changes permanently, when the balance of political and economic power shifts decisively?" [2]

## **Western civilization reaches a momentous turning point**

Almost a year on from Tisdall posing the question about whether Covid-19 is a turning point for Western supremacy, Foreign Policy magazine interviewed some of the world's leading thinkers about their views. Opinion appears somewhat divided. Professor John Ikenberry of Princeton believes that the pandemic will increase the instability of the West and precipitate "the fragility of democratic institutions" and the "precariousness of Enlightenment-era civilization". [3] Robin Niblett, of Chatham House, sees the West losing its economic dominance. According to Niblett, China's economic growth is "turbocharged" to become "the world's largest economy" and he readily accepts that "East Asia has become the epicenter of global economic growth". [4] Kishore Mahbubani, of the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute, is more forthright in his assessment that the crisis has shifted power from West to East. He argues "numbers [Covid-19 deaths] don't lie. Behind them lies the much bigger story of the shift of competence from West to East. Western societies were once known for their respect for science and rationality. Donald Trump has literally pulled the mask off that illusion." [5]

Stephen Walt, professor of international relations at the Harvard Kennedy School, admits that Covid-19 "has accelerated the shift in power from West to East" but does not believe this will profoundly alter Western dominance. [6] Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, argues in similar fashion "the pandemic will not fundamentally reshape international relations". [7] These assessments are also echoed by Joseph Nye, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School. He thinks that globalization forged and administered by the West, especially America will continue—albeit the style will change. [8].

Whilst none of these thinkers is forecasting the collapse of Western civilization, there is a broad consensus that prevalent situation presents a major challenge to Western supremacy and some power has already shifted from West to East. Leaving aside, vested institutional interests that muzzles scholars for expressing their real opinions, the business of predicting fall of civilizations is fraught with difficulty. To mitigate such challenges, the best starting point is to assess the underlying trends eroding confidence in Western dominance prior to the pandemic. And the best approach in terms of evaluating West's decline is to examine the response of America (the leading state of the West) to these trends. This will establish whether America—and indeed the West—is in decline.

## **History provides a guide to understand the decline of nations**

It is interesting to note that a few Western scholars have postulated innovative theories that envisage the end of Western dominance through America's decline. Paul Kennedy theorizes that America's overseas military commitments spurred by deficit spending are indicative of America's impending decline. [9] Other scholars base their assessments on the cyclical nature of history. In 1997, two amateur historians, William Strauss and Neil Howe, in their book "The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy" claimed that in about 2008 the US

would enter a period of crisis that would peak in the 2020s. [10] According to Peter Turchin, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Connecticut, the world goes through bouts of a secular cycle every two to three hundred years. This is where labor supply outstrips demand, products become cheap, and wealth inequality increases between the very rich and the masses. Subsequently, infighting ensues between the elites, and misery of the poor increases in magnitude. Society enters a destructive phase and finally collapses. Turchin, also spoke of a much shorter cycle of 50 years, which is just as destructive. Based on his study of US history, Turchin predicted in 2010 that the next short cycle is due in 2020 but it will coincide with the longer cycle causing unprecedented chaos. [11]

The billionaire hedge fund owner, Ray Dalio, has developed a theory similar to Turchin, which he prefers to call the long-debt cycle. From Dalio's standpoint, this cycle occurs every 50 to 75 years and exhibits four notable features: upswing in innovation, a deeply divided political elite at home, abroad very little cooperation between nations, and a rising challenger. The last long-debt cycle ended in 1945, after the Great Depression had provoked Germany to challenge Britain's world order. Britain won the war, but lost its global position to America, which established a new political and economic order based on the Bretton Woods agreements. According to Dalio, 2020 is the end of the long-debt cycle and will produce a radical restructuring of the world economy with China on top. [12, 13] Decades before Turchin and Dalio, Oswald Spengler in 1922 boldly foretold the death of Western civilization and was adamant that the West had entered its final season i.e. winter.

