

# The Controlled Disorder as a USA Transitional Strategy toward Multipolarity

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to show the deliberate and systematic actions of the world superpower (USA) in creating a state of controlled chaos. The reason for such an approach lies in the inevitable change in global relations in which the superpower must define its new position and prepare for the near future in which it no longer has a dominant role. This discourse can be used to analyze the reasons for the war in Ukraine, as well as the reasons for the rise in tensions on the great dividing line between East and West. Considering that the established global order is slowly disappearing, and the emerging new multipolar world is increasingly showing signs of strength and vitality, all this opens the door to a general rethinking of future relations. The already disavowed international law and unclear international order are a factor in increasing insecurity throughout the world, while the double standards that have become a basic feature of the Western democracies speak of the serious problems that global politics has fallen into. Additionally, American militarism intertwined with concept of inalienable rights hardly works as universal value anymore. "America first", Trump's slogan, can and should be understood in this sense as a return to the isolationist policy, but also to exploit all the opportunities that brings the benefits to US, and not as a necessary call for remaining in the position of a superpower.

**Keywords:** Multipolarity, Chaos Theory, International order, USA

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## Introduction

The collapse of liberal internationalism, as a promise and concept of promotion of democracy and a “rules based international order” happen very quickly. Failures in liberal trademarks such as military intervention and nation-building, primarily in Afghanistan, Syria and Libya proved that liberal internationalism’s collapse has accelerated, but also the decline of Washington’s global power is factual too.

Although it is still more acceptable than Russian autocracy or “socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era” over decades, it lost power and credibility. Although the foundation of liberalism is rooted in aim to protect life even in foreign, non-liberal, undemocratic environment, it has become a battle over values in which liberalism must prevail. This predominance of ideology over life and humanity, most of all, has been lately demonstrated in Gaza after October 2023, when Western governments officially and almost unequivocally supported Zionist genocidal campaign.

The emergence of polycentrism in the global affairs also affects the whole Balkans. The idea that the entire European continent, due to the visible loss of its global position, can be a space of polar non-belonging, is gaining its proponents. Unstable governments in Bulgaria as well as the growth of autocratic sentiments in Romania, Serbia and most Central European countries contribute to strong socio-political movements in this European space. As successful as the Euro-Atlantic integrations have been in the last thirty years, so many questions have popped up over the heads of many about the future.

Of course, the possible emergence of non-polarity in Europe depends on the political choices of the main protagonists, and future development will depend on the evolution of the role of the US at the global and European level, the ability of the EU to overcome the current crisis and the stronger development of forms of international action.

This would not necessarily mean non-polarity. A stronger European presence within NATO and less dependence on the US could be one of the solutions. The current tensions over Trump’s goal to take over Greenland and impose high

taxes on EU countries are the beginning of a serious reconsideration of the future relations between the EU and the US. In this regard, despite the chaos that arose between the EU and Russia after February 24, 2022, the announcement that EU countries could start buying more gas and oil from Moscow again speaks for itself.

The main conclusion of this discussion is, therefore, the need to face the reality of new international relations and, based on those relations, to define new general international standards. Otherwise, the state of tension and rejection of redefinition will lead to further deepening of the conflict with more serious consequences.

Deep global problems are dramatically changing relations of world great powers. On the other side, their real aims and intentions are still covered by the mist of current geopolitical processes. The idea that global actors are in the process of repositioning themselves within the order rather than advocating a fundamentally different project organizing international relations also makes sense (Alcaro, 2018: 166). But, this, too, is an additional argument to the inevitable change in the global politics.

The new global realities such as the shortage of food, lack of energy sources or lack of ambiguous efficiency of the United Nations (UN), have a strong impact on humankind. "War for medical equipment" and battle for vaccines during pandemic Covid-19, have directed nations toward an anxiety on how it will look like when the most fundamental needs such as food stuff become a tool in geopolitical arena. Indeed, for certain period of time food, as appeared in Ukrainian grain case, became a geopolitical tool in 2022, and again in the mid-2023.

At the first place, the crisis of liberal hegemony i.e., dictatorship of liberal paradigm causes these changes by allowing hectic positioning of the world powers for the projected future order (Mulaosmanovic, 2024: 251). China was strongly convinced about it in 2016 when Brexit happened and Trump, as bearer of isolationist policy instead of liberal universalism, became the US President. While the liberal order has been remarkably successful in certain ways, as Colgan (2019: 85). Argued, it has also become self-defeating due to deepening economic

inequality and policies that stemming from this, and partly due to the missteps of complacent elites, so that 2016 shook many supporters of liberalism.

