



NEW MULTIPOLAR ORDER: HEPTARCHY AND ITS MEANINGS

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The world order is changing so rapidly today that institutions related to international politics do not have time to adequately respond and fully comprehend it. In Russia, there is a tenuous theory that international law is something solid and stable, taking into account the interests of all parties, while the theory of "rules" and the rules-based order promoted by the collective West and North American elites is some kind of trickery to consolidate hegemony. This is worth exploring in more detail.

Premodern World Order

Let us summarize the fundamental mutations of the world order in the last 500 years—that is, since the beginning of the New Age (the Modern era).

Before the beginning of the era of Great Geographical Discoveries (coinciding with the transition from Premodern to Modern, from traditional society to modern society), the world was divided into zones of several autonomous civilizations. They exchanged with each other on different levels, sometimes conflicted, but none of them questioned the very fact of each other's existence, accepting everything as it was.

These civilizations were:

1. Western Christian (Catholic) ecumene;
2. Eastern Christian (Orthodox) ecumene;
3. Chinese Empire (including cultural satellites—Korea, Vietnam, partly Japan and some states of Indochina);
4. Indosphere (including partly Indochina and the Indonesian Islands);
5. Iranian Empire (including areas of Central Asia under strong Iranian influence);
6. The Ottoman Empire (inheriting in outline much of the Abbasid dominions—including the Maghreb and the Arabian Peninsula);
7. A number of independent and developed African kingdoms;
8. Two American empires (Inca and Aztec).

Each civilization included several powers and often many very different ethnic groups. Each civilization had a distinct religious identity that was embodied in politics, culture, ethics, art, lifestyle, technology,

and philosophy.

In essence, this was the zoning of mankind in the epoch when all societies, states and peoples lived in the conditions of traditional society and built their existence on the basis of traditional values. All these values were divine, sacred. At the same time, they were different for each civilization. Sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the specific case, but in general all civilizations accepted the existence of others as a given (if, of course, they encountered them).

It is worth paying attention to the fact that both the Christian West and the Christian East thought of themselves as separate ecumenes, as two Empires—with the predominance of the Papal beginning in the West and the imperial beginning in the East (from Byzantium this was passed on to Moscow—the Third Rome).

This order [Buzan and Little](#) call "antique or classical international systems." Carl Schmitt [refers to them](#) as the first nomos of the earth.

This was the first model of international relations. No general international law existed in this period, because each civilization represented a complete and completely autonomous world—not only a sovereign culture, but also a perfectly original understanding of the surrounding existence and nature. Each Empire lived in its own imperial cosmos, the parameters and structures of which were determined on the basis of the dominant religion and its tenets.

Modern Times: The Invention of Progress

This is where the most interesting part begins. The Western European New Age (Modernity) brought with it an idea completely alien to all these civilizations, including the Catholic-Christian one—the idea of linear time and the progressive development of mankind (later this was formalized into the idea of progress). Those who adopted this attitude began to operate with the fundamental ideas that the "old," "ancient," and "traditional" are obviously worse, more primitive, and coarser than the "new," "progressive," and "modern." Moreover, linear progress dogmatically asserted that the new removes the old, overcomes and surpasses it in all parameters. In other words, the new replaces the old, abolishes it, takes its place. This negates the dimension of eternity, which is at the heart of all religions and all traditional civilizations and constitutes their sacred core.

The idea of linear progress simultaneously redefined all forms of traditional society (including the traditional society of Western Europe). Thus, the "ancient international system," or the "first nomos of the Earth," came to be regarded collectively as the past, which should be replaced by the present on the road to the future. At the same time, the model of post-traditional, post-Catholic (partly Protestant, partly materialistic—atheistic in accordance with the paradigm of the natural-scientific worldview) European society was taken as the present (contemporary, Modern). In Western Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the idea of a unified civilization (civilization in the singular), which would embody in itself the destiny of all mankind, was first conceived. This destiny consisted in the overcoming of tradition and traditional values; and thus, it swept away the very foundation of the sacred civilizations that existed in that period. They meant nothing more than backwardness (from the modern West), a set of prejudices and false idols.

The Second Nomos of the Earth

Thus began the construction of the "global international system" (according to Barry Buzan) or the "second nomos of the Earth" (according to Carl Schmitt).