Centuries before Western thinkers espoused theories to explain the birth and death of dynasties and civilizations, Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century described in his Muqaddimah four cyclical stages (establish, growth, decline, and collapse) that illuminated the forces behind the rise and fall of dynasties and civilizations. Khaldun expected the cycle to repeat every 120 years. The historian Arnold Toynbee was so impressed by Khaldun's Muqaddimah that he remarked "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind". [14] An exhaustive explanation and application of the foregoing theories is beyond the scope of this paper: however, some parameters like political dysfunction, wealth inequality, and the rise of a challenger to the incumbent state will be loosely employed to evaluate the probability of America's displacement from world affairs.

### **America's leads the decline of the West**

There are several reasons for choosing America over Europe as a case study to appraise the decline of the West. First, since 1945 America is the world's foremost state and after the demise of the Soviets in 1991, it is the only super power in the contemporary period. During the age of bipolarity—Soviet-US rivalry (cold war)—Europe was a mere bystander. Additionally, as a product of the detente between US and Soviet Union and American pressure, old Europe— Britain, France Belgium and others—lost direct control over many colonies. Second, Europe's economic strength and security have been exclusively moulded by America through the Marshall Plan, deployment of US troops on the continent, and the establishment of NATO. In other words, American military and economic power has subdued war on the continent, deterred Russia from venturing into Europe, and transformed Europe into a bastion of peace and stability. Table 1.0 shows the comparisons in nominal GDP and military expenditure amongst different powers in 2019. Clearly to this day, America leads Europe in both areas. With the occurrence of brexit and an increase in competition between UK and the EU, these indicators are likely to deteriorate underscoring EU's weakness.

	US	China	Russia	EU	Germany	UK	France
Nominal GDP	\$21.4tn	\$14.1tn	\$1.7tn	\$15.6tn	\$3.8tn	\$2.8tn	\$2.7tn
Military spending	\$732bn	\$261bn	\$65.1bn	\$225bn	\$49.3bn	\$48.7bn	\$50.1bn

**Table 1.0 Depicts nominal GDP and military spending amongst major powers in 2019 [15, 16 and 17]**

Third, the absence of a common European foreign policy and the capacity to project global military power means Europe cannot compete with America on the world stage. Even when Europe as a whole or some European countries like Britain and France have acted on their own, they are totally reliant upon America's military might and political support to safeguard their interests. For instance, the liberation of Kosovo from Serbia in 1999 and intervention in Libya in 2011 could not have happened without US support. Fourth, for the resolution of global political problem, the world turns towards American leadership and not Europe. Fifth, the pervasiveness of America's popular culture across the globe—dwarfs anything Europe has to offer—and this has shaped the tastes and inclinations of millions of people. Hence, it is sufficient to illustrate weakness in American preponderance to make an assessment about the decline in Western dominance.

Ascertaining America's decline is nothing new. It is a well-established discipline that scrutinizes America's receding power in economy, military might, domestic areas—like politics, education, healthcare, environment, and so forth—and also geopolitical primacy. Adherents of this discipline are typically known as declinists. Chomsky maintains that the US has been in perpetual decline since 1945. [18] Others like Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum contend that what America is experiencing is fifth bout of declinism. They claim that the first wave accompanied the Sputnik Shock of 1957; the second wave occurred with the Vietnam War; the third wave came with President Jimmy Carter's policies and the rise of Japan; the fourth wave coincided with the ascendancy of China, and the fifth wave was triggered by global financial crisis of 2008. [19] Those opposed to declinist thesis suggest that after each wave, America recovered well enough to continue its global hegemony.

This paper examines the underlying trends that have diminished American primacy prior to Covid-19, what to expect in a post Covid-19 world, and why the Muslim world must seize this moment.

### **Dysfunctional politics at home**

Conceivably the most recognizable development which compromises America's ability to lead, project power and influence the global order is the political dysfunction at home. Not so long ago, American democracy was the envy of the world. Most people across the globe coveted America's ruling system, the separation of powers and the rule of law. All of this has evaporated now. The polarization of American politics has revealed unbridgeable schisms between Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, blacks and whites, and haves and have nots. Since the turn of the century, these deep fissures constantly fed a broken political system that eventually culminated into an assault on American democracy by Americans under President Trump.