Pursuit for liberal hegemony, as a main characteristic of the US foreign policy during Cold War period inevitably started to pale (Doshi, 2021: 307). Partial revitalization of NATO and Western unity due to war in Ukraine stopped some of the tendencies within the developed Northwest, but time-consuming geopolitical battle already creates cracks in that communality. On the other side, economic and financial flows are threatening to end the hegemony of US dollar as a global currency what also could have deep impact on Western alliances.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the paper is based on a somewhat different way of thinking about reality as such. Namely, due to the initial thought of the current feverish transition process that brings about a change in the general paradigm but also a strong redefinition of the world order, chaos theory and the theory of ontological uncertainty are intertwined and form the backbone of the text. Although chaos theory comes from the field of natural sciences, it has also had its application in social sciences, especially in the context of business strategy and the issue of the evolution of complex organizational relationships and organizational control of joint actions. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was seriously analyzed and written about by (social) scientists gathered at the Fernand Braudel Center (Ekeland, Prigogine, Birken), citing the growth of its importance in the future.

Chaos theory, which suggests that new, more complex organizational forms will appear more often, also seems adequate in studying the current “mutation” of the world order, i.e. it can be one of the attempts to explain the state of the international order in which we find ourselves (Levy, 1994: 171). The ability of this theory to demonstrate how a simple set of deterministic relationships can produce patterned but unpredictable outcomes is not limiting. Since chaotic systems do not return to the same state while outcomes, despite their unpredictability, are bounded and form patterns, it can be used to understand the behavior of certain agents.

The key point here, since chaotic systems are deterministic and have a determining equation that governs their behavior, is the behavior of the agent (US) who understands that he is in a state of chaos and that he has the opportunity to extract the necessary benefits from it. In the language of theory, US is an equation that has the tools to govern the behavior of the system. The question of the system, its behavior, survival or redefinition, therefore, is paramount in the behavior of a global power. In conditions of relative equilibrium, subsystem (ethnicities, races, politics, economics, agencies, businesses, churches, institutions could all constitute subsystems and all are interacting with one another while their interactions constitute even more subsystems) small differences do not affect the prevailing state of general equilibrium. However, in turbulent states that are far from equilibrium, there are conditions of exceptional sensitivity and potential adaptation due to the imbalance and influence of these sometimes-small differences. A random combination of subsystems can become so powerful as to disrupt order and equilibrium. At this moment ("singular moment" or "bifurcation point") it is impossible to determine in advance in which direction the change will take: whether the system will collapse or become a new, more differentiated higher level of order and balance (Seiter, 1995: 85).

But there are positive and negative feedback loops as a mechanism that maintains balance. Seiter is arguing (1995: 86) that "Under acceptable conditions, society constitutes a dynamic mix of balanced negative and positive feedback loops. In times of relative stability, the positive loops are held in check by the negative, and taken together they constitute those seemingly insignificant subsystems (...) All possible subsystems and their permutations are engaged with one another in a seething, boiling, cauldron of activity teeming with possibilities". The idea of the article is, therefore, that America has the possibility of relative control of feedback loops in a complex and at the breaking point "global society".

The logic of imperial decline, which is a kind of companion of highly developed societies, is a constant reminder of the inevitability of change in which those who are higher will descend to lower ranks (James, 2014: 38). It is precisely this

understanding of one's own position and concern for the "level and strength of possible decline" that opens up space for securing one's future position, not only in the physical sense but also in the ontological sense. The lessons of history serve precisely to understand possible scenarios and how to make them as acceptable as possible.

In this regard, the thinking of Brent Stephens was also used, who introduced the concepts of the Retreat Doctrine into the polemic about American isolationism, such as foreign policy freelancers (in the context of current international relations, they can be understood as states or even non-state actors who behave unpredictably, autonomously and independently) but also suprasystematic unpredictability. Suprasystemic unpredictability, which is both the cause and the main characteristic of the coming global disruption, overwhelms our systems and damages the reference points by which we usually consider the world. (Stephens, 2014:144). Suprasystemic unpredictability in this work is umbilically connected to chaos theory. It is possible to imagine that Donald Trump and everything he represents is precisely suprasystemic unpredictability or as its face.

Ontological in/security, on the other hand, would be a common characteristic of global powers that found themselves in tense confrontation in wider world areas. Ontological security, as Krasnodebska (2021: 137) argues, is rooted in a stable and consistent set of narratives about oneself and one's environment, which constitute the ways of orientation, through which an individual makes sense of the world. After Giddens' groundbreaking work in 1991 (*Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*), this subdiscipline within IR theory emerged as a valuable explanatory framework.