Now the West began to transform itself and, in parallel, to influence the zones of other civilizations more and more actively. In Western Europe itself there was a rapid process of destruction of sacral foundations of its own culture, dismantling of Papal influence (especially through the Reformation), formation of European nations on the basis of sovereignty (previously only the Papal See and partly the Western European Emperor were considered sovereign), breaking and moving to the periphery of theological dogmatics and transitioning to natural sciences on the basis of materialism and atheism. European culture was demi-devived, de-Christianized and universalized.

In parallel, the colonization of other civilizations—the American continent, Africa, Asia—was in full swing. And even those empires that resisted direct occupation—Chinese, Russian, Iranian and Ottoman—and maintained their independence, were subjected to cultural colonization, gradually absorbing the attitudes of Western European Modernity to the detriment of their own sacred traditional values.

Modernity, progress and scientific atheism colonized Western Europe, and Western Europe in turn colonized the rest of civilization, either directly or indirectly. At all levels it was a struggle with Tradition, sacredness and traditional values. The struggle of time against eternity. The struggle of civilization in the singular with civilizations in the plural.

Peace of Westphalia

This process of building the second "international system" (the second nomos of the Earth) culminated in the Peace of Westphalia, which ended a 30-year war, the main parties to which were Protestants and Catholics (with the exception of Catholic France, which took the opposite side because of its hatred of the Habsburgs). The Peace of Westphalia approved the first explicit model of international law, the Jus Publicum Europaeum, completely discarding the principles of the medieval order. Henceforth, only nation-states were recognized as bearers of sovereignty, without regard to their religion and political system (however, all states of that time were monarchies). Thus, the supreme authority of foreign policy was recognized as the nation-state (État-Nation), the model of which was not traditional empires or civilizations, but modern European powers, entering the era of rapid capitalist development, sharing in general the principles of the New Age, natural sciences and progress.

Western Europe of the New Age became synonymous with civilization as such, while other non-European political entities were considered "barbaric" (if culture and politics were sufficiently developed in them) and "savage" (if peoples lived in archaic societies without strict vertical political organization and stratification). "Wild societies" were subject to direct colonization and their "hopelessly backward" populations to slavery. Slavery is a modern concept. It came to Europe after the end of the Middle Ages and with the New Age, with progress and the Enlightenment.

"Barbarian powers" (to which Russia belonged) posed a certain threat, which could be dealt with both by direct military confrontation and by introducing into the elite elements that shared the Western European worldview. Sometimes, however, "barbarian powers" used partial modernization and Europeanization in their own interests to oppose the West itself. A striking example is the reforms of Peter the Great in Russia. But in any case, Westernization corroded the traditional values and political institutions of the era of "antique international systems."

That is why Barry Buzan calls this second model of the world order a "global international system." Here only one civilization was recognized, built on the idea of progress, technological development, materialistic science, capitalist economy and national egoism. It was to become global.

Sovereignty: Evolution of the Concept

Although this system nominally recognized the sovereignty of each nation-state, this applied only to European powers. The rest were offered the status of colonies. And "barbarian states" were subjected to derogatory ridicule and arrogant contempt. The past—including the Western European past—was vilified in every possible way (hence the myth of the "Dark Middle Ages"), while progress—humanism, materialism, secularism—was glorified.

Gradually, however, the status of sovereignty began to extend to some colonies, if they managed to get out from under the authority of the metropolis. This happened during the War of Independence of the United States. Later, this path was followed by other colonial entities, which were gradually accepted into the European club. Henceforth, the Westphalian principles applied to them as well. This is called the Westphalian system of international relations.

By the end of the 19th century, it had spread to some of the liberated colonies and a number of "barbarian powers" (Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Iran, China), which retained their traditional ways of life inside, but were increasingly drawn into the "global international system" established by the West.

World War I was the peak of the Westphalian order, as it was the major national powers—the Entente, Tsarist Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary—that clashed with each other. In this conflict, coalitions were created arbitrarily, as the participants were independent and quite sovereign units. They could conclude an alliance with some and start a war with others, relying only on the decision of the supreme power.

Ideologization of the International System

By the 1930s, the Westphalian system began to transform. The Bolshevik victory in Russia and the creation of the USSR led to a dramatic intrusion of the ideological dimension into the system of international relations. The USSR fell out of the dualism of "modern societies" and "barbaric states," as it challenged the entire capitalist world, but was not an inertial continuation of traditional society (rather the opposite—modernization in the USSR was extremely radical, and sacred values were destroyed to an even greater extent than in the West).