Notwithstanding Biden's proclamation "America is back", there is little indication that these festering wounds will heal anytime soon. This is because in the recent US general election 74m people voted for Trump—the second highest count in the history of the US presidential election—only Biden secured more votes at 81m. Trump maintains approval ratings of 87% amongst Republican voters and 6% amongst Democrats. [20] Moreover, 85% of Republicans believe that the election was stolen and Biden is illegitimate. [21] Almost 50% of the electorate is opposed to its new President—an unprecedented turn of events. The Republican Party is now officially Trump's Party. He and his supporters will cast a long shadow over American politics for the foreseeable future. It also means that Republican politicians will have to increasingly adopt Trump's rhetoric and policies to get the party nomination to stand, and garner the right amount of financial clout to succeed. This is likely to make the political environment even more caustic between Republicans and Democrats.

Another factor that is bound to paralyze American politics is the senate voting process. Biden will find it tough to get his key domestic reform agenda passed into law. Because of procedural guidelines, most legislation in Congress effectually requires 60 votes in the Senate. Reconciliation bills must tread a set of intricate requirements known as the "Byrd Rule." [22] Biden will find it hard to execute structural reforms regarding his main election pledges on health, education and other promises. Worse, any move against cherished

Republican rubicons could result in violent street protests or challenges at the Supreme Court where conservative judges outnumber progressive 6 to 3. The most destructive aspect of American domestic politics is that allies and enemies are unlikely to sign-up to deals with the knowledge that a Trump like figure in the future may upend any agreement reached with Biden. This will curb America's ability to persuade nations to follow its lead. With the political elites constantly putting themselves ahead of ideology and public interest, America's entrenched political divisions will produce a protracted crisis as forecasted by Dalio.

### **Facing economic contraction**

America's economy has fared better than its political system. America is the world's biggest economy by nominal GDP at \$21.4tn and enjoys the largest share of the global economy at 25%. [23] The dollar is the undisputed reserve currency of the world and is widely employed to settle transactions more than any other currency. American companies dominate top 20 Fortune Global list. [24]. America also has the highest disposal income per capita amongst the OECD countries. [25] Despite this economic dominance, America's economic power has contracted over the years.

In 1960 America's share of the global economy stood at 40% and over the years— as more nations sought the world's economic bounty—the US economy fell to almost half this amount. [26] The dollar still remains robust because of the dollar system, but has suffered a notable deterioration in purchasing power due to the cumulative effects of inflation. One dollar in 1960 is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$8.84 today, an increase of \$7.84 over 61 years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, today's prices are 884% higher than average prices in 1960. [27] It is anticipated that the dollar's purchasing power will decline further with the commencement of Biden's \$1.9tn stimulus plan. The Fortune Global 500 no more reflects the dominance of American companies. In 2020, the Global Fortune 500 boasted 133 Chinese Companies, and 121 American Companies—only 2 US companies made it to the Top 10. [28] Lastly, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few in America casts fresh doubts on the validity of indices that measure US household incomes. For the first time, American median household income reached \$63,000 in 2019—but after adjusting for inflation, it stood only at 1999 levels. [29] Meanwhile, America's top 1% have vastly enriched themselves by taking \$50 trillion from the bottom 90%. [30] If such trends continue—especially the usurpation of wealth by America's super-rich capitalists—US economic power will become less credible and effective, and will produce domestic upheaval as noted by Ibn Khaldun and Turchin.