The conditions of globalization have certainly led to anxieties and identity crises, which have led to an increased likelihood of conflict and violent action. Globalization has also liberated collective traumas and ethnic conflicts, while migrations have opened up a large space for security and identity analyses. All of this has played an important role in explaining how global and regional actors have reacted to the post-Cold War unipolar hegemony and its end. Actors, as interpreted by Kinnval and Mitzen (2017:4), are considered ontologically secure when they feel that they have a sense of biographical continuity and wholeness

that is supported and recognized in and through their relationships with others. When the relationships and understandings upon which actors rely are destabilized, on the other hand, ontological security is threatened, and the result can be anxiety, paralysis, or violence. Globalization and the hegemony of liberalism have led to such difficult experiences all over the world.

While Russia and China perceived globalization, among other things, as an ontological threat and accordingly built mechanisms and even took aggressive steps to protect it, the EU and the US also felt a similar insecurity. Both due to the strengthening of authoritarianism in the East, which began to spill over into the liberal world, opening space for populist and right-wing forces, and due to the loss of one's own credibility, the protection of "European values" and "our way of life" (especially after 9/11/2001, reaching its peak with Trump) has jumped to the top of the political agenda.

The great financial crisis of 2008 also opened up big topics between the strongest actors of the international order. Narratives are activated as well as concepts that are imagined as their results (Russian world, Turkish world, Let's make America great again, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, etc.). The brilliant conclusion drawn by Stephens (2014: 167–168) back in 2014 still resonates and testifies to the deep awareness of many in USA about the coming change. It also testifies about understanding that it is an open process with a number of unknowns. It, at the end deals with the possibility of predicting future steps, that is, the control of the already mentioned feedback loops.

Yet as the American retreat becomes increasingly noticeable, adversaries sense a strategic opening to revise regional, and global, order in a way that's more to their liking. And our allies are forced to consider their security options in ways they haven't for many years, comfortable as they were under the U.S. security umbrella. This creates a geopolitical environment that is less predictable, less manageable, and potentially more violent. To compound the problem, non-state actors are increasingly capable of using limited means to profoundly alter the international security landscape. And the very concept of "state" is in many places collapsing

Ultimately, international relations are the study of interpretations. The hermeneutics of international relations reveals the possibility of multiple interpretations and it is not possible to single out the version of the most authentic interpretation that can explain international politics. (Putra, 2023: 10.) Therefore, no existing theory can explain everything completely because interpretations will continue to develop and multiply. In a complex globalized world, at a time when the supporting elements of the international order are breaking, this perspective is a brick in the wall that can remain but also be changed due to own porosity.

## **The Market Crises**

Economic flows after 2008 have increasingly become a means of manipulation and pressure on the entire global system. No matter how tense the claim of former Greek Finance Minister Varoufakis about the end of capitalism (at least as we know it) and the beginning of the era of technofeudalism may seem, with the second term of Donald Trump, this matter is also taking shape, especially due to the role of Elon Musk (Head of the Department of Government Efficiency/DOGE) in the new US administration.

Hypothesis that capitalism is dead (its dynamics no longer govern our economies) and it has been replaced by fundamentally different technofeudalism mainly based on two developments – the manner in which Western governments and central banks responded to the 2008 great financial crisis and the privatisation of the internet by America's and China's Big Tech (Varoufakis, 2023: 8-9).

Indeed, the privatization of the internet by Big Tech companies in the United States and China has had profound effects on the global market, reshaping industries, economies, and geopolitical dynamics. Google, Amazon, Meta, Apple, and Microsoft have become global leaders in search, e-commerce, social media, hardware, and cloud computing so their dominance has allowed them to set global standards for technology, data governance, and digital services. Chinese Companies like Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, and Huawei have expanded their influence too, particularly in Asia, Africa, and other emerging markets. They



dominate e-commerce, mobile payments and telecommunications infrastructure, often using state support, which provokes strong reactions from Western countries due to serious economic imbalances.

It is quite clear that the privatization of the internet has led to oligopolistic control, with US and Chinese firms capturing the majority of global market share in key sectors. This argument put forward by Varoufakis not only “holds water” but also proves to be stronger as time goes by. These companies often set de facto standards for technology (e.g., 5G, AI, cloud computing), forcing other countries to align with their ecosystems while that success has led to significant wealth accumulation, exacerbating global economic inequality.

This process has created a double-edged sword for the global market. While it has fostered innovation, economic growth and connectivity, it has also led to market concentration, geopolitical tensions and inequality. The continued growth of the influence of these tech giants faces the challenge of balancing innovation with regulation, competition and equality in the digital age by governments of many countries as well as international organizations.

The segment that talks about the impact of the privatization of the Internet is perhaps best described and concluded by Varoufakis (2023: 88) with the following statements.

