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Models of a New World: towards a Synthesis

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ABSTRACT. *Three alternative world orders can be imagined in the post-World War II international relations. During most of the Cold War a bipolar order, centered on the possession of nuclear weapons, existed. This world order was incomplete, however. The United States and the Soviet Union faced each other with equal capacity to destroy each other, but in terms of economic and global influence the United States was superior. The strengthening of economic and technological dynamics increased further the U.S. influence, but also sparked the power of non-states actors, including transnational corporations and banks, independent of states. Simultaneously with the globalization of the world, one could witness the rise of non-state actors in the military and political fields. The emergence of the world order of the third type has sometimes been called the neomedieval world in which some central tenets of feudalism has re-emerged. None of these world order models can be said to dominate in today's world and none of them is likely to emerge victorious any time soon. In recent times., globalization has suffered from various setbacks and state-centric relations have re-*

emerged. Their focus is not, however, any more on the military competition between the United States and Russia, although some of its elements remain in the arms competition between them. Globalization has brought in new ingredients in the rivalries between states and it has appeared most visibly in the U.S.-Chinese rivalry for economic and technological dominance of the globalized world economy. In other words, a new type of economic bipolarity is winning ground and is only secondarily manifesting itself in military relations. Patterns of warfare has in recent decades been colored by fighting of non-state military forces and the rise of new feudal patterns of behavior, but they have not been pronounced enough to justify the labeling of the entire world order by the name.

KEY WORDS: *world order, bipolarity, economic globalization, patterns of warfare, state structures, foreign policy, strategy, diplomacy*

The future world order can be assessed at least by three different models. The old postwar bilateral order, centered on Rus-

sia and the United States, is gone forever, although there are remnants of it left, especially focusing on nuclear weapons. In a state-centric world, the most likely alternative is a multipolar order in which the rise of China, and to lesser extent the European Union and India, are transforming the international order. Of course, we can think in terms of different bipolar order that is based on the confrontation between China and the United States. There is a growing speculation whether this new bilateral competition, which is increasingly evidenced by a military confrontation in the Western Pacific, will erupt in the future in a hegemonic war or whether it will be limited to a peaceful competition for power [Allison 2017].

Bilateral competition – whether it will take place between the Soviet Union and the United States or between China and the US – is conditioned by differences in socio-political and cultural systems. This competition occurs usually between the leading democratic power and its autocratic challenger, and is at the same time ideological and power political in nature. There is always a chance of war in such a confrontation, but in particular in the present-day world the open use of force between major powers is unlikely both in bipolar and multipolar systems. It is primarily due to nuclear weapons that are major deterrent against their use by any major power possessing them. Even the use of conventional military force by nuclear-weapon powers is unlikely because of the fear that it might escalate into full-scale devastation [Väyrynen 2006].

The models of polarity are, however, too state-centric and concentrate on simplified measures of power resources. It is argued, for example, that traditional theories of the outbreak of war and power transitions can be disastrously wrong as they use various gross measures of national power. Instead, they should be using measures of net power resources in which the

costs of producing power should be subtracted from the gross resources. Such an exercise would lead to better understanding of why China lost the Opium War with Great Britain in the 19th century or why the United States was able to defeat the Soviet Union in the Cold War. In other words, the net power is a better predictor in the ability to start a war and prevail in it [Beckley (1) 2018; Beckley (2) 2018].

However, such calculations of power resources, even if they take its cost into account, are often too simplified as they do not consider, for example, the role of nuclear weapons. They are, after all, a great equalizer in relations between nuclear-weapon powers. A neat distinction between unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity is often unwarranted and, for instance, various bipolar systems may differ significantly from each other. Both US-Soviet relations during the Cold War and the US-Chinese relations today can be considered loosely as bipolar systems, but they are very different in many regards. In the former system, bipolarity was primarily of military nature, while in the latter bipolarity is manifested increasingly in the economic sphere. Also the degree of economic interdependence and the contestation over global governance differ significantly in two systems [Maher 2018, pp. 497–502].

Power calculations do not either consider the intensive interdependence that ties most nations together. In an interdependent world, states are still dominant actors, but they are constrained by financial forces and industrial innovation. Leading states have different capacity to innovate and grow, and these forces have created entirely new structures for international relations. These structures are both relatively independent of state-based relations (such as SWIFT and ICANN) and cut across the interstate relations (e.g. transnational investment and capital flows). In such world, economic sanctions by major states and corporations play an increas-

ingly important role. Economic sanctions are still most often executed by states, but their impact reverberates beyond the traditional politico-military power resources.

The third model predicts the dissolution of the inter-state model as we know it. The state-centric framework, whether it is dominated by political or economic forces, is too narrow to check the coming rise of primarily internal actors. They may be political or economic insurgents and militias, actors of malevolent globalization such as smugglers or human traffickers, and leading transnational industrial and financial corporations. This augurs the rise of a new “mediaeval order” which states can be only partial direct. There are no commanding centers in this order and hence no centralised coordination capacity. The inter-state structures of governance have ceased to exist and societies are not organized by states but are structured along the “feudal” lines.