The emergence of the phenomenon of European fascism and especially German National Socialism further aggravated ideological contradictions—now horrible in Western Europe itself. After Hitler came

to power, Germany began to rapidly build a new European order, based not on classical nationalism, but on the racial theory, glorifying the Aryan race and humiliating all other peoples (partly Aryan—Celts, Slavs, etc.).

Thus, by the end of the 1930s, the world was divided along ideological lines. In fact, the Westphalian system, still recognized in words, was a thing of the past. Sovereignty was now possessed not so much by individual states as by ideological blocs. The world became a tripolar one, where only the USSR, the Axis countries and the liberal Anglo-Saxon Western powers really meant anything. All other countries were offered to join one or another camp, or.... to fend for themselves. Sometimes the issue was settled by force.

The Second World War was a clash of these three ideological poles. In fact, we dealt with a short-term sketch of a three-polar international model with a pronounced conflict and antagonistic ideological dominance on the system of international relations. Each of the poles for ideological reasons actually denied all the others, which naturally led to the collapse of the League of Nations and the Second World War.

Here again, different combinations could theoretically be formed—the Munich Pact suggested the possibility of an alliance between liberals and fascists. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact—fascists and communists. As we know, the alliance of liberals and communists against fascists was realized. Fascists lost, liberals and communists divided the world between them.

Bi-polar System

At the end of World War II, a bi-polar system emerged. Now not all nominally recognized "sovereign" countries had sovereignty, and only two of the three ideological camps remained. The Yalta Peace consolidated the division of the world between the capitalist and socialist camps, and the UN became the expression of this new model of world order. International law was henceforth based on parity (primarily nuclear) between the capitalist West and the socialist East. The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement were given a certain freedom to balance between the poles.

Carl Schmitt calls bipolarity and the balance of power in the conditions of the Cold War "the third nomos of the Earth," while Barry Buzan does not single out a special model of the world order,

considering it a continuation of the "global international system" (which somewhat weakens the relevance of his general theory).

The Unipolar Moment

The collapse of the socialist camp, the Warsaw Pact and the end of the USSR led to the end of the bipolar world order, based on the ideological principle of capitalism versus socialism. Socialism lost, the USSR capitulated and collapsed—and moreover, recognized and accepted the ideology of the enemy. Hence the Russian Federation, built on the basis of liberal-capitalist norms. Together with socialism and the USSR, Russia lost its sovereignty.

This is how the "fourth nomos of the Earth" began to take shape, which Carl Schmitt himself did not live to see, but whose probability he foresaw. Barry Buzan defined it as a "postmodern international system." By all accounts, this new model of international relations and the emerging system of international law should have consolidated the established unipolarity. Of the two poles, only one—the liberal one—remained. Henceforth, all states, peoples and societies were obliged to accept the only ideological model—the liberal one.

At this time, theories that consolidated unipolarity emerged. An example of this is [Robert Gilpin's](#) "stable hegemony theory." Charles Krauthammer [cautiously called](#) it a "unipolar moment," i.e., a temporary situational state of world politics, and Francis Fukuyama [confidently proclaimed](#) the "end of history," i.e., the irreversible and final triumph of liberal democracy; that is, the modern West, on a global scale.

At the political level, this was reflected in Senator John McCain's call for the creation of a new international organization—the League of Democracies—to replace the irrelevant UN, which would explicitly recognize the complete and total hegemony of the liberal West and the supremacy of the United States on a global scale.

Objections to this mood of radical transition to a unipolar-globalist-postmodern international system were raised by Samuel Huntington, who rather unexpectedly for a culture based on Modernity and linear progress, on the acceptance of the universalism of Western civilization, and at its apogee, suddenly suggested that after the end of the bi-polar world there will be not the end of history (i.e., the complete triumph of liberal capitalism on a planetary scale), but the resurfacing of ancient civilizations.

Huntington decoded postmodernity as the end of the Modern as a return to the Premodern, i.e., to the international system that existed before the age of the Great Discoveries (i.e., before the planetary colonization of the world and the beginning of the New Age). Thus, he proclaimed the "return of civilizations;" that is, the new emergence of those forces that dominated the "first nomos of the Earth"—the "antique-classical international system."

In other words, Huntington predicted multipolarity and a completely new interpretation of postmodernism in International Relations—not total liberalism, but on the contrary, a return to the sovereignty of civilizational "large spaces" on the basis of a special culture and religion. As will become clear in the future, Huntington was absolutely right, while Fukuyama and the proponents of unipolarity were somewhat hasty.