But the technologies that spawned cloud capital have proved more revolutionary than any of their predecessors. Through them, cloud capital has developed capacities that previous types of capital goods never had. It has become at once an attention-holder, a desire manufacturer, a driver of proletarian labour (of cloud proles), an elicitor of massive free labour (from cloud serfs) and, to boot, the creator of totally privatised digital transaction spaces (cloud fiefs like amazon.com) in which neither buyers nor sellers enjoy any of the options they would in normal markets. As a result, its owners – the cloudalists – have acquired the ability to do that which the Edisons, the Westinghouses and the Fords never could: to turn themselves into a revolutionary class actively displacing the capitalists from the top of society’s pecking order. In the process, the cloudalists – some consciously, others unthinkingly

– have changed everything that previous varieties of capitalism had taught us to take for granted: the idea of what constitutes a commodity, the ideal of the autonomous individual, the ownership of identity, the propagation of culture, the context of politics, the nature of the state, the texture of geopolitics.

## **New Approach**

More significant strategic shifts started to occur in 2019. Specifically, in early August, the United States officially withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, an agreement with the Russian Federation that limited the types of weapon systems that participating countries could use. All of this made the already difficult and tense situation in Ukraine and the Black Sea region even more complicated and challenging. After the COVID-19 pandemic, it became evident that relations between NATO and Russia were increasingly deteriorating and Russia's renewed strike in February 2022 brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Even Europeans started to question their own position toward Americanization.

Pluralism was given up in favor of hegemonic liberalism, an “era of imitation” started. The core tenet of the imposed model of imitation, as Schultze said (2020: 27), was very simple – adopting the Western model would speed up the process of institutional democratization and economic, social, and cultural modernization. Therefore, phrases such as democratization, Europeanisation, and membership in the European and transatlantic communities were the catch words of the process, albeit overshadowed by assimilation to Americanism. The emancipation from imitation is leading to the inevitable overthrow of today's quasi-unipolarity because that system, and more and more states are freely expressing their views in such manner, is fully satisfactory only to the United States (Dale Walton, 2007: 103).

Nevertheless, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has brought a series of new opportunities to the rising powers, but also difficulties to the global authority (USA). Strategic withdrawal under the pressure of “imperial overstretch” led US foreign policy to new

concept, emergence of Anglo-Saxon alliance and treatment of EU as a partner suitable for role of keeper of US interests toward Eurasian powers.

Such a development is not promising for the EU, but could be pleasant for the US. The increased geopolitical game between different integration initiatives should not result in a coherent political unification, but surely it is not something that West, liberal democracies, should cheer up. There are no key benefits from it for liberal order. Instead of political unification, multipolarity emerges as a disharmony, period in which new axial poles are going to be created with their own worldviews and values. It is precisely in this disharmony that the goals of the USA can be seen. And this is actually what Dale Walton prescribed (2007, 104):

Washington should have two central foreign policy goals in the next two decades. First, it must strive to bring about the development of a healthy multipolar system in which it remains the world's greatest single power. Second, it must seek to ensure that it does not become a victim of the Revolution in Strategic Perspective, failing to adapt to the changing character of the international order. The first task is the easier of the two, as a healthy multipolar system appears to be developing even without significant American guidance.

Controlled chaos actually offers them the possibility of minimal investment in regions where until recently they gave a lot of resources. By leaving them in the intermediate space with the already established levers of dependence on Washington, the future US rulers have room to maintain its own hegemonic model through isolationist policy.

As a successor of previous Soviet Union, Russia had to deal with economic instability and loss of position not only at the global level but also among former allies. Russian strategists logically saw the consolidation of American power at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the expansion of NATO as part of Washington's grand plan to "surround" Russia. But surrounding was not a goal, rather it is a tool for further disintegration of Russia what former US vice president Dick Cheney (2001-2009) explicitly confirmed (Norton, 2022).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union between the Baltic and Black Seas (former communist countries and the region where Iron Curtain was established between East and the West), a continuous chain of NATO member states was established, Moscow could no longer count on being able to extend its military power to the Adriatic Sea too. Indeed, the situation in Southeast Europe was/is linked to the Russian-US confrontation in the Caucasus and Central Asia. To all of that Russia has reacted with intensified efforts to regain an influential position in global politics.

Considering the main competitors, the USA, Russia, China and the EU, it would be important to theoretically define a unifying position for all of them. Ontological in/security (OST) would be a common characteristic of these global powers that have found themselves in tense confrontation in wider world areas. Ontological security, as Krasnodebska (2021: 137) argued, is rooted in a stable and consistent set of narratives about oneself and one's environment, which constitute modes of orientation, by which an individual makes sense of the world. Following Giddens' groundbreaking work from 1991 (*Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*) the subdiscipline within IR theory emerged as a valuable explanatory framework.

