On fourth of February 2022 an important meeting took place in Beijing, China between the leader of China Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Putin was in China at Xi’s invitation to attend the opening of the Winter Olympics. The reason for his visit however, went far beyond celebrating the opening of a major sporting occasion. The two men signed a series of economic and political agreements that strengthened the already close ties between the two Asian neighbours.

One of the most important agreements signed that day was for a 30-year deal with which Russia agreed to supply China with gas, to be delivered via a new pipeline built for the occasion. In one of the most important signals in the signing of the deal, the two men agreed that China would pay for the gas in Euros. It signalled another break from the United States dollar whose importance in international trade has been steadily declining.

Following the meeting, the Chinese and Russian governments issued a joint statement that ran to more than 5000 words in length. The statement declared a “new era” under which the two men proposed a new international political model, one that was designed to leave behind the United States dominated unipolar world.

“The world is going through momentous changes and humanity is entering a new era of rapid development and profound transformation” the joint statement declared. In this “new era” China and Russia and their allies in the global South were determined to build a different system from that which the United States and its Western allies had dominated for so long.
Russia and China made it abundantly clear that they foresaw a new world order. The alternative they were proposing “condemned the practice of interference in the internal affairs of other states for geopolitical purposes.” Instead, the two countries sought to establish “a just multipolar system of international relations.” They called on NATO to “abandon its ideologized cold war approaches, and to respect the sovereignty, security and interest of other countries.”

The two powers made it clear that they oppose the obvious United States ploy to overthrow the government of both countries and replace it with a system of government that would not challenge the United States desire to rule the world. The Americans have made no secret of their ambitions in this regard. In 2021 the Atlantic Council, which functions as a think tank for the western United States alliance, published a document called The Longer Telegram, an obvious reference to The Long Telegram published many years earlier by George Keenan, a man known for his hatred of both the Russian and Chinese system of government.

The 2021 document declared that President Xi must be replaced and for Beijing to “conclude that it is in China’s best interests to continue cooperating within the United States led liberal international order rather than building a rival order.” The arrogance of the United States demands is breathtaking. The Atlantic Council undoubtedly reflects the views held in Washington.

The Russian and Chinese governments are undoubtedly aware of these views. The joint statement they released on fourth February may be interpreted as their response to the incredible hubris being shown by the Americans. The joint statement made the disagreement with the United States view abundantly clear. The two leaders instead called “for the establishment of a new kind of relationship between world powers on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation.” The contrast between the two worldviews could not be starker.

Their joint statement requested de-escalation of global tensions, of which the extraordinary US behaviour in and around Ukraine is the current best example of unilateral single mindedness. The joint statement instead emphasised “the need for cooperation, not confrontation.” The West should be under no illusions however, of the determination and ability of the two great Asian powers to defend themselves, should the Americans be crazy enough to actually mount an attack on either or both of them.

Their joint statement made it abundantly clear that Washington’s policies of unilateralism and interference in the affairs of others had to end. That part of the statement is worth quoting:

“Some actors representing but the minority of the international scale continue to advocate unilateral approaches to address international issues and resorted to force; they interfere in the internal affairs of other states, infringing their legitimate rights and interests, and incite contradictory differences and confrontation, thus the development and progress of mankind, against the opposition from the international community.”

There is no doubt that the Russian and Chinese view is widely shared in the so-called South. Just taking those countries that have signed up to the Chinese inspired Belt and Road Initiative as one example, its co-signees now represent nearly three quarters of the worlds countries, and an even greater share of the world’s population.

Another important part of the joint statement referred to the need

“to protect the United Nations driven international architecture in the international law based world order, seek genuine multipolarity within the United Nations and its Security Council playing a central and continuing role.”

The declaration used the phrase “the international law-based world order.” It is an important emphasis to draw attention to. The United States and its Western allies have for some time been attempting to substitute the international law-based order with its own much vaguer and self-serving phrase of a so-called “rules based international order.” This is a system the United States and its allies have been seeking to impose on the world for some time. It is dangerous and must be opposed.

There is in fact only one international system in the world and it has the United Nations at its core. That system is one of international order and is the one underpinned by international law. The United Nations Charter is the central document governing relations between nations. The so-called rules based international order is in attempt to replace international law with the dictum of a small group of countries who have an obvious motive in undermining
In the past, the rules based international order has been an excuse for intervention in the affairs of sovereign nations, being continually used by the United States government to justify its intervention in the sovereign affairs of states. The joint statement issued by the Chinese and Russian governments firmly rejects the United States version of international law. They condemned the “abuse of democratic values interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states under the pretext of protecting democracy and human rights”. Besides urging other countries to accept the United Nations as the proper vehicle for the resolution of international disputes, both China and Russia made it clear that they are not waiting for things to happen.

Instead, the aim is to “comprehensively strengthen the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and to further enhance its role in shaping a polycentric world order based on the universally recognised principles of international multilateralism, equal, just, indivisible, comprehension and sustainable security.”

The two men clearly see the future in cooperation and unity between the BRI, the Greater Eurasian Economic Partnership and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. It is one of the main vehicles for promoting greater connectivity between the Asia Pacific and the Eurasian regions.

After the meeting, the Chinese foreign ministry issued a statement summarising the main points of the meeting. The Chinese statement read:

“the two sides have taken an active part in the reform and development of the global governance system, following true multilateralism safeguards and the true spirit of democracy and served as a bulwark in mobilising global solidarity at these trying times and upholding international fairness and justice.”

The overall message emerging from the Chinese and Russian meeting spells out clearly that the old order is dead. The world was now in a new era with an international order based on multi polarity and the fundamental principle but no State should ever interfere in the affairs of another State.

It is not a message that will be well received in western capitals, especially Washington that for 70 years has written rough shod over the world in pursuit of his own interests. China and Russia have made it clear that in their view that era has long ended. The world for the first time in a very long time has a clear alternative. The majority have made their choice. It is unlikely that United States will except that reality.

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