### **The Costs of sustaining a huge military are growing**

Despite 800 military bases in 70 countries and territories, and an annual military spend of \$734bn—almost 3 times that of its nearest rival China—US military power is fading. [31, 32]. In 2010, Pentagon officially deprioritized fighting two simultaneous wars in two different theaters of military operations from its war doctrine. In 2010, the Quadrennial Defense Review no longer viewed “the two-war requirement as the fundamental factor in determining the composition of the force.” [33] America's decades old military advantage over other states has also diminished, as well as its capacity to dissuade and defeat enemies. In 2018, an independent bipartisan commission about America's defence strategy noted “America's longstanding military advantages have diminished” and “doubts about America's ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat opponents and honour its global commitments have proliferated”. [34] An additional complication is America's ability to attract new recruits—interest amongst youth to serve in the US army has plummeted to an all-time low. The situation has become so awful that just to uphold US ground forces—the army and Marine Corps—the two services have resorted to extraordinary pay raise and bonus schemes to attract youth. [35] There is little doubt that America's poor military performance in Afghanistan and Iraq contributed to the decline in US military power. If these trends persist, then war with non-minnow countries like Russia and China will severely test American military power, which could increase the improbability of victory. However, the more immediate threat stems from the economic and political costs required to sustain overseas

military engagements as highlighted by Kennedy. The political dysfunction at home combined with receding economic clout is expected to impair America's military commitments abroad.

### **America's failings have emboldened some great powers and caused others to rise**

It is evident that America faces relative decline in economic and military power and exacerbated by a broken political system. This has also effected America's capacity to persuade Europe on key issues and to discourage revisionist states like Russia and China. The transatlantic relationship has been the cornerstone of America's political order since the post war years. Europe has willingly towed America's line on a plethora of issues, and lent support to American actions when required. However, after the demise of the Soviet Union, differences amongst the transatlantic partners surfaced on a number of important issues like the direction of EU's expansion, NATO's new mission, increased American unilateralism in international affairs, policies towards the global south and so forth. The wars of choice against Afghanistan and Iraq added to the simmering European disillusionment with America. In 2003, Dominique Moisi, deputy director of the Paris-based French Institute for International Relations, expressed "What we are witnessing is the emergence of two Wests—an American West and a European West—with different sensitivities and different emotions". [36] The global financial crises proceeded by eurozone crisis, the Greek debt crises, currency wars and disagreements over austerity versus monetary stimulus compounded relations between the two. The Arab spring and Syrian refugee crisis further eroded confidence in the transatlantic relationship.

But it was not until the ascendancy of Trump that relations reached an all-time low. Trump's determination for Europe to increase its share of NATO's financial burden and his non-committal on Article 5 of the organisation drew sharp criticism from allies. Speaking about Trump's refusal to reaffirm America's pledge to protect Europe, Chancellor Merkel said, "The times in which we could completely depend on others are on the way out...We Europeans have to take our destiny into our own hands." [37] Trump unabashed continued his tirade against Europe. He openly supported Brexit and the disintegration of the EU, rebuked Macron for suggesting Europe needed an army to defend itself from America and ignited a trade war. [38] Europe reacted by disregarding US concerns and committed to signing a comprehensive trade deal with China knowing full well that Trump was exiting the Whitehouse. The badly damaged transatlantic relationship has made cooperation extremely problematic—a point emphasized by Dalio. Macron and Merkel reminded Biden—at his first public encounter—that the Franco-German alliance would safeguard Europe's autonomy and interests. At the meeting, Macron emphasized "strategic autonomy" from the US, while Merkel defended the trade agreement reached with China stating "Our interests will not always converge". [39] There is little optimism that relations between continental Europe and America will improve anytime soon.

America's relationship with Russia has also plummeted to a new low—not seen since early stages of the Cold War—after encountering a number of stumbling blocks over the years. Undeterred by asymmetry in power, Russia has challenged America's primacy and pushed back America's influence in the Caucasus, Ukraine and Central Asia. In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia and occupied South Ossetia, and in 2014 it annexed Crimea and waged war in Ukraine to create its own sphere of influence in the Eastern part of the country. Russia was able to accomplish this, while facing stiff sanctions and penalties from the West. In Central Asia, Russia successfully rollbacked American influence in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Writing in The Wall Street Journal former US Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates, had this to say about Russia's newfound ascendancy, "We want Russia to be a partner, but that is now self-evidently not possible under Mr. Putin's leadership. He has thrown down a gauntlet that is not limited to Crimea or even Ukraine. His actions challenge the entire post-Cold War order." [40] Russia further alarmed the West by cutting gas supplies to Europe during harsh winter months, carrying out brazen assassinations on foreign soil and interfering in American and European elections. Russia's display of sophisticated cyber weaponry and advanced military hardware in the Syrian conflict and elsewhere revealed to

American policy makers that Russia possessed the propensity to challenge American hegemony in specific areas.