It is possible to imagine also other types of international orders, such as those directed by a world state which governs the anarchy of interstate relations or domestic unruliness. The global order has a long pedigree of intellectual thinking, including the preponderance of ideas or international brotherhood or international law, but it has never been converted into effective global order. There are cases in which humanitarian concerns or ideas of the rule of law have briefly captured the political mind, but they never lasted for long and became a durable international order of peace and cooperation [Mazover 2012; Sands 2016].

Looking into the next thirty years or so, hardly any of these models will dominate. Military and political factors are increasingly complemented by transnational economic forces, and the role of states to govern them are growing weaker. For instance, the stress on military competition between China and the United States do not take into account extensive inter-

dependence which exist between the two economies. Deterrence situation between them is muted by the US dependence on Chinese purchases of American federal bonds. They are the real nuclear option in their mutual relations

The rise of authoritarian tendencies, with accompanying protectionist bend, may serve as an antidote to trends towards anti-state forces. An illustrative example can be obtained from the fact that before the global financial crisis in 2008 over 50 per cent of the worldwide product was derived from international trade. In 2017, this share had declined to 35 per cent. For some, this suggests that the world economy is turning to a more autarkic direction. Yet, there are many scholars who argue that trend towards globalization is an inevitable tendency which ultimately leads to a great convergence of individual cultures and societies [Chanda 2007]. The recent slowdown in the process of globalization is only a temporary aberration.

On the other hand, the centralization of economic and security power within states necessarily calls for countervailing opposition and hence fragmentation. World politics is essentially dialectical by its nature: structures call for counter structures, forces give rise to counterforces, and ideas elicit counter ideas. International relations have never reached a stationary phase, not at least over a longer period of time. Domestic changes regularly feed into relations between states which, in turn, constrain the internal politics, in particular in the smaller nations. That is why world politics is in constant flux and it can never attain a stable, permanent solution.

The demise of old bipolar world

The end of the WW II saw the creation of a bipolar world. Most of the world powers have been devastated by the war and even seemingly victorious powers, such as

France and Great Britain, had lost much of their interwar influence. They tried to stick to their previous imperial domains, but the course of history in the 1950s and the 1960s showed that their time as dominant powers were past the pole. They were unable to retain their empires and lost them gradually as a result of anticolonial revolts and warfare. Imperial Japanese system was unable to survive and its condition of existence was to rely on the dominant power in the Pacific, the United States. Japan was able, however, to compensate its political and military decline by its economic success in the postwar world. In a way, the rise of Japan and Germany from the ashes of the world war was a result of the war itself. They rose like a Phoenix because they were able rebuilt their devastated economies from the ground up under the aegis of the state power (ordoliberalism in the German case).

China was plagued by tumultuous power struggles and the civil war which the Communists won in 1949. The new China was unable to develop during the unruly years of Mao and dependence on the Soviet Union, and it suffered several setbacks in its quest for a classless society. Then, in 1979, Deng Tsiao-ping proclaimed a new era of openness in China when the economic expansion and the profit motive became the leitmotifs of its politics: however, without the Communist Party relinquishing its grip on political power. The Chinese success has been, in part, due to the link established between the past civilization and the imperatives of modernization by Deng and his successors.

The continued dominance of the Communist Party was hardly the priority of Western powers, but they were even more fearful of its political instability in China of which there was ample evidence from earlier periods of history. Moreover, major transnational companies were attracted by the growing size of huge Chinese market believing, together with their national po-

litical elites, that its economic integration will bring with itself the rise of the middle class and the spread of the market power to change the domestic system. China has been indeed growing by leaps, but the promise of democracy and human rights is nowhere to be seen.

The Soviet Union emerged from the WW II as a victorious power, albeit it had also suffered immensely from the war. It was dominant Eurasian power, whose tentacles reached deep in Central Europe through its new allies conquered in the aftermath of the world war. The territory in-between Hitler's and Stalin's empires suffered also grievous humanitarian and material costs [Snyder 2010; Applebaum 2012]. Because of the huge investment in hard military power, and underinvestment in the material wellbeing of its citizens, it was able to acquire destructive military power on par with the United States. These two were the dominant powers of the postwar era, albeit with the distinction that the United States had a worldwide commercial empire and the global military power unequalled by any other actor. The Soviet empire was, however, unique in its degree of power concentration and geographical spread. It was "the most singular geopolitical innovation in the twentieth century; no communist states existed at the beginning of the century and none of significance remained by the start of the twenty-first" in Europe [Mason 2018, p. 54].