It is not necessary, as is claimed, that actors are more prone to anxiety and identity crises under conditions of globalization, which makes violence and conflict more likely, nor that the collective traumas, ethnic conflicts, securitization of migration, and prevailing discourses of terror, liberated by globalization, open up space for the analysis of ontological security (Kinvall and Mitzen, 2017: 5). All of this of course plays an important role, but in this context it is more significant how actors reacted to the post-Cold War unipolar hegemony and its end.

While Russia and China experienced globalization, among other things, as an ontological threat and accordingly built mechanisms and even took aggressive steps towards protection, the EU and the USA also felt insecurity. Both because of the strengthening of authoritarianism in the East, which began to spill over into the liberal world, opening up space for populist and right-wing forces, and because of the loss of own credibility, the protection of "European values" and "our way of life" jumped to the top of the political agenda.

Given that the great financial crisis of 2008 also opened up major topics between the strongest actors of the international order, as Subotić (2016: 611.) says, precisely in times of major crises and threats to multiple state securities (physical, social, as well as ontological), narratives are selectively activated to provide a cognitive bridge between policy change that addresses the challenge of physical security (for example, secession of territory), while at the same time preserving the ontological security of the state.

## The Beginnings

In January 21, 2007, during a joint press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Sochi, after discussion on world order and particularly the case of Kosovo, Russian President Putin said that, in his opinion, it was “more about non-compliance with the basic principles of international law”. The Russian president, referring to Yalta conference, reminded how the great powers “divided the world” after the Second World War. “Now those who feel like Cold War winners want to divide the world to their will”, he said. However, Russia will not accept “decisions being imposed on it”. In fact, Russia was already determined to be very active in future crises (President of Russia, 2007a). Soon the cases of Ukraine and Syria made this clear too.

Putin’s speech at 43<sup>rd</sup> Munich Security Conference in 2007 when he directly stressed that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today’s world also is a milestone in the beginning of the global order erosion: *“Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result, we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible”*, he added leaving no space for Russian position in the future (President of Russia, 2007b).

Diplomatic debates over Kosovo’s status led Putin to repeatedly announce that he would recognize the independence of seceded areas in the former Soviet republics if the West insists on Kosovo’s independence. South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan and Transnistria in Moldova

were mentioned. After a brief military intervention in Georgia in the summer of 2008, Moscow has fulfilled its announcements regarding the secessionist areas of its southern neighbor.

However, due to the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the credibility of Moscow's frequent assurances about the necessity of strict adherence to international law was lost. After the war in Georgia, Russia's position on Kosovo could no longer be interpreted as principled because Moscow itself deviated from the norms of international law in the Caucasus. Russia has responded to such criticism by pointing out that Russia's actions in the Caucasus are only a "mirror" of the Western way of acting.

China on the other hand was very focused on its own goals. Consecutive strategies of displacement were created to confront US influence and dominance. Second strategy (2008–2016), had more serious goals related to wider region - it sought to build the foundation for Chinese regional hegemony (Doshi, 2021: 157). Launched after the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 it led Beijing to see US power as diminished and emboldened. Surely it helped Beijing to take more confident approach. With the invocation of "great changes unseen in a century" following Brexit, Trump-Biden traumatic mandates, and the coronavirus pandemic, China already launched a third phase, one that expands its blunting and building efforts worldwide to displace the United States as the global leader (Doshi, 2021: 304).

### **Russian Invasion of Ukraine**

These approaches by Russia and China give a fruitful insight into the multipolar future of global politics. This kind of understanding and interpretation should certainly question the Russian invasion of Ukraine and what it brings to global politics. Russia is imposing its concerns about Ukrainian aim toward NATO membership since 2008. It was the most important reason to support former Ukrainian President Yanukovich (2010-2014) who was against Ukraine's Nato accession and acted pro-Russian role.

Political turmoil in Ukraine finished by successful integration of NATO aspirations in Ukrainian Constitution (2019) followed by Brussels Summit (June

2021), when NATO leaders reiterated the decision that Ukraine would become a member of the Alliance. In that same period Ukraine and NATO forces launched joint naval drills in the Black Sea (Sea Breeze 2021) what signaled Moscow that strong reaction is needed. It was the “red line” issue for Russia (“Black Sea Drills”, 2021).

An expansion of NATO’s presence in Ukraine, especially the deployment of any long-range missiles capable of striking Russian cities or defense systems is seen as a biggest threat. More than that, through development of crisis, Russia is probably trying to make Ukraine a turning point and provide even stronger support in Central and Eastern European countries by creating a wide buffer zone between East and the West. It is not without importance that states in that belt are former communist countries. Whether that means the beginning of a new Cold War, creation of new Iron Curtain, is less important. What is more significant is Russia’s aspiration to raise its own stake as a global stakeholder.

