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## The World Order: Problems of Transformation

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THE WEST, shocked by Crimea's voluntary re-unification with Russia, qualified the latter's actions as an undisguised challenge to the world order and started talking about it as one of the gravest threats to international security.<sup>1</sup> There are appeals to the Western community to close ranks to stop Moscow's aggression against the East European countries even though nobody in the Baltic states, none of which is favorably disposed to Russia, believes that this scenario might be realized.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the West unfolded its anti-Russian campaign to prevent Russia from becoming an influential power center with an independent foreign policy and to avoid the inevitable (as is commonly believed in the Western analytical community) crumbling of the world order followed by chaos and anarchy. Russia, in its turn, believes that the complicated international situation is a product of an unfair world order and destroyed political balance, both the doings of the only superpower. This means that the destroyed balance of power should be restored: the world needs an efficient system of global security<sup>3</sup> or, to put it differently, a new world order.

In this article, I have discussed the circumstances potentially conducive to such transformations and identified the obstacles.

### What Is a World Order?

THERE IS NO CLEAR and generally accepted definition of the world order concept. Political science relies on it to describe the periods in the history of international relations that followed dramatic events, mostly wars, in the lives of peoples and states. Content analysis of the currently

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used definitions identified principles, rules, norms, agreements, and obligations observed by the states in interstate relations as the most typical elements of this concept. This suggests the following definition: world order is a sum-total of the rules of behavior of states on the international scene formulated by victors to protect their national interests and rule out security threats.

To acquire a clear idea of the place and role of the world order in international relations, we should clarify its correlation with the “international system” concept. The international system, as we know it today, is a sum-total of states that follow the generally accepted principles and norms of international communication as registered in the documents issued by the UN and are true to its Charter.

This system was born in the mid-seventeenth century to replace the chaotic and mainly random relations between states inherited from hoary antiquity with more or less well-ordered, stable and predictable, that is, systemic, relations. Success was ensured by the rulers’ realization that certain common agreements and harmonized rules of behavior should be observed – such as recognition of sovereignties of states in external and internal affairs; their equality regardless of faith; guaranteed fulfilment of all agreements; and the right to conclude alliances to prevent an emergence of hegemon states. These fundamental principles of international system went down in history as the Westphalian system, named after the venue of the first forum of states.

This created a new phenomenon in international relations: international stability based on a political balance between the states rather than on the might and influence of a super-empire – an absolutely new phenomenon in international relations. International practice was enriched with the “balance of power” principle that remained the cornerstone of interstate relations for three and a half centuries in the course of which several world orders – the Vienna, Versailles and Yalta – replaced one another. They differed in terms of the states involved and the methods applied to maintain order and defend the interests of the key participants

For the first time in human history, a state that does not fit all the parameters of world power center and has not cobbled together a military coalition of its own has announced for everybody to hear that the domination of a sole superpower is a threat.

yet they invariably observed the Westphalian principles. This means that the world order and the international system are interconnected: the world order is a model of governance of the international system, a faithful reflection of the distribution of power between the leading countries at any specific stretch of history.

An historical analysis of the circumstances, under which a new world order replaced the old one, reveals certain common specifics. First, each of the new orders was based on the results of preceding wars, to wit, two European wars and two world wars. Second, all wars were caused by the intentions of certain states to destroy the balance of power not to their liking while others tried to preserve it. Third, the victors invariably introduced the rules that protected their national interests and excluded any new security threats. Fourth, the existing world order was ripe for change when some states became weak while others grew stronger. This upset the political and military balance in the world and started the process anew.

The bipolar Yalta world order followed the above pattern to the dot: there was a protracted and fierce Cold War between the two superpowers – the USSR and the U.S. – when one of the sides weakened and dissolved while the victor paid for its triumph an exorbitant price of huge efforts and resources. The past experience of bitter defeats and humiliations it had suffered throughout the Cold War with the Soviet Union taught it: in future, America should exclude even the slightest possibility of similar rivalry on the world arena.

The task was temptingly easy: the Soviet Union had abandoned the scene leaving the United States the only superpower with no competitors on the horizon. Since the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, the Americans have been convinced that the Westphalian system with its balance of power, spheres of influence and bloc mentality was false through and through. The post-Soviet period looked like another confirmation of the theory that all conflicts and wars had been products of the Westphalian system. In an effort to remedy the situation, Americans offered a system of liberal ideas as universal values and the foundation of international relations: the pluralist political system, liberal and open economy, and human rights and freedoms.