The Soviet Union was primarily a continental power which only in the 1970s started to obtain an active maritime dimension. Up and until the same period, the United States was also the leader in the nuclear arms race, but then approximate equality was achieved in the 1970s by the Soviet Union. The numerical equality mattered little, however, because both great powers had an overkill capacity and they were able to destroy each other, and the world many times over. The world politics was colored by great-power bilateralism

and militarized tensions between them, but short of open war. The Cuban crisis in 1962 and the Euromissile crisis in the beginning of the 1980s were particularly critical periods in great-power relations and the expectations of nuclear war were real.

The contest between the Soviet Union and the United States was in one sense between equals. Both had adequate military power to contain each other and in the 1950s the doctrine of nuclear deterrence started to characterize their mutual relationship. At the same time deterrence acted as a constraint on their expansive policies and was accompanied by peaceful co-existence which propagated the view that a military confrontation between the two great powers was not historically inevitable. These powers had, on the other hand, incompatible ideologies, capitalism and communism, which both claimed universal validity as paths of socio-economic development. Thus, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States was characterized not only by nuclear deterrence, but also by a systemic competition of two incompatible ideologies and socio-economic systems (for encompassing surveys of the Cold War, see [Westad 2007; Westad 2017; Stöver 2007]. The final phase of the Cold War is well told by [Service 2015]).

The international system of bipolarity was not, however, on firm structural foundations. The Soviet system was economically much smaller and its capacity to innovate, in particular from the 1970s on, was much weaker than that of the West. These strains on the Soviet system started to gradually show themselves, with the political stagnation strengthening these tendencies. Even though there was much talk in the 1970s of the United States as a declining great power, the systemic contest became much more unequal and resulted in the moral victory of the West in the turn of the 1990s. The Soviet Union had turned out to be an “incomplete superpower”, to

quote an expression by the Australian political scientist, Paul Dibb [Dibb 1986]. There was a brief period of unipolarity in the 1990s, when the United States was the sole significant pole of power in the world, but its dominance was short-lived and was overshadowed by the relentless rise of China.

Compared with the historical record, Western Europe emerged from WWII as a weak and devastated continent. In 1957, the core of the European Union was formed, but the Western half of Europe failed to develop into an independent center of world politics, though single internal market gradually emerged and expanded. The European Union was thus an economic superpower, but not a strategic and military one. Despite efforts no single strategic rationale for its foreign policy was created, but the external orientation was divided between independent nation states. Neither its military capability was no match for the Soviet Union or the United States, but the security policy of its nation states was heavily dependent on transatlantic ties through NATO. In fact, the military power of Western Europe remained limited with the exception of the British and French armies. The European Union can be primarily characterized as the civilian union with its leading state, Germany, being especially reluctant to use force in its external policy [Sheehan 2008].

Toward an interdependent world

Nations are sovereign power containers which are differentiated by boundaries controlled by the states. You still have to prove your identity at the border upon demand and often need a visa when travelling across them. Human mobility is not entirely new thing in the world, however. To the contrary, large-scale migration of human beings and other living organisms is a constant factor in human histo-

ry. In the turn of the 20th century, masses of people moved from underdeveloped parts of Europe to North America, but also to Australia and Latin America. People were on the move and there were fewer restrictions to such a mobility.

The rise of transnational corporations reflected the emergence of new centers of wealth, often of robber baron variety, and they also forged entirely new linkages across the borders. Giant factories were erected both in socialist and capitalist countries, but difference between them was that companies of capitalist variety developed transnational networks and adopted new technologies and management models. Technological innovation occurred still primarily in the West, but a labor-intensive production started to move to Asia in the 1970s, where, for instance, electronics industry, like Foxconn, established huge plants for subcontracting and assembly. The industrial companies were not any more self-standing production units, but parts of huge global exchange of products and technologies across political boundaries (for historical development of industrial corporations, see [Freeman 2018]).

Companies in Eastern Central Europe, which were earlier parts of socialist central planning, became integrated with the Western, in particular German, production networks. German companies, especially automotive industry, carved their own industrial spheres of interests in, for example, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Croatia. The unification of Germany was the final seal of its rise to a dominant material position in Western Europe. Yet, at the same time she continued to pursue cautious foreign policy and was reluctant to develop military power commensurate with its political standing.

New means of communication revolutionized both physical transportation and telecommunication permitting much of the world to function as a single entity.

Rapid development of technology also facilitated building up by major powers formidable fighting machines both on land, air, and sea. Thus developed a bifurcated international system. On the one hand, there was a state-centric world in which major powers dominated and the degree of polarity was one of its main characteristics. In this world, the dominance of the United States, Russia's efforts to stick to its great-power status, and China's relentless rise to compete with the United States were prevalent features. Yet, it would be misleading to describe world solely in terms of military power and state structures.