How did America allow this to happen? Arguably in the 90s, America was at the apex of its economic and military power and enjoyed global supremacy as the world's sole superpower. Russia was in a midst of a deep economic and political crisis. Hemorrhaging under IMF loans, Russia was in no position to stop EU and NATO expansion into former Eastern Europe neither could the Kremlin prevent America displacing Russian influence in the Balkans. The loss of Kursk (K-141) submarine in the Barents Sea in 2000, and the Kremlin's inability to save the crew epitomized how far Russia had fallen from its super power status. [41] Yet, in a matter of two decades, Russia with an aging population and a weak economy was able reassert itself and challenge America. The narrow ascendancy (military power only) of Russia demonstrates that the US preoccupied by the disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the global financial crisis was unable to counter Russia's belligerence in specific areas of the world. For sure, Russia cannot dislocate America's global leadership, but it can definitely disrupt American plans and nibble away at America's primacy in Eurasia.

Equally questionable are the US efforts to contain China's rise in the Asian Pacific. Since the mid-nineties, Washington regarded China as America's biggest enemy. Successive US governments worked meticulously to try and keep China hamstrung within its borders through a variety of measures. The US embroiled China with protracted on and off North Korean nuclear talks—deliberately avoiding a permanent settlement. At the same time, America exploited China's human right abuses in Tibet, Xinjiang and the treatment of the religious Falun Gong group to discredit the Chinese leadership and keep it inward focused. America made India a bulwark to oppose China's Westward expansion. Washington laid the groundwork for a future war between the two countries by spurring India to overhaul its military and nuclear capabilities. In a bid to forestall China's naval expansion, US inducted India into Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD). In the past decade, QSD—America, India, China and Japan—have conducted numerous naval exercise to send ominous messages to Beijing not to venture outside the first and second island chains—the aim is to amputate China's sea legs before they grow. Washington also encouraged Vietnam, Philippines and Japan to engage China in futile territorial disputes in the East and the South China Sea. However, the mainstay of America's leverage over China is Taiwan—American strategists view the island as an unsinkable aircraft carrier—which the US bolstered with military equipment to thwart any attempt of annexation from the main land. On the other hand, China considers Taiwan an inseparable part of one China, and a source of enormous humiliation as long the island remains in America's orbit.

In spite of America's strenuous initiatives intended to buttress China's containment, Beijing was able to set the country on a meteoric path to regional preponderance. China quickly rose to become the World's second largest economy in 2010 overtaking Japan, and presently enjoys 17% of the global GDP—second to the US. [42, 43]. In the span of three decades, China's economy as a percentage of US nominal GDP grew from 6% in 1990 to 67% in 2019. [44, 45] The GDP of the Soviet Union at its peak was only 50% of the US, and it effectively competed with America for global supremacy.

Besides, the stellar economic growth and China's technological prowess increased substantially, especially in 5G and artificial intelligence. Alphabet chairman, Eric Schmidt, warned persistently about China surpassing the US in AI. [46] On the military front, China made extraordinary progress in reducing the gap with America. In 2000, the US Department of Defence (DOD) noted "The PLA's ground, air, and naval forces were sizable but mostly obsolete". [47]. Twenty years later, the DOD observed "[China] has marshalled the resources, technology, and political will over the past two decades to strengthen and modernize the PLA in nearly every respect. China is already ahead of the United States in certain areas". [48] The extensive improvement in China's military capabilities is really worrisome for US military strategists.