Washington was clear about the main goal of its foreign policy: with all the means and methods at its disposal, to help all peoples take the road of democracy and freedom. To achieve this, America should remain the world's political, military, economic, and technological leader. The unwilling and disagreeing were entered into the list of states that threat-

ened the U.S. national security and that, therefore, should be kept in check through political and economic measures, as well as by propaganda. Objectionable regimes should be removed by force to bring pro-Western politicians to power. This was the beginning of the unipolar world order, the format and the content of which being very different from what the world had known in the past. For the first time in modern history, the principles of political realism, the cornerstone of the previous world order, were discarded as useless; in fact, the new world order was deliberately juxtaposed to the international system despite the easily predictable destructive repercussions.

What are the main specific features of the world order established after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which they now call the American world order? They are the following:

- geopolitical hegemony of the United States, i.e., its ability to impose its own rules on other states and create a new political order<sup>4</sup>;
- the liberal model of political order and market economy;
- total disregard for international law plus foreign policy based on America's inner norms and cultivated values;
- strategic partnerships with the traditional allies combined with hierarchical pyramidal structures with the dominant power at the top and the satellites at the lower levels;
- abandonment of the balance of power principle to allow the United States to gather the maximum possible number of countries in its camp;
- a smokescreen of statements about spreading universal values to camouflage the true geopolitical interests of the superpower.

The following means and methods are used to maintain the unipolar world order:

- economic sanctions and the use of force against the undesirable regimes. Interference in the internal affairs of states is legitimized by the concept of humanitarian intervention based on the understanding that totalitarian rulers should be held responsible for injustices they perpetrate in their countries;
- arbitrary division of states into so-called "failed" and "rogue" states a priori declared a threat to international security. In fact, this means that America refuses to accept the policies pursued by their rulers; the list has included Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Syria. Three of these countries have been subjected to regime change; in Syria, the policy of regime change stalled due to Russia's interference;
- democratization of social and political order of the developing coun-

tries based on the strategy of the so-called democratic imperialism;

- resistance to the efforts of any state to undermine America's leadership by building up armed forces equal to the American army in their efficiency.

As soon as the main features of the world order that emerged after 1991 became clear, discussion of its future could not be avoided. The discussion participants are seeking an answer to the question: for how long the unipolar world in which the imbalance of the interests of states is only too obvious will survive?

There are two different answers to the question. Some respondents insist that the world is *de facto* multipolar<sup>5</sup>: they point to Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya to prove that even though America managed to implement the regime change, it cannot restore law and order in these countries single-handedly: it needs other countries' help. New centers of power are gradually emerging in the non-Western part of the world; they are pushing the traditional economic leaders to the side.

The supporters of an alternative view believe that the world is still unipolar and will remain unipolar for a long time to come.<sup>6</sup>

One wonders why the same world order is differently assessed. To a certain extent, this has been caused by the methodological error since not infrequently such notions as the "multipolar" and "multisided" are treated as if they are synonyms. Under George W. Bush, the United States acted unilaterally: America invaded Iraq without the mandate of the UN SC and in disregard of the protests of the world community. This caused an outburst of anti-American sentiments in the world.

Having taken into account the faults of the Republican administration, Obama informed the world about America's new approaches to international and regional problems: closer interaction with allies and partners to achieve a more secure world; a dialogue with the so-called problem countries (Iran and North Korea), and the intention to listen to other countries and hear them.<sup>7</sup> Russia was invited to "reset" the relations with United States to overcome the problems that had undermined their bilateral cooperation.

The U.S. president, however, reconfirmed the foreign policy aims of his country: the status of the only superpower and the political, economic and military leader of the contemporary world, as well as prevention of the rise of rivals on the world arena able to challenge America's interests and threaten its national security. In other words, the American political leadership wanted and still wants to preserve the current world order.

They expect that the Western countries and the steadily expanding circle of the developing states will side with the United States and support its policies.

This means that the multilateral approach Washington is using in its policies on the world scene is nothing more than the use of more adequate means and methods intended to preserve the unipolar world.

At first, the world found it hard to clearly formulate its response to the American world order. America's aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia in 1999 would have passed unnoticed but for Russia's protests. However, America's aggression against Iraq in 2003 caused serious concerns even in Germany and France, Washington's traditional NATO allies. Berlin and Paris were convinced that America's flagrant violation of international law was a significant threat to worldwide security. Europeans even started talking about defense structures of their own to ensure security on the continent. These contradictions inside the trans-Atlantic community were interpreted as a sign that the unipolar world was moving to its end and that united Europe would become an independent military and political center of power.

Japan and China were also seen as power centers. The comparison of the U.S. GDP with the GDP of the European Union, Japan and China led to a conclusion that America did not dominate the world and that economically it had already become multipolar.