New era augured in the late 19th century in international integration and interdependence. This period was characterized, however, by primitive interdependence in comparison of the postwar development. Interdependence was high if measured by the national dependence on trade flows and, to some extent, of direct investments. The primitive nature of interdependence was reflected in the extent by which the protectionist ideologies, fascism and communism, were able to take hold of much of the European continent. Under the impact of the Great Depression, they formed autarkic national or regional economies which raised, practically in every country, tariff barriers around themselves. Japanese and German efforts to establish spheres of interests in their regional surroundings are typical of these efforts.

The result was a relative decline in international economic and human interdependence and the growth of political chauvinism. The difference between interwar and postwar periods is manifested, for example, in the nature of warfare. The interwar period and the two world wars were featured by interstate wars between major powers, while the postwar world was more peaceful in this regard and the international dynamics was fueled more by anticolonial and civil wars. The WW I has been characterized as the chemists' war, as a re-

sult of chemical attacks at Somme and elsewhere, while the WWII has been dubbed as the physicists' war because of the invention and the use of atomic bomb. The massive killing power of nuclear weapons was soon complemented by increasing technological sophistication of means of destruction [Gat 2006; Ferguson 2006; Friedman 2017].

The end of the WW II resulted in major transformation of the world economy. Socialist countries formed their own economic bloc which was large enough to operate initially on its own, assisting the Soviet Union materially in the recovery from the ravages of the war. The postwar economic history is one of the victory of global capitalism which was steered from its undisputable center, the United States. Its predominance created some resistance, in particular in France, but the rest of the Western world had only one possibility, to adjust. The new transnational concentrations of capital – corporations, bank and a plethora of other financial entities such as pools of eurocapital – were in the driver's seat. Their operations were steered from London and New York, the financial centers of the world. Some two-thirds of all international exchanges were dollar-based. Globalization and the introduction of new technologies were unstable elements in the new economic order [Frieden 2006, pp. 392–412, 432–472].

The nature of capitalism started also to change. It has always been international, but now it was transformed into genuine transnational phenomenon with growing cross-border linkages. It did not create a genuine borderless world, as some authors claimed, but it was built on transnational production and commodity chains in which corporations established economic activities on the basis of their profitability, access to labor force and markets, and size of the surrounding purchasing power. The result was a production behemoth in which the end products were put togeth-

er from components prepared in dozens of different countries. Although the countries aimed to limit to spread of autonomous transnational capitalism, for instance by the rules of origin, but most of them gladly abided by its requirements and even competed with each other. Some of them, for example Ireland and Luxembourg, made themselves shelters of low taxation from which in particular US leading tech companies were able to benefit handsomely.

Productive activities became transnational and of international trade some one-half was conducted within multinational companies. Trade was increasingly derived from international investments with their transnational character. The world industrial system became detached in the capitalist countries from their national moorings and it assumed a global nature which individual states could barely regulate. In particular the European Union was engaged in the development of a single internal market in which the free flow of factors of production was expected to take place without national restraints. The primary motivation of this move was to increase the competitive capacity of individual nations and companies which were too small to survive in a cut-throat competition from major centers of capitalism. Nations had basically two options: either their leading companies became truly transnational in their activities or they were purchased in their early stages by transnational industrial giants. Only in a few countries state-owned national champions were able to prosper.

Even more transnational than international production was the international financial business which not only developed cosmopolitan connections between national banks, but also created, from the early 1970s on, shadow banking operations and derivative securities. They opened up new speculative possibilities for financial institutions. There are ample examples of billions of dollars of illegally ac-

quired wealth which was criminally laundered by these institutions and sheltered in tax havens.

The postwar world can be divided into two periods, viz. regulated capitalism and neoliberal capitalism, dividing line between them being timed to the late 1970s. In the Western world, the first era was characterized by Keynesian demand management when state intervention and co-operative labor market policies stabilized the economy, although in Europe the existence of national currencies and fiscal policies resulted in competitive devaluations and other nationalist moves. The regulated regime of capital accumulation prevented a steep increase in social inequality and restrained the occurrence of deep financial crises as money supply was controlled.

The neoliberal regime was ushered in the late 1970s when the international flows of capital were liberalized. The role of central banks was reduced, political control of international transfer of financial resources was eased, and assumptions of efficient markets prevailed. Money markets were supposed to be self-regulating and public intervention into its operations were thought to lead to suboptimal results. The regulatory power was transferred from political realm to markets which were regarded by business people as an optimal way to steer economic processes (and at the same time privatize profits). The neoliberal model of capitalism hit its limits in 2008 by internally generated crisis which called for the state to save the capitalism from itself. Thus, the costs of private profit generation had to be borne by public authorities and the search of a new model of accumulation was started [Kotz 2018, pp. 29–55].