The flaw in America's China containment strategy lay in the mistaken belief that by restricting China's territorial ambitions and simultaneously integrating China's economy into the Western dominated global economic system would allow the US to democratize and manage China's rise. In 2000, President Clinton made the explicit link between economic growth and democracy promotion while supporting China's entry into the WTO. He said, "By joining the W.T.O... [China] is agreeing to import one of democracy's most cherished values: economic freedom. The more China liberalizes its economy, the more fully it will liberate the potential of its people. [49]. China adroitly opened up its economy according to its own playbook— spectacular economic growth without the CCP ceding control. It took America a good decade or so before it could respond to the errors in its China containment policy. In 2012, President Obama announced the long awaited US to Asia pivot strategy, which chiefly consisted of repositioning 60% of America's naval fleet from Europe to the Asian Pacific. President Trump followed his predecessor and commenced a trade war with China specifically targeting China high tech industry. Hitherto, none of these measures has tampered China's ascendancy.

Some observers, like Dalio, view the failure of America to contain China, as evidence that China will supplant America to lead the world in the not too distant future. Others like CNN's Fareed Zakaria foresee the US and China settling on a bipolarity arrangement similar to US-Soviet one. [50] These opinions are based on the reassessment of American power and its perceived decline. In fact, some of America's prominent foreign policy thinkers predicted America's decline two decades ago, but described it as relative rather than absolute. In 1997, at the height of American power, Brzezinski foresaw America's unavoidable demise. He wrote in "The Grand Chessboard" "Once America's leadership begins to fade...what America will bequeath to the world ..." [51] Writing in Foreign Affairs in 1999, Haass predicted "US superiority will not last" as " America's position relative to others will inevitably erode." [52]

There is no doubt that prior to Covid-19, the polarization of America's political system and the weakness of its national power—in particular economic and military power— contributed to the decline of the world's leading state. Deterioration in America's relations with Europe, and push back from Russia and China receded America's superiority even further. Moreover, a weakened America also implies a weakened West. The poor handling of the coronavirus in the West has severely undermined confidence in American and European leadership. Vaccine nationalism has put another unfavorable stigma on Western competence to lead. This is in marked contrast to the vaccine diplomacy conducted by Russia and China to improve their image amongst the world's poorer countries.

### **An opportunity for Muslims to displace the great powers**

As the world emerges from the pandemic, it is pretty obvious that West's global dominance will never be the same. Allah (swt) says: **﴿وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْجِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ﴾** **“And for every nation is a [specified] term. So when their time has come, they will not remain behind an hour, nor will they precede [it].”** [TMQ: 7:34]. Here lies the opportunity for the Muslim world to liberate itself from Western dominance.

The life of the Messenger of Allah (saw) is replete with examples on how he (saw) diligently observed the international situation of his time, followed up the great power struggles between the Romans and Persians, and was acutely aware of their capabilities. There is a lot Muslims can learn and apply to their situation today.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) was brought up in a strong political environment, where the Quraysh would observe the power politics between the Romans and Persians. This is because Quraysh had trade agreements with both powers, and pursued events to ensure neutrality in any dispute between the two great powers lest it should impact their trade. In one incident, Abu Bakr entered a wager with Quraysh predicting a Roman victory over Persia. The Messenger of Allah (saw) was keenly aware about the relative decline of Romans in comparison to the Persians, and knew that Romans would reverse this decline to

defeat the Persian in a certain period of time. Hence, he (saw) instructed Abu Bakr to increase the length of time and the number camels as part of a wager with Quraysh. On other occasions, the Messenger of Allah (saw) would go into the minutest of details to assess whether those giving nusrah had enough power not only to establish the Islamic state but to expand it and displace Roman and Persian dominance. Even when the Messenger of Allah (saw) was in the process of physically establishing the first Islamic state in Medina, he (saw) would keenly observe the Romans and Persians to minimize any impact on the establishment of the Islamic State.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) never ignored the international situation, or what the Romans and Persian were planning. In 629, the Messenger of Allah (saw) perceived that the security of Medina was threatened by the hostile Quraysh to the South and the belligerent Jews of Khaybar to the North. To make the situation even more dangerous for the nascent Islamic state, the Romans were searching for a base in Arabia and Khaybar was an obvious candidate. However, the signing of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah enabled the Messenger Allah (saw) to neutralize the Jewish threat and to prevent the Romans from expanding their dominion. The companions of the Messenger of Allah (saw) carried on this tradition after his (saw) death. When Abu Bakr and Omar bin Al Khattab fought both the Romans and the Persians simultaneously, they were well aware that after twenty-six years of war, both powers had entered a relative period of decline, and capitalized on this weakness to deliver a devastating blow to both powers.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon Muslims to methodically follow the international situation, assess the decline and rise of great powers, and constantly look for opportunities to re-establish the Islamic state and then to expand it. Is there anyone bold and sincere enough to carry out this task today? Allah (swt) says: ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ ﴾ **“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”** [TMQ: 47:7].