The illusions about united Europe developing into an independent center of power disappeared, as soon as Russia announced that it intended to defend its interests on the international arena.<sup>8</sup> The West was puzzled; very soon, however, it became worried and, later, irritated. The events in Georgia, Libya, Syria, and, to the greatest extent, Ukraine showed that the geopolitical interests of the United States and the European Union were practically identical. They agree in their assessment of the threats and challenges to the security of the Euro-Atlantic community and prefer identical means and methods of counteraction – in short, it has become clear that Europe is not an independent center of power willing and ready to contain the only superpower.

### **Are There Prospects for a New World Order?**

THOSE WHO REPRESENT the school of realism doubt the sustainability of the unipolar world and assert that the multipolar world will take shape sooner or later. These authors emphasize that, as history shows,

when the balance of power is tipped by one power it is inevitably restored later.<sup>9</sup>

The neoliberals, on their side, doubt that the international conditions are conducive to a traditional response in the form of balance of power. They prefer to think that the already existing and new centers of power will try to contain the United States and its power yet an anti-American coalition will be hardly possible because of very different strategic interests of its potential members. Indeed, the EU, Russia, China, and Japan will hardly pool forces to contain the United States.

It is commonly believed that the strategic responses to the unipolar world of the United States will depend on whether Washington continues to address the world problems single-handedly or will engage other states and international institutions. If and when the world sees that Americans have opted for a multisided approach it will cooperate with Washington and move away from confrontation. This process has already begun. Those who profess this approach believe that the future of the world order depends on the United States, rather than on its opponents. They point out that, unlike in the past when the predominance of one power forced others to crowd into alliances against it, today, when the United States does not threaten other states and does not claim their territories, such alliances are no longer justified.<sup>10</sup>

It is also argued that since none of the big states or united Europe is ready to shoulder the financial burden of fighting global terrorism and respond to other global challenges – nuclear proliferation, poverty, drugs, and epidemics – preeminence of the United States should be preserved. Hence the conclusion that the international order in which the United States is and will remain the predominant center of power has come to stay.<sup>11</sup>

The leading countries that, on the whole, have accepted the American world order can be divided into three groups: the countries of Anglo-Saxon culture (the U.K., Canada and Australia); the countries of Romano-Germanic culture (Germany, Italy, Spain, and France); and the countries of Far Eastern civilization that have accepted the Western political system, democratic procedures and market economy (Japan and South Korea). Their devotion to the liberal values is further confirmed by their agreements with the United States on multilateral or bilateral mutual defense.

These countries, however, can have and actually have economic interests that do not coincide with those of the United States and that stirred up trade wars in the past. On the other hand, all of them depend on the

United States when it comes to military matters and defense. At the periods of relative stability, they move away from their unquestioned loyalty to the American course; they even gather enough courage to criticize it considering their responsibilities to the United States fairly burdening. This explains why any exacerbation of the situation in any given region or, better still, at the global level is to the benefit of Washington who uses it to remind American partners to whom they owe their well-being and security.

America is skillfully manipulating the Ukrainian developments to fan fears of Russia's alleged expansionist plans in Europe and Asia. In the West, the wave of anti-Russian sentiments is on the rise; today, the Europeans are more convinced than ever before that their alliance with the United States protects them against the Russian threat. This is why despite the losses caused by the anti-Russian sanctions and the Russian anti-sanctions united Europe sides with the United States in its desire to punish Russia and force it to abandon its foreign policy course.

From this it follows that the states that share America's liberal values and defense interests have obviously decided to close ranks around it. This group of the developed countries acts as a united center of power and influence with the United States as their military and political leader. It will consistently oppose everything done by other countries to set up an alternative center of power.

The above should not be taken to mean that the current order is a monolith and that its future is cloudless. It rejects the idea of a balance of power designed to defend the system of states<sup>12</sup> and, therefore, contradicts the principles of the international system. Americans insist that the states should contribute to the preservation of international stability yet the states prefer to look after their own interests, in the first place. This order is weak also because it is undemocratic; it lacks symmetry in the distribution of powers and is, on the whole, unfair. It does not take into account the new phenomena in the world where power is gradually being transferred to new claimants. This contradiction undermines the world order that is showing signs of breaking up.<sup>13</sup>

Even American experts have realized that the mechanism is going out of order while the rules and norms of the current world order are becoming questioned outside the Western world.<sup>14</sup>

Seen from Russia, the world has approached the crossroads of historic importance beyond which the world order will be changed.<sup>15</sup> It is gradually parting with the age of total domination of the West to enter a fairly

long period of transfer to a more sustainable system with several, rather than a couple, of poles.<sup>16</sup>