The crisis of neoliberalism was visible in the decline of economic growth in Europe and the North America in which also the level of income in the lower strata of population stagnated. The rapid rise of China and other emerging nations narrowed down the income differences be-

tween nations, but in practically all of them the Gini index in domestic income, measuring inequality, increased. This was the case independently of whether the trend towards deeper economic inequality was caused by globalization, technological development, institutional designs, or all of them together.

These tendencies have exacerbated by the freedom in world trade, has produced economic rents in the form of breakthrough technologies and reduced the tax burden in upper income brackets. All these changes have contributed to higher degrees of inequality within the economies. A well-known fact, revealed by Oxfam studies, is that twenty richest persons in the world control as much wealth as the poorest one-half. In particular, the reduction of the tax rates in 1 per cent and 0.1 per cent of topmost income brackets have increased in the industrialized countries the degree of income and capital equality. Historically, the shift towards capital, with higher productivity, at the expense of personal income, have caused the tendency toward inequality and, as a consequence, its growing dominance in the national economies [Scheidel 2017, pp. 405–423; Piketty 2013].

On the other hand, the leading powers of semi-periphery, especially China, have witnessed decades of strong economic growth. The redistribution of economic resources away from the North to the East and South has been the result. It is manifested in the considerable number of billionaires in China, but also the fading away of poverty and the rise of new middle class. The role of state-owned companies has significantly diminished and in the 2010s state controlled only some 10 per cent of companies in the country. On the other hand, the distribution of budget funds to these loss-producing companies have significantly contributed to growing domestic debt. The accumulation of funds in China – its holdings of foreign curren-

cies amount to some 3000 trillion dollars -have permitted it to become engaged in huge shopping spree and major infrastructures projects across the world economy [Mason 2018, pp. 126–133].

As a result, the global economy became more open and dominant, and the era of bipolarity was over as the United States was in decline and the Soviet Union was dissolved. It was replaced by a new constellation of powers which has been called either multipolarity or non-polarity depending on whether leading powers are regarded as being in charge or not. Those who consider that no major power is able to steer the course of international affairs speak of non-polarity or zero-polarity. Gone are the days of hegemony and hegemonic stability which has become even more obvious during the Trump presidency in the United States. In geopolitical terms, one can speak of “off-shore military strategy”, in which the United States has significant military power which it increasingly projects from home base rather than deploys it internationally.

In any case, the steering capacity of major states has been thinning out and global dynamics is more and more a result of the activities of non-state actors, especially the economic ones. The state structures have not withered away, however, but they still affect substantial parts of international relations. In particular, the world is increasingly divided between autocratic and democratic spheres in which state interests play a more central role in autocratic systems. Yet, these political dynamics increasingly interact with underlying economic changes. Autocratic governance spearheads accumulation of economic resources rather than controls it.

To be able to capture the nature of the present international system, one cannot treat it as a totality, but one has to discern its fragmented character. In other words, the United States is not any more capable of reigning over the entire world, except

perhaps in the margins, but its influence is geographically more limited. At a minimum, one has to distinguish between East Asian and European subsystems where the influence patterns diverge from each other (for early analyses of the differences between these subsystems, see [Väyrynen 2001; Hurrell 2007]). In the East Asia and Western Pacific, there is an increasing bifurcation or duality of power structures to be seen. China, as an economically rapidly developing and as a demographic giant, controls the economic hierarchy. It stands in the center of organized capitalism that is characteristic of the entire region of Northeast Asia

Countries like Australia, Philippines, South Korea, and Vietnam increasingly bandwagon China and its huge appetite for markets and natural resources. It is concluding lucrative bilateral economic agreements with neighboring countries and even if there is some resistance towards its “debt trap” strategy, China’s expanding economic heft assures that countries in the region become increasingly dependent on it. The “belt and road” strategy, and the establishment of such multilateral financial institutions as the AIIB (Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank) aims to expand China’s influence even beyond the borders of East Asia, to Europe and Africa. These efforts have become increasingly obvious during the presidency of Xi Jinping, from 2012 from on, when he has consolidated his power and his thought has become to emulate Mao’s thinking of China’s future.

On the other hand, the United States is still in the apex of security hierarchy of Indian and Pacific oceans. There are, of course, challenges to its role as a security provider, including China’s determination to develop a full-fledged triad of nuclear weapons by investing also in aircraft carriers capable of carrying and launching such weapons. The United States has military expenditures that are many times great-

er than any other country which does prevent China from challenging the American security order especially in South China Sea. China aims adamantly to stick to its control of coastal seas within so-called “nine dash line”. The United States will stay, however, at the top of security hierarchy as long as it can keep Japan and South Korea as its loyal allies, and Australia, India, Singapore and Vietnam friendly disposed to its presence in Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. In the mind of one observer, “there is a growing mixture of hegemony and balance within the region”, but in the opinion of the same author the duality of power structures now prevails in East Asia. The smaller powers in the region benefit from this duality as it permits them to negotiate and balance between the competing great-power interests [Ikenberry 2016].