Joint appearance of China and Russia certainly speaks of the inevitability of re-defining the international order. Proponents of Yalta 2.0 are increasingly loud in advocating it while those problems are piling up. In addition to processes that carry tension and conflict, the multipolar world is still trying to figure out solutions that will ensure peace. That peace, it is clear, cannot be achieved by maintaining the ideological and cultural supremacy of the West. True acceptance of diversity will be a precondition for overcoming the crisis, which means that different socio-political arrangements, cultural patterns, and traditions will not be disregarded from the position of liberal hegemony. It must be accepted as such.

It seems that China would like to achieve a balance of power. For that purpose, main tool China uses is geoeconomics, the use of economic instruments (from trade and investment policy to sanctions, cyberattacks, and foreign aid) to achieve geopolitical goals. This geoeconomic strategy harkens back to Sun Tzu’s maxim: “Ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle, but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting.”

Ukrainian crisis is a sign of new reality, the path to new world, the emergence of new global politics and the continuity of same old problems – how world will be ruled and who is going to be in charge. All that is happening in the Sahel region

in Africa, aggressive attacks by new US Administration on Panama Chanel, Greenland and Canada, and then in the area of Palestine and Israel, are an additional argument to this position.

The Ukrainian model, as a Pentagon pilot project at the time of the great debate about the Two-War Strategy, offered the United States valuable insights. For approximately 20 billion dollars, the United States has so far managed to help Ukrainian forces defend their territory and thus decimate the Russian army, its second most formidable military opponent. The full cost of the war to the United States is slightly higher, as it includes humanitarian aid to Ukraine and the cost of an additional 20,000 troops in Europe to bolster deterrence on NATO's eastern flank. Even the total of \$100 billion allocated by Congress is not much because Ukraine provides a model for what could look like a reasonably cost-effective way to fight another conflict in the future.

And here, in fact, the strategic determination of the USA, which dominantly wants to get as many proxies as possible in a wider area, is quite clearly shown. In addition to cost savings, the Ukrainian model also offers strategic flexibility. American policymakers should avoid direct American military intervention for several reasons, as a large-scale conventional conflict would almost certainly be a bloody affair, while building capabilities for indirect combat at the very least provides another positive option for Washington (Cohen, 2023).

Recently, the growing importance of small and medium-sized countries has been undeniable. Global powers will have to listen to them and to please them. As Ongur-Zengin (2016) rightly argues: "Wannabe hegemons (...) are those countries whose rise into the position of international decision-makers is seen as threatening to the status quo. That said, their unique material capabilities in regard to production, demographics, etc., make them important agents for the continuation of the world order". But it is to discontinuation also.

The Hungarian case in EU and Orban's "wayward son policy" is good example of it. Mexican rejection to participate in Summit of Americas which (the beginning of June 2022) is next significant case. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was very clear that he cannot support President Biden's decision not to invite Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba (Spetalnick and Graham, 2022). Both are



witnessing simple fact; redefinition of powers position has started, and it will last for a certain period.

To reach balance within the region (geopolitical body) and in second step to establish balance among regions will create huge space for different types of negotiations and agreements. Along with the geoeconomics the role of diplomacy has to be increased. Anglo-Saxon world initiated these processes by creation of AUKUS, Russian Orthodox Pan-Slavism for 21st Century is ongoing process under concept of Russian World and its variants, and Chinese positioning in Eastern Hemisphere as a main power, especially in Indian Ocean (The White House, 2022).

The formation of AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States) in response to China's rise was factual evidence, primarily for Europeans, that the focus had changed and that the time was coming for new types of alliances. On the other hand, the strengthening of NATO in the north by accepting Finland and Sweden should give the US a somewhat more relaxed position ("Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson", 2023).

Technofeudalism plays a major role in this, deepening already existing sources of instability and transforming them into new existential threats. The hyperinflation and cost-of-living crises that followed the pandemic cannot be properly understood outside the context of technofeudalism. (Varoufakis, 2023: 119.)

The combination of the birth of the Post-Columbian Epoch and the resulting return of multipolarity, and the ongoing and multiple technological revolutions, has created profound instability in the international system and, as Dale Walton (2007: 102) says, the quasi-unipolar system has already largely disintegrated, considering the international debate prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq to be the "beginning of the end" of unipolarity.

European security, in this regard, has become more vulnerable. New developments have put the European Union in front of a series of political debates but also upheavals. Migrant crisis (2015) and Brexit (2016) were a strong call to Europeans to start thinking more seriously about their own military power. Old French idea (President De Gaulle) about European Forces drove President

Macron to support a joint European military project once again in 2017, while German Chancellor Merkel, in her address to the European Parliament in November 2018, said “we need to work on a vision of establishing a European army” (General Secretariat of the Council [GSOC], 2010).