Synchronism of Different Types of World Order

Here we should again pay attention to the concept of "rules-based world order." In the 2000s there was a peculiar situation where all systems of international relations and, accordingly, all types of international law operated simultaneously. Long-forgotten and expunged civilizations reasserted themselves in a renewed form and began to move towards institutionalization—this is what we see in BRICS, SCO, Eurasian Economic Union, etc. The premodern has intertwined with the postmodern.

At the same time, many provisions of the Westphalian system have been preserved in international law by inertia. The sovereignty of nation-states is still recognized as the main norm of international relations, even if only on paper. Such realists as [Stephen Krasner](#) frankly recognized that the thesis of sovereignty applied to all but the truly great powers in the modern world order is pure hypocrisy and does not correspond to anything in reality. But world diplomacy continues to play the game of the Westphalian world, of which the smoking ruins remain.

Peace of Rules-Based Order

At the same time, the Yalta peace system retains its influence and normativity. The UN is still built on the presumption of bipolarity, where a kind of parity of two nuclear blocs—capitalist (USA, England, France) and former socialist (Russia, China)—is preserved in the Security Council. In general, the UN maintains the appearance of a balanced bi-polarity and insists that this is the system of international

law (although this is more of a "phantom pain" after the collapse of the socialist camp and the collapse of the USSR). This is what the leaders of modern Russia like to appeal to in their opposition to the West.

The West seeks to consolidate the unipolar system—the League of Democracies, the Forum of Democracies, recognizing those who do not agree with this hegemony as "rogue states." So far, this cannot be done at the level of international law, which remains nominally Westphalian-bipolar, so the globalists decided to introduce the concept of "rules" and proclaimed a world order based on them, where the rules are created, implemented and protected by only one center—the global West.

The theorists of globalism see in the triumph of Western liberal-capitalist civilization the proof of the theory of progress. All other systems—civilizations, nation-states, confrontation of ideologies, etc.—are in the past. They are removed, overcome. The rules of global domination of the collective West become in this case a prolegomenon to a strictly unipolar New World Order.

That is why Russia, which claims to restore its civilizational sovereignty, attacks the rules so fiercely, seeking to insist either on its Westphalian sovereignty (the second nomos of the Earth) or on something even greater, which is guaranteed by nuclear weapons and a seat on the UN Security Council.

Only recently, after the beginning of the Special Military Operation, has the Kremlin begun to think seriously about real multipolarity, which is, in fact, a return to the traditional pre-Columbian civilizational world order. Multipolarity presupposes a system of international law, fundamentally different from unipolarity, transferring the status of sovereignty from the nation-state to the State-Civilization, i.e., a new edition of the traditional Empire, as well as the principle of equality of all poles.

Heptapolarity

Today, after the XV BRICS summit, such a heptapolarity of seven civilizations is broadly outlined:

1. Liberal West;
2. Maoist-Confucian China;
3. Orthodox Eurasian Russia;
4. Vedantic India;
5. Islamic world (Sunni-Shia);

6. Latin America;
7. Africa.

Its contours are quite clearly outlined. But of course, this model has not yet become a new system of international law. It is a long way off.

However, attention should be paid to how deep a complete and radical break with the West must become in order to justify the right of civilizations and their traditional values to exist. All poles will need to reject the basic postulates of the West that have been consistently and compulsively inculcated in themselves and in all of humanity since the beginning of the New Age:

- individualism,
- materialism,
- economism,
- technology as destiny,
- scientism,
- secularism,
- the dominance of money,
- the culture of hedonism and decay,
- progressivism, etc.

This must be taken out of one's culture by anyone who claims an independent pole, a distinctive civilization. None of the big cultures, except Western culture, is based on these principles. All traditional values are completely opposed to it.

The gradual liberation from the West's colonial ideology will, of necessity, predetermine the basic parameters of the new system of international relations and the new model of international law.

For now, the proponents of a multipolar order are called upon to reactively counteract the entrenchment of rules dictated by the global West, clinging in agony to the unipolar moment. But soon this will not be enough, and the countries of the expanded BRICS—the civilizations that have surfaced—will have to raise the question of the meaning of sacredness, of Tradition and its values, of eternity and the transcendent dimension of existence.

The new nomos of the Earth lies ahead. A fierce battle is going on now for its outlines. First of all, in Ukraine, which is the frontline between the unipolar and multipolar world order. And all the structures of different layers of international law—from antique-classical to Westphalian, bipolar and unipolar—are clearly present in this brutal war for the meanings and orientations of the new world that is being created before our eyes.

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[*Featured*](#): Fra Mauro map (1460).