In Europe, a new situation has emerged. While it was possible for a few years ago to speak of a European security order, this is hardly the case any more. Domestic dynamics prevail in all parts of a wider European system and direct international developments. We have entered in the era of *Primat der Innenpolitik*. In the United States domestic inequality has increased as a result of economic globalization and technological change. Domestic elites have become increasingly greedy and the growing amounts of domestic and transnational capital wash around in society. Most recently many of the elite members have turned their gaze towards lucrative political appointments, including the Presidency, and if not the top political positions, then major charitable operations.

The growing cap between wealthy liberal metropolitan areas in the eastern and western coasts and populist areas in the Midwest and the South, that have failed to keep abreast of economic dynamics, is growing. This economic polarization has been accompanied with political division in the predominantly Democratic and Republican regions which, in part, ex-

plains the rise of Donald Trump. The political polarization of the United States, and the offshore strategy in foreign relations, is accentuated by the electoral system which gives undue emphasis on small conservative states in the election of the Senate and the President. Traditional political institutions, which have ensured long-term stability, has grown in the United States weaker at the expense of populist movements. These movements are integrated with Evangelical Christianity and outright racist forces.

In Western Europe, the common political system is in turmoil. The European Union, and NATO, have expanded to former socialist countries, but the expansion has not added to the strength of the Union; to the contrary. Many new member states in Eastern Central Europe have gone in their own ways and are challenging in multiple fronts the leading powers of the Western Europe. The rise of nationalism, even its nastier forms, is typical of French, German, and Italian politics, making them actively oppose common EU policy or transforming them, in practical terms, ungovernable. It seems to be impossible to agree within European Union on various political issues such as common immigration policy, joint border control, or relations with Russia. Although common internal market and the common currency, the euro, also face uphill struggle, the strong capitalist underpinning of the Union seems to be inexorably driving the economic integration forward. The decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, though the issue remains at this writing unclear, is bound to add to the political disintegration of the EU.

The United States, and most members of the European Union, are turning inwards and the all-European ties are fraying. This tendency is also visible in Russia during the last ten years or so which is growingly isolated from her European partners. Russia is a minor version of the old Sovi-

et Union, but she maintains also a considerable fleet of nuclear weapons. In terms of weapons of mass destruction, it is second great power on par with the United States. It has maintained nationalism and religion as mainstays of social and political order and is extending its power in Ukraine and Syria to prove its great-power ambitions. Otherwise also Russia is turning inside and shows little practical interest in integrating with the West. To the contrary, it considers NATO, which has, true, approached east in its expansionary quest, to be its primary political and military threat. In the same way, the European Union is regarded as inimical to its efforts to dominate Eastern Central Europe. The biggest problem of Russia is its failure to modernize with technological innovations its economy and converge its system into a “competition state”.

New medievalism

The concept of medievalism departs from the assumption that international relations are returning again to the Middle Ages when feudalism was the dominant mode of production. Institutionally, the key characteristics of feudalism was the dispersal of power manifested in the existence of multiple, competing sovereigns. The feudal society was vertically segmented; each king had personal ties with nobles who, in turn, extracted rent from the peasants. Another key feature was that the land was by the far the most important resource. Due to the barriers to the growth of productivity of land, the feudal society was economically stagnant which tended to push it to periodic crises when the environmental conditions deteriorated. Therefore, the only means of expansion in the feudal system was either to intensify rents-seizing from the subordinated peasants or engage in the colonization of new lands. The latter could happen either by peaceful reclamation of land or the conquest by

force. The nobles faced the risk of peasant revolts which were more likely the more intense the exploitation became.

The colonization of land was possible only if the king was commanding a military force that was effective enough to defeat his peers in war. In sum, the expansion and appropriation of land was in the core of feudalism which helps to explain why feuding was recurrent in the mediæval and early modern times. Over time, the growing autonomy of peasants permitted their political mobilization, fueled by shrinking margin of subsistence due to the population growth and the scarcity of land. This forced the nobility to resort to increasing coercion to extract enough rent from the peasants. The result was the growing separation of production and appropriation which called, in turn, for more violent measures to continue to redistribute resources in the old manner [*Teschke* 1998; *Epstein* 2000; *Kriedte* 1980].

The question is, of course, to what extent the European societies in the medieval era resembles of today’s global world. Obviously, state structures in international relations are now more robust than they were in medieval times. On the other hand, the globalisation is creating a growing range of challenges to the autonomous policy-making capacity, authority and legitimacy of nation-states. A new security dilemma, a term coined by Philip Cerny, is challenging the ability of states to provide both international and domestic security for their citizens. The world is not organized only by the state boundaries, but aside the basic functions, there are cross-cutting and overlapping levels of governance and fragmentation of economic and political spaces. At the same time, there are inadequate centripetal forces to form effective systems of global and regional governance; the governance gaps are visible and real. Civil wars, either with or without international participation, are a frequent occurrence, in particular in developing countries. The re-

sult “will be not mere chaos, however, but something resembling the ‘durable disorder’ of the Middle Ages” [Cerny 1998].

