



# CIVILIZATION STATE, OR THE MULTI-POLAR WORLD

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The Special Military Operation in Ukraine (SMO) is widely recognized by competent experts in International Relations as the final and decisive moment in the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world.

Multipolarity often seems intuitively clear; but as soon as we try to give a precise definition or a correct theoretical description, everything becomes less obvious. I believe that my work *A Theory of a Multipolar World* is more relevant today than ever before. But since people have forgotten how to read—especially lengthy theoretical texts, I will try to share the main points.

The main actor of a multipolar world order is neither a nation-state (as in the realist theory of International Relations), nor a unified World Government (as in the liberalist theory of International Relations). It is civilization state. Other names for it are "big space," "Empire," "ecumenism."

The term "civilization state" is most often applied to China. Both ancient and modern. As early as ancient times, the Chinese developed the theory of "Tianxia" (天下), the "Celestial Empire," according to which China is the center of the world, being the meeting place of unifying Heaven and dividing Earth. And the "Celestial Empire" may be a single state; or it may be broken up into its components and then reassembled. In addition, Han China itself acted as a culture-forming force for neighboring nations that were not directly part of China—primarily Korea, Vietnam, the Indochina countries and even Japan, which is quite independent.

The nation-state is a product of the European New Age, and in some cases a post-colonial construct. The civilization state has ancient roots and uncertain, shifting boundaries. The civilization state at times pulsates, expanding and contracting, while always remaining a constant phenomenon. (This is what, above all else, we need to know about our SMO.)

Contemporary China behaves strictly according to the principle of "Tianxia" in international politics. The One Belt, One Road Initiative is a prime example of what this looks like in practice. And China's Internet, which cuts off any networks and resources that might weaken the civilizational identity at the entrance to China, demonstrates how the defense mechanisms are built.

The civilization state may interact with the outside world, but it never becomes dependent on it and

always maintains self-sufficiency, autonomy and autarchy.

Civilization state is always more than just a state in both spatial and temporal (historical) terms.

Russia is increasingly gravitating toward the same status. After the beginning of the SMO, this was no longer mere wishful thinking, but an urgent necessity. As in the case of China, Russia has every reason to claim to be precisely a civilization. This theory was most fully developed by the Russian Eurasians, who introduced the notion of a "world-state," or—which is the same thing—"Russian world. Actually, the concept of Russia-Eurasia is a direct indication of the civilizational status of Russia. Russia is more than a nation-state (which the Russian Federation is). Russia is a separate world.

Russia was a civilization in the era of the Empire, and remained so in Soviet times. Ideologies and regimes changed, but the identity remained the same.

The struggle for Ukraine is nothing less than a struggle for the civilization state. The same as the peaceful Union State of Russia and Belarus and the economic integration of the post-Soviet Eurasian space.

A multipolar world consists of civilization states. This is a kind of world of worlds, a megacosmos that includes entire galaxies. And here it is important to determine how many such civilization states can even theoretically exist?

Undoubtedly, this type includes India, a typical civilization state, which even today has enough potential to become a full-fledged actor in international politics.

Then there is the Islamic world, from Indonesia to Morocco. Here the fragmentation into states and different ethno-cultural enclaves does not yet allow us to speak of political unity. Islamic civilization exists, but the question of its assembly into a civilization state is rather problematic. Moreover, the history of Islam knows several types of civilization states, from the Caliphate (the First, Umayyad, Abbasid, etc.) to the three components of Genghis Khan's Empire that converted to Islam (the Golden Horde, the Ilkhan and Chagatai ulus), the Persian Safavid Empire, the Great Moghul state, and finally, the Ottoman Empire. The borders once drawn are still relevant today in many respects. But the process of gathering them into a single structure requires considerable time and effort.

Latin America and Africa, two macro-civilizations that remain quite separate, are in a similar position. But a multipolar world will somehow push integration processes in all these zones.

Now the most important thing—what to do with the West? The theory of a multipolar world in the nomenclature of theories of International Relations in the modern West is absent.

The dominant paradigm there today is liberalism, which denies any sort of sovereignty and autonomy, abolishes civilizations and religions, ethnicities and cultures, replacing them by a forced liberal ideology, the concept of "human rights," individualism (in the extreme leading to gender and transgender politics), materialism and technical progress elevated to the highest value (Artificial Intelligence). The goal of liberalism is to abolish nation-states and establish a World Government based on Western norms and rules.

This is the line pursued by Biden and the modern Democrat Party in the U.S., as well as most European rulers. This is what globalism is all about. It categorically rejects civilization state and any hint of multipolarity. That is why the West is ready for war with Russia and China. In a sense, this war is already going on in Ukraine and in the Pacific (the problem of Taiwan)—but so far via proxy-actors.

In the West, there is another influential school—realism in International Relations. Here the nation-state is considered a necessary element of the world order; but only those who have achieved a high level of economic, military-strategic and technological development—almost always at the expense of others—have sovereignty. While liberals see the future in a World Government, realists see it in an alliance of major Western powers setting global rules in their own interests. Again, both in theory and in practice, civilization state and a multipolar world are categorically rejected.

This creates a fundamental conflict already at the level of theory. And the lack of mutual understanding here leads to the most radical consequences at the level of direct collision.

In the eyes of supporters of multipolarity, the West is also a civilization state or even two—North American and European. But Western intellectuals do not agree with this; they have no theoretical frame for this—they know either liberalism or realism, and no multipolarity.

However, there are exceptions among Western theorists, such as Samuel Huntington or Fabio Petito.

They—unlike the vast majority—recognize multipolarity and the emergence of new actors in the form of civilizations. This is gratifying, because through such ideas it is possible to build a bridge for supporters of multipolarity (Russia, China, etc.) to the West. Such a bridge would at least make negotiations possible. As long as the West categorically rejects multipolarity and the very notion of the civilization state, the conversation will be conducted only at the level of a clash of brute force—from military operations to economic blockade, information and sanction wars, and so on.

Finally, to win this war and defend itself, Russia itself must first clearly comprehend multipolarity. We are already fighting for it, but still do not fully understand what it is. It is necessary to urgently dissolve the liberal structures created in the Gorbachev-Yeltsin period and establish new multipolar structures. It is also necessary to restructure the educational paradigm itself—first of all at MGIMO, MGU, PFUR, the Maurice Thorez Institute, the Diplomatic Academy, and other specialized universities. Lastly, we need to really turn to a developed and fully-fledged Eurasian school of thought, which has proven to be highly relevant, but against which the overt and covert Atlantists and foreign agents, who deeply penetrate our society, continue to fight.

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*[Featured image](#): "The Course of Empire: Consummation," by Thomas Cole; painted in 1836.*