China, India and Russia are mentioned more frequently than any others as potentially influential powers. They do not depend on the American military umbrella; they can look after their security themselves and are able to gradually increase their military might to make it equal to the American military potential. The future of their military depends on the consistent and dynamic economic growth. According to expert assessments, Chinese economy stands a good chance to become the world's biggest by its GDP by 2030 yet the armed forces of China will hardly become the world's strongest. It will take the country a lot of time to be able to defend its interests on par with the United States. We should not forget that the two powers are closely connected in the financial and trade spheres. In the near future, China, in our opinion, will demonstrate caution on the international arena so that to avoid confrontation with the United States: it will abstain in the UN SC even though it might side with Russia from time to time.

The future foreign policy course of India is still unclear. It can be regarded as one of the potential power centers yet it does not look as a persistent fighter against America's domination: it is burdened by the sad experience of the 1960s when it caused a lot of irritation in Washington as one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement and preferred the policy of positive neutrality. The border disagreements with China and Pakistan and a series of wars between them did not allow India to play the role of an intermediary between the Soviet Union and the United States so that to ease international tension. These conflicts crippled its positive role in the world and forced Delhi to concentrate on its own security. Something of this sort might happen today if India decides to challenge the United States on its own or together with other states.

Fully aware of the fact that the claimants of the status of new centers of power will hardly outbalance the United States and its allies if they act separately, Russia united them into BRICS. In the most favorable outcome, it could become an efficient financial, economic and political organization and an alternative pole of power and influence able to fight for a fair world order based on equality for all.

Much will depend on Russia that for many reasons cannot accept the current world order. What are these reasons? First, the current world order presents a grave and rising threat to Russia's security caused by the persistent desire of the United States and its NATO allies to move their mil-

itary infrastructure maximally close to the Russian territory; to encircle it in the north, west and south; to lower Russia's defense capabilities and destroy the military parity. Second, it ignores Russia's interests in the post-Soviet space and in the neighboring regions – the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East. Third, this order presupposes interference in the domestic affairs of Russia, which is a sovereign state; destabilization of political situation and economy; introduction of all sorts of sanctions on false pretexts of violation of human rights and persecution of the opposition. Fourth, there are attempts to impose on it Western values, standards, ideas, and convictions that contradict traditional Russian values, ethical norms and family relationships and customs regarding what is bad and what is good, what is moral and what is amoral, and what is permitted and what is not permitted. In view of these threats, Russia is talking about a multipolar world in which its national interests, traditional values, culture, and spirituality will be respected.

Rather than trying to understand the motives of Russian leaders, Western politicians prefer to criticize them. Germany, for example, has concluded that Europe and Russia cherish different values and ideals and that the continent needs a new security policy in which Russia will be viewed as an opponent rather than a partner.<sup>17</sup>

No wonder the West that interprets Russia's efforts to defend its geopolitical interests in terms of confrontation introduced political and economic sanctions to force Moscow to abandon its course. In fact, the desire to punish Russia means that the world is still unipolar and that the right to "punish or pardon" belongs mainly to the United States.

In fact, for the first time in human history, a state that does not fit all the parameters of world power center and has not cobbled together a military coalition of its own has announced for everybody to hear that the domination of a sole superpower is a threat. This is a unique or even contradictory situation. On the one hand, Russia has announced that it is devoted to open economy and, therefore, has no intention to oppose the West and retreat into its shell isolating itself from the world. On the other, it says that the world needs changes and that the balance of power should be restored. America that refuses to accept Russia's increasing role in the world will oppose it. If this role is accepted, Russia's interests should be accepted as well; this is highly improbable, however, because they are different to what America wants.

What might force the United States to do this? World history knows no precedent of this dimension: never before did the unrivalled leader

share its power. This will not happen today. In the past, the world order was changed either because the dominant power was defeated or because its economy declined. So far there are no rivals on the horizon ready to challenge the United States. There are no signs of decline of America's economic or military might; this means that the world order that protects the interests of a group of Western states led by the United States will survive for a long time.

### **The Challenges Facing Russia**

DESPITE ALL THAT, Russia presents itself as a center of power that stands opposed to the superpower determined to ignore Russia's interests. If this happened in the nineteenth or even first half of the twentieth century, the dominant power would have responded with the use of force to punish the impudent state. Today, in the twenty-first century, a direct military confrontation between the U.S. and Russia is hardly possible. How can the U.S. and its satellites respond?