To check the validity of the (neo)medieval thesis, one should divide the world into two: zones of instability and of stability. The former would include much of *tiers monde* in Latin and Central America, Africa, and parts of Asia. In them there are no systems of centralized governance, but the maintenance of peace and security is primarily dependent on the successful coordination of policies between the states. However, there are always the forces of economic, political and religious movements of opposition, often cutting across the state lines, which challenge the prerogatives of states to the control of people and resources. It is not farfetched to compare the life in such zones of instability with that of the late feudal periods when the role of lords and nobility were challenged by popular uprisings. These revolts have also been led by non-democratically elected leaders which were had been able to raise resources outside the state framework to strengthen their position.

The opposition movements in zones of instability are financed in non-conventional ways both by state and non-state actors. Many a state does not conform with the Weberian notion in which central authority is the sole source of violence and military power. People are left to political whims and patrimonial rules of rent-seeking individual leaders. They are often, however, minor “celebrities” rather than leaders of larger domains.

Recent statistics of warfare indicate that civil wars are on the rise again. Pure interstate wars have become a rarity in international relations of today, while civil wars have gained in urgency. The number of civil wars declined somewhat in the 2000s giving credence to the thesis that the world has become more peaceful, that a new age of enlightenment is in the offing. However, the number of civil wars has increased in

recent years, especially in the unstable arc of crisis stretching from Africa to the Middle East and parts of Asia. Latin American countries have suffering from high crime rates and other forms of violent domestic instability short of war. There is a mixture of causes for these violent conflicts ranging from ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and Syria through violence fueled oil and minerals in Africa to warfare between drug cartels in Latin America.

Statistics indicate that in 2014–2016 a little over 100.000 people died of warfare. After 2005, both the internal conflicts have increased and the number of refugees has been growing. In 2016, there were in all 60 violent domestic conflicts, increasing from 30 in 2005, and 40 million refugees. The number of people died in violent conflicts had grown five-fold since 2005 [Bewaffnete Konflikte 2018, pp. 45–49; Armed Conflict Survey 2018]. These figures clearly indicate that an increasing share of armed conflicts occur within national borders in which external powers tend to become key players.

A central feature of these new types of war – which have existed since the 1970s – is that the parties to them are seldom states, but various types of militias and other informal groups [Joas 2000]. In some cases, these militias may be organized by private warlords who are rent-seeking private entrepreneurs searching by violent means loot for themselves and their supporters. In other cases, they are emulated by political, ethnic or religious grievances which gain increasing autonomy for their groups. In any case, the militia groups differ considerably from each other and it may be difficult to find for them of common denominators. To some extent they are coordinated by transnational terrorist groups, such as ISIS or al-Shahab, but they still form a patchwork of disparate groups rather a unified organization.

A common denominator of militias is that they are nonstate armed groups with

some degree of organization. They may be united by national, ethnic or religious identity and may occasionally have extensive political ambitions. All of them challenge traditional notions of nation-state sovereignty and sacrosanct conceptions of defense of that sovereignty. Some of the militias may take care of social welfare of populations under their rule and collect taxes or trade in valuable commodities to collect funds for this purpose. Again, local conditions rather than any grand designs determine the nature and outcomes of militia operations (for a study of various outcomes of militia operations, see [Biberman, Turnbull 2018, pp. 695–727]).

Concluding remarks

There is any number of analyses which operate in state-centric framework and built their conclusions on the distribution of power among the leading states. In a similar fashion, there is a plethora of studies which sees the movement towards a borderless world in which major economic forces, such as capitalism or technology, define the direction of movement. There is also examples of studies which considers the world to be on the verge of collapse back into a “medieval chaos” which both state structures or patterns of interdependence cease to exist.

It would be too simplified to assert that any of these models are a true description of reality. Obviously, all them contain a kernel of truth, but to what degree and what is their mutual relationship are open questions. At one level, in particular nuclear weapons, bipolarity still holds true. Both Russia and United States have committed themselves to qualitatively upgrade their arsenals and the future of arms control, including the INF Treaty and the future of START agreement, looks unpromising. The European security order will return to the beginning of the 1980s when

the Russian intermediate nuclear weapons will be targeted again on Western Europe. In such a situation, the United States must decide whether she will supply corresponding weapons to her NATO allies and they must decide whether they will accept them on their territory. In all likelihood, this will turn out to be very a divisive process within NATO.