## Reference

- [1] Kagan, R. (2013). *The world America made*. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House.
- [2] Tisdall, S. (2020). Power, equality, nationalism: how the pandemic will reshape the world. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/28/power-equality-nationalism-how-the-pandemic-will-reshape-the-world>.
- [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8] Foreign Policy, (2021) The World after the Coronavirus: We asked 12 leading thinkers to predict what happens in 2021 and beyond. *Foreign Policy*. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/02/2021-coronavirus-predictions-global-thinkers-after-vaccine/>
- [9] Kennedy, P. (1988). *The Rise and Fall of Empires*. New Ed edition, Publisher: William Collins.
- [10, 11] New Scientist (2016). End of days: Is Western civilisation on the brink of collapse?. *New Scientist*. Available at: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23731610-300-end-of-days-is-western-civilisation-on-the-brink-of-collapse/>
- [12] Deal Street Asia (2020). Billionaire investor Ray Dalio says pandemic to usher in new world order with China on top. *Deal Street Asia*. Available at: <https://www.dealstreetasia.com/stories/pandemic-china-ray-dalio-187533/>
- [13] Wall Street Journal (2018). Why history goes in circles. *Wall Street Journal*. Available at: <https://www.dealstreetasia.com/stories/pandemic-china-ray-dalio-187533/>
- [14] Rodenbeck, M. (2012). The cycle of history. *Economist*. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/news/2012/11/21/the-cycle-of-history>
- [15] Amdad, K. (2020). Largest Economies in the World: Why China Is the Largest, Even Though Some Say It's the U.S. *the balance*. Available at: <https://www.thebalance.com/world-s-largest-economy-3306044>



- [16] Statista, (2020). The 15 countries with the highest military spending worldwide in 2019. Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>
- [17] World Bank (2020). GDP (current US\$) - Russian Federation. *World Bank*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=RU>
- [18] Chomsky, N. (2011). American Decline: Causes and Consequences, *al-Akhbar*. Available at: <https://chomsky.info/20110824/>
- [19] Joffe, J. (2011). Declinism's Fifth Wave, *The American Interest*. Available at: <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2011/12/09/declinisms-fifth-wave/>
- [20] Gallup, (2020). "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Donald Trump" [online] *Gallup*. Available at: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203198/presidential-approval-ratings-donald-trump.aspx>
- [21] Eurasia Group, (2021). "Top Risks 2021" [online] *Eurasia Group*. Available at: <https://www.eurasiagroup.net/issues/top-risks-2021>.
- [22] New York Times, (2021). "With New Majority, Here's What Democrats Can (and Can't) Do on Health Care" [online] *New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/upshot/biden-democrats-health-plans.html>
- [23] Amdad, K. (2020). Largest Economies in the World: Why China Is the Largest, Even Though Some Say It's the U.S. *the balance*. Available at: <https://www.thebalance.com/world-s-largest-economy-3306044>
- [24] Fortune. (n.d.) Fortune: Global 500, Fortune. Available at: <https://fortune.com/global500/2019/search/>
- [25] OECD, (2021). Household disposable income (indicator). doi: 10.1787/dd50eddd-en
- [26] Visual Capitalist, (2021) The U.S. Share of the Global Economy Over Time. Available at: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/u-s-share-of-global-economy-over-time/>
- [27] CPI Inflation Calculator, (2021) Value of \$1 from 1960 to 2021. Available at: <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1960?amount=1>
- [28] Fortune Media. (2020 FORTUNE Releases Annual FORTUNE Global 500 List. Available at: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/fortune-releases-annual-fortune-global-500-list-301119164.html>
- [29] Telford, T. (2019), Income inequality in America is the highest it's been since Census Bureau started tracking it, data shows. *Washington Post*, Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/09/26/income-inequality-america-highest-its-been-since-census-started-tracking-it-data-show/>
- [30] Time, (2020). The Top 1% of Americans Have Taken \$50 Trillion From the Bottom 90%—And That's Made the U.S. Less Secure. *Time*, Available at: <https://time.com/5888024/50-trillion-income-inequality-america/>
- [31] Vine, D. (2015). Where in the World Is the U.S. Military? *Politico*. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321>
- [32] Statista, (2020). The 15 countries with the highest military spending worldwide in 2019. Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>
- [33] Daggett S. (2010). Quadrennial Defense Review 2010: Overview and Implications for National Security Planning, *Congressional Research Service*. Available at: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41250.pdf>
- [34] New York Times, (2018). U.S. Military's Global Edge Has Diminished, Strategy Review Finds. *New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/14/us/politics/defense-strategy-china-russia-.html>
- [35] Arkin, W. (2019). Fewer Americans want to serve in the military. Cue Pentagon panic, *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/10/fewer-americans-serve-military-pentagon-panic>