It seems that they will use, and have already used, the strategy they applied to the Soviet Union during the Cold War – containment, isolation and sanctions. NATO will gather even more significance and will open its doors to the second line of post-Soviet conscripts: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. They will try to exhaust Russia by arms race to detract resources needed in the economic and social spheres. Western politicians expect that these and other measures may lower the standard of living to the level that will stir up discontent followed by protest rallies; create the conditions in which the president will be replaced with a politician of the pro-Western opposition.

Analysts in the West do not bother to hide their hopes that corruption in the corridors of power will gradually undermine the regime from inside. They like to say that Putin is the most influential Russian leader after Stalin yet he depends to much greater extent on the pro-Western elite; this elite, they hope, will weaken Russia's resilience to the sanctions.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the campaign of the so-called nationalization of the Russian elite has been launched: state officials cannot keep their money in Western banks; officials of all ranks, judges, law enforcers, and deputies of all levels are obligated to fill in declaration about their incomes and spending, as well to make public any information about real estate and bank deposits inside and outside Russia. The turning point, however, is not yet in sight.

In the present conditions, the country should modernize its economy and develop high-tech and innovation branches to reduce the country's dependence on foreign technologies, machines and production accessories. This much has become abundantly clear to all and everyone in Russia.

The liberal part of Russian society believes that the task will remain a dream unless we cut down defense expenses, achieve a compromise with the West and restore its trust in Russia. However, the liberals prefer not to mention the cost the country will pay for the compromise and the trust. Their pro-Western orientation makes them unaware of the dangers presented by the NATO infrastructure at the threshold of our country, by the European segment of America's ABM system, and American military presence along Russia's borders. They merely repeat the same mantra that Russia should become one of the leading economies before claiming the status of military power of consequences.<sup>19</sup>

The liberal politicians and writers seem to be unaware of the fact that the Western community does not need another rival with innovation economy and high-quality products. We saw this in the 1990s when the ruling Russian elites faithfully followed what the Western advisors were saying: in 1998, they brought Russian economy to the brink of bankruptcy and the country to the brink of disintegration. The West needs Russia as a resource base supervised by Western managers. The country is too big, too rich in natural resources and too advantageously situated to be left in peace: the leading Western countries would prefer to control it.

The road toward the status of one of the great powers that the liberals have chartered for Russia stems from their conviction that there is a universal pattern according to which new centers of power appear: economic achievements-military might-political influence. This is based on the generalized experience of several developed states: the UK followed this road in the 18th-19th century; the U.S. repeated this experience in the 19th-20th centuries while Germany, Japan and the Republic of Korea, after 1945. Great Britain and the United States could afford the luxury in an absence of enemies strong enough to threaten their security; the latter three developed under the American security umbrella. China and India are developing according to a different scenario: having acquired independence, they must combine economic growth with building up their military might.

The grave reality that has nothing in common with the imagined idyllic picture does not allow Russia to concentrate on economic moderniza-

tion. If it fails to keep its defense capability at a high level, it might degenerate into an amorphous entity unable to respond to the threats and challenges of our time; this risk is too great to be ignored. Russia will not be able to defend its national interests across the post-Soviet space, at the international markets of fuel and armaments and to develop the shelf zones, in particular in the Arctic. In other words, today, it cannot concentrate on economic changes and, for the time being, shelve its security concerns.

In a nutshell, Russia's response to the challenges of the contemporary world should be based on a different pattern: security comes first and it is followed by economic reforms. This does not mean that military might should be built up at the expense of economy; the country is not militarized, the social programs are not eliminated and the task of economic innovations is not abandoned. All these issues will be addressed at one and the same time.

The defense sector not only strengthens Russia's defense capability; it creates new jobs and increases the share of finished products in the country's exports while the budget receives more currency. Finally, it means a rapid development of Russia's dual-purpose technologies, including information technologies, which the civilian branches of its economy need so much.

We know from the past and, in fact, present international practice that the West will not be greatly impressed by Russia's economic successes – this role belongs to our country's military might. It was after Peter the Great's military reform that Europe accepted Russia as an influential power; the Soviet Union became a superpower when it had acquired strategic weapons and delivery systems. This means that Russia should not abandon its intention to ensure reliable protection of its interests in the world and create favorable external conditions for the very much needed internal changes.

Today, the situation is unique: for the first time, Russia is showing the road toward a new order without wars, which invariably accompanied the past changes of the world order. This task can be resolved if the claimants of the status of new centers of power are strong enough to persuade the dominant center of power to resist the temptation to smash the potential rivals by force.

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*Key words:* world order, foreign policy, balance of power, international security, centers of power, geopolitical interests.