Of course, the degree of bipolarity is decreasing even in the nuclear field as new powers are acquiring nuclear weapons. Yet, Russia and the United States will retain for foreseeable future their primogeniture in nuclear-weapons development as they are prepared to take new steps in this field. Moreover, there are several powers which have decided to give up their nuclear weapons and their development (e.g. Brazil, Libya, South Africa and Ukraine). They seem to regard nuclear weapons as much as a liability as the source of strength and authority. On the other, there are new powers that may be contemplating the acquisition of nuclear-weapons capability (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Turkey).

The argument that the significance of polarity is disappearing in international relations can be sustained by decreasing influence of sovereignty and hard military power. Nuclear weapons are unusable and economic resources are only partially controlled by the nation states. The financial, industrial, and economic forces have developed their own independent dynamics. Transnational banks and corporations create their financial and production networks which cut across borders. Huge material and symbolic resources are at their disposal and impose limits on national political decisions, especially on smaller powers. This tendency towards globalization has been resisted by larger powers, such as China and Russia, which make efforts to emphasize their sovereignty and national power. The world is at the crossroads of these competing tendencies; the future is a seesaw pattern between auto-

cratic nationalism and freewheeling globalization. The third factor, opposing globalization, is burgeoning populism which calls for strong leadership to protect national employment and fight the growing inequality within nations.

In these two models national sovereignty retains at least some influence, although it is undermined in a world characterized by globalization and interdependence. In a unipolar world, globalization of sorts prevails; it is of hegemonic character dominated by the leading state. National sovereignty does not disappear in a unipolar system, but it assumes a global form; sovereignty of the dominant hegemonic power becomes a global mantle. In a bipolar and multipolar system, sovereignty becomes a national feature or it may be undermined by alliance politics. Most often world politics is the contest between national sovereignties.

Today's world is characterized at one level by two types of bipolarity. In the US-Russian system it lives on by the existence of nuclear weapons and the determination to use national power to promote specific ends. In this relationship, one can hardly speak of complete bipolarity as it happens increasingly complex economic and technological world in which Russia is unable to compete. The other type of emerging bipolarity is to be seen in the US-Chinese relationship which is, in economic terms, increasingly balanced, especially in the Asian domain. Power struggle in the economic field continues and even extends to the global institutions. In the military field, the United States continues to dominate for the foreseeable future, but overall its power position is in decline [Maher 2018].

The United States is in critical turning point in its relations with China which is, slowly but surely, expanding its international role. China does not want an open, and even less a violent conflict with the United States which is in the throes of deciding which sort of policy it prefers to

pursue. The alternatives are accommodation or containment, or a combination of them. The dominant view today is forceful containment both in economic and military fields which also the Trump administration favors (for arguments of this kind of policy, see [Friedberg 2018]). The sad state of both the US-Chinese and the US-Russian relations, which are complemented by a precarious Russian-Chinese alliance, augurs the years of turmoil to come in international relations. This is the dominant model of the international system of the near future which is complicated by the partially ungovernable non-state actors and the economic system which has its own dynamics and actors.

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АННОТАЦИЯ. В послевоенных международных отношениях можно представить себе три альтернативных мировых порядка. На протяжении большей части холодной войны существовал биполярный принцип, построенный вокруг фактора обладания ядерным оружием. Однако этот мировой порядок был неполным. Соединенные Штаты и Советский Союз противостояли друг другу с одинаковой способностью взаимного уничтожения, но с точки зрения экономического и глобального влияния Соединенные Штаты были могущественнее. Нарастание экономической и технологической динамики еще более усилило американское влия-

ние, но и спровоцировало рост негосударственных субъектов, в том числе транснациональных корпораций и банков, независимых от государств. Одновременно с глобализацией мира можно наблюдать рост негосударственных субъектов в военно-политической сфере. Возникновение миропорядка третьего типа иногда называют неомедиевским миром, в котором возродились некоторые центральные принципы феодализма. Ни одна из этих моделей мирового порядка не может доминировать в современном мире, и ни одна из них, вероятно, не победит в ближайшее время. В последнее время, когда глобализация страдает от различных не-

удач, вновь преобладают отношения, ориентированные на взаимодействие государств. Однако их центр тяжести более не лежит в области военного соперничества между Соединенными Штатами и Россией, хотя некоторые из его элементов остаются. Глобализация внесла новые составляющие в соперничество между государствами и наиболее ярко проявилась в американо-китайском противостоянии в борьбе за экономическое и технологическое доминирование в глобализированной мировой экономике. Иными словами, новый тип экономической биполярности завоевывает позиции и лишь вторично проявляется в военных отношениях. Принципы ведения войны в последние десятилетия были дополнены боевыми действиями негосударственных вооруженных сил и возникновением новых феодальных моделей поведения, но они не были достаточно выражены, чтобы оправдать переименование всего мирового порядка в соответствии с этим определением.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: *мировой порядок, биполярность, экономическая глобализация, принципы ведения войны, государственные структуры, внешняя политика, стратегия, дипломатия*

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