- [36] Synovitz, R. (2003). U.S.: Two Years After 9/11, 'Two Wests' Emerging With Fundamental Differences. Radio Free Europe. Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1104302.html>
- [37] BBC, (2017). Merkel: Europe 'can no longer rely on allies' after Trump and Brexit. *BBC*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40078183>
- [38] Sky News, (2018). Donald Trump ridicules Emmanuel Macron with jibe over First and Second World Wars. *Sky News*. Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/donald-trump-ridicules-emmanuel-macron-with-jibe-over-first-and-second-world-wars-11553193>
- [39] New York Times, (2021). Biden Tells Allies 'America Is Back,' but Macron and Merkel Push Back. *The New York Times*. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/us/politics/biden-munich-conference.html>
- [40] Gates, R. (2014). Putin's Challenge to the West. *Wall Street Journal*. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303725404579460183854574284>
- [41] Kitap Sun, (2000). RUSSIAN NAVY: Feelings of shame, disgrace. *Kitap Sun*. Available at: [https://products.kitsapsun.com/archive/2000/08-22/0006\\_russian\\_navy\\_\\_feelings\\_of\\_shame\\_\\_.html](https://products.kitsapsun.com/archive/2000/08-22/0006_russian_navy__feelings_of_shame__.html)
- [42] *ibid.* 15
- [43] Council of Foreign relations, (2020). Timeline: US Relations with China. *Council of Foreign Relations*. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-relations-china>
- [44] *ibid.* 15
- [45] The World Bank, (n.d.). World Development Indicators. The World Bank. Available at: <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/>
- [46] James, V. (2017). Eric Schmidt says America needs to 'get its act together' in AI competition with China. *The Verge*. Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2017/11/1/16592338/eric-schmidt-google-ai-competition-us-china>
- [47] Department of Defense, (2020). Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020. *Department of Defense*, Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF> [48] *ibid.* 47
- [48] *ibid.* 47
- [49] Johns Hopkins University, (2000). Full Text of Clinton's Speech on China Trade Bill. Available at: [https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Full\\_Text\\_of Clintons\\_Speech\\_on\\_China\\_Trade\\_Bi.htm](https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Full_Text_of Clintons_Speech_on_China_Trade_Bi.htm)
- [50] Zakaria, F. (2020). China-US rivalry poses world's greatest challenge, but we can prosper. *The Sunday Morning Herald*. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/china-us-rivalry-poses-world-s-greatest-challenge-but-we-can-prosper-20201125-p56hwe.html>
- [51] Brzezinsky, Z. (1997). *The Grand Chessboard*. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 210
- [52] Haass, R. (1999). What to Do With American Primacy. *Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1999-09-01/what-do-american-primacy>