## **What about global order?**

The current state of the international order is characterized by a complex interplay of cooperation, competition and fragmentation. It is shaped by changing power dynamics, geopolitical rivalries, and the challenges of globalization, technological advances, and transnational issues such as climate change, pandemics, and economic inequality. Some of the mentioned things can also be understood as megatrends that indicate fundamental changes in the international order.

Megatrends (French historian Fernand Braudel calls them conjunctures) often take decades to establish themselves and prove robust in the face of shocks or setbacks. They permeate all societies and areas of life, and last for several decades. Megatrends often develop their full impact and penetrating power only in their interaction (Stormy Mildner et al., 2023: 5). This Braudelian attitude is actually very significant for understanding the coming profound transformation that the current cycles and trends will produce. The question for the most of actors in international arena is not what kind of the world of tomorrow will be, grey or bright, but how to secure position and lesser dependency.

From 2014, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova are defined as an Intermediary Space sharing about three thousand kilometers of common borders with the EU and NATO and about two thousand five hundred kilometers with Russia, making their geopolitical exposure undeniable. Positioned within the strategic triangle of Russia, a less unified EU, and NATO led by the USA, it was concluded that due to the “centuries-long subordination of the Intermediary Space, today common characteristics inherent to this area emerge: unclear identities, deficits in democratic practices, a complicated, prolonged, and unfinished transition, economic lag, demographic problems - all of which favor the strategic ‘conquest’ of the Intermediary Space by the Kremlin” (Kuko and Kurečić, 2014: 7-28).

After what happened in Ukraine in 2014, especially with the start of the war in February 2022, regardless of the reasons the authors used, this conclusion has only gained strength. The whole Southeastern Europe region, is also not immune to impulses coming from the Eurasian space. The attempt of the NATO alliance to move its border to the Dnieper River, with serious opposition to the policies of the US and the UK, first by Hungary, and then by Slovakia, led to a series of political processes in this part of Europe (pro-Russian sentiments are on the rise in Bulgaria).

Taking all this into account, and especially with the increasing Turkish dissatisfaction with the attitude of Western partners towards Ankara, the question arises about the strategic goals of the Alliance, i.e., whether they are sufficiently profiled. The withdrawal from Afghanistan indicated the U.S. understanding that they were still faced with a great burden (imperial overstretch), but it also raised questions about the behavior of the former sole superpower in other areas.

Probably inspired by this example (imperial overstretch), the RAND Corporation has developed a report suggesting areas in which Russia can be stretched to make it more vulnerable and less dangerous. (Dobbins et al., 2019) They also delved into history and found such measures in the policies of US Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, which included a massive strengthening of the US defense, the launch of the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars), deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe, assistance to anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan, intensification of anti-Soviet rhetoric (the so-called “evil empire”), and support for dissidents in the Soviet Union and its satellite states. It is hard to imagine that the authors believed that Russia had not learned its lessons, but in the proposed scenario, one can see recent US political actions and obvious failures in this regard (It is fundamentally about predicting that Russia’s greatest vulnerability is its economy, which is relatively small and highly dependent on energy exports, and that this will completely weaken it).

The context opens up a big topic of a multipolar world and a new order. Things can go to the extent that even the entire European continent, due to a visible loss of position globally, can be problematized as a space of polar non-belonging

(which would mean rejecting the American security umbrella, advocated by French statesman De Gaulle and more recently). Hiski Haukkala has addressed this and stated that the possible appearance of non-polarity in Europe depends on the political choices of the main protagonists and that non-polarity in Europe is not inevitable. The future development will depend on the evolution of the role of the US globally and in Europe, the EU's ability to overcome the current crisis and develop stronger forms of international action, and the future conflict between Russia and the West (Haukkala, 2021: 381-399).

What is missing is a strong theoretical stance that would pave the way for the emerging world. We are witnessing a great fear, as it has always been in the past, of the unknown, so the recent world seems to us a good refuge to which we should return. However, it is evident that the creators of that world of yesterday have also left it and embarked on the adventure of building new positions and tools for preserving them.

The US foreign policy elite, which has long held a bipartisan consensus that global engagement is in America's long-term interest, has been torn between different opinions and is showing serious cracks in recent years. Liberal internationalists want to use the residual strength of the United States to co-opt rising powers to act as responsible stakeholders in maintaining global stability and the core institutions, regimes, and practices of the liberal order, while nationalists, on the other hand, embrace multipolarity and advocate for a complete normalization of American foreign policy, in which the country should abandon any pretense of leading the world and instead use its military and economic advantage to aggressively pursue 'better deals' than those in which it is currently supposedly engaged (Alcaro, 2018:154-5). Trump, especially at the beginning of his second term in the office, is doing just that; better deals are in his focus. How much it correlates with the two key goals of America's new isolationism is difficult to say at the moment, but it is not easy to dismiss the thought that it fits very well into the projected scheme.

## Conclusion

It is quite clear from the above that the Liberal International Order led by the US is collapsing, and the US from being a global superpower is increasingly taking an isolationist stance, as seen in policies such as “America First”.

Among other things, failed military interventions (e.g. Afghanistan, Syria, Libya) led to serious questioning of American power, both in Washington and in other parts of the world, which opened up space for the rise and greater visibility of advocates of multipolarity. The last decades shows that the global order is indeed changing (especially after 2016) and is moving from unipolarity (US dominance) to multipolarity, while China is already a power that has the capacity to structurally defy the hegemony of the West. While China uses geo-economic strategies to supplant the US as a global leader, Russia is slowly asserting its influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The BRICS led by these two countries is quickly becoming attractive to many, and the expansion of this organization has become a matter of prestige.

The second, probably more important issue is related to liberalism as such. The credibility of the liberal order has been weakened by double standards, economic inequality, and the prioritization of ideology over human life. The West's support for Israel in its genocidal campaign in Gaza has deepened great distrust not only among Muslim countries but also among many around the world and even within the EU. Europe, on the other hand, is facing increasing vulnerability due to the strategic withdrawal of the US and the rise of autocratic sentiments in Eastern Europe. NATO expansion and the war in Ukraine have increased tensions, but European dependence on the US for security has been called into question. In such a game, the EU is currently losing hard because its dependence on the US has extended to the energy sector, but the question is how things will develop when Brussels realizes that distancing itself from Washington is the key to Europe's positioning and more successful operation in a multipolar world.

The war in Ukraine, as a manifestation of this multipolar struggle, with Russia seeking to prevent NATO expansion and establish a buffer zone while the US is interested in precious natural materials and political influence in Kiev, is only

an indication of future relations. The US and its allies (primarily the UK) are creating a state of “controlled chaos” in order to maintain influence in regions where they do not want to invest much but would like to gain a lot. This strategy of exploiting existing dependencies through minimal investment allows the US to maintain its hegemonic model. The whole process has also led to very serious changes in the economic model. The privatization of the Internet by American and Chinese technology giants has led to oligopolistic control, exacerbating global economic inequality. The rise of “technofeudalism” (a term coined by Varoufakis) has transformed capitalism, with technology companies (e.g. Google, Amazon, Alibaba) becoming dominant forces in the global economy.

These relations and especially the ongoing conflicts (one could say even since September 11, 2001) have left serious consequences for international institutions such as the United Nations, which are losing their effectiveness, and international law is increasingly being ignored. It is precisely the lack of clear international standards and the rise of double standards that contribute to global insecurity, and the fact that things must change was indicated as early as 2007.

As Smirnova et al. (2023: 253) have emphasized, deepening cooperation with the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as increasing confrontation with the West, were natural consequences of Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference. This was also accompanied by the growth of foreign trade between Russia and the BRICS countries, which can be considered an external indicator of the formation of independent and complementary economies, so that Putin’s political discourse had a decisive influence on foreign policy in 2008-2024.

The global community must acknowledge the reality of a multipolar world and work to establish new international standards that reflect this new balance of power. Therefore, redefining global norms that will respect diversity is necessary to avoid further conflict and instability. Diplomatic efforts should take precedence over military interventions to resolve conflicts and establish long-term stability. It is good that small and medium-sized countries are given a stronger voice in global decision-making because it is through them that the above can be achieved, and a more balanced international order would be ensured.

The EU, as a necessary pole in a multipolar world, also have to overcome its internal crises and take a more proactive role in global affairs. Reducing its dependence on the US by developing a stronger, more unified military and political presence within NATO should be one of the first steps on this path.

It is certain that the US accepts the inevitability of multipolarity and focuses on maintaining its influence through dubious partnerships rather than unilateral domination. Avoiding direct military intervention and instead focusing on indirect strategies (e.g., proxies) to achieve its geopolitical goals, as seen in the Ukrainian model, could be a meaningful approach in the future.

International institutions such as the UN, if they are to continue to have a reason for existing, must be reformed to better respond to contemporary challenges. Clearer international legal standards are needed to reduce double standards and restore trust in global governance. Addressing economic and social inequalities, as well as regulating the position of big technology companies, by governments and international organizations is essential to ensuring fair competition and reducing geopolitical tensions.

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