

Rozwój społeczności międzynarodowej: przeszłość oraz nowe wyzwania

Tom 2

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TRANSFORMATION OF THE POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS

For the last 25 years the international system has undergone fundamental transformations. The most evident of them include the end of the bipolar world order and shaping the new one, a shift in the U.S. role in the global affairs, emerging of new centers of power, diffuse of power among different state and non-state actors, regional integration processes, a growing role of leading developing nations in the global economy and politics, a return to ideological confrontation and a struggle between different developmental models, a rise of nationalism and untraditional security threats, including terrorism and militant extremism. The speed of the transformations is unprecedented, largely due to globalization process and dynamic technological changes that are distinctive features of the present époque.

In modern and contemporary history fundamental transformations of international system proceeded from the results of great wars. Thus, the establishment of the Westphalian international system was the result of the 1618-1648 Thirty years war, the 19th century Vienna system proceeded from the allies victory over Napoleon, the Versailles-Washington system fixed the results of the World War I as well as Yalta system played the same part for the post-World War II international relations.

Contemporary transformations don't fit the scheme. They started in the late 1980s together with M. Gorbachov's reforms and the "new thinking" policy. These developments stopped ideological, political and military confrontation between two – socialist and liberal democratic – "camps", and ended the Cold War in international relations, as well as diminished the threat of a nuclear war between the two superpowers. They also resulted in a rapid disintegration of the socialist "camp" and, unexpectedly, the USSR.

Initially the socialist "camp" and the Soviet Union's collapse looked like a victory of Western nations with liberal democratic values and market economies over communist ideology. Instead of previous division of the world nations into the West (capitalist nations), the East (socialist nations) and the Third World (developing nations) the new concept of the Global North (developed nations) and the Global South (developing and new independent states with economies in transition) entered into use.

1990s were the period of unprecedented American dominance and the triumph of Western values. As the only superpower with unchallengeable predominance the United States felt a unique moment in history to diffuse its values, including democracy as a form of government and market economy, within the whole world to make it more prosperous and peaceful. The bipolar world system of

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the U.S. and the Soviet Union ideological, political and military rivalry and confrontation shifted to unipolar world with American leadership and dominance.

The U.S. President George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) famously defined the fundamental transformations of the international system as a birth of “a new world order”. In the Preface to the National Security Strategy of the United States, issued on August 1, 1991, G. H. W. Bush described it as “an extraordinary possibility... to build a new international system in accordance with our own values and ideals, as old patterns and certainties crumble around us”². The next National Security Strategy (January 1993) defined the U.S vision of “the new world order” as “a world of cooperation and progress, not confrontation; a world no longer divided, but a community of independent and interdependent nations joined together by shared values”, “the age of democratic peace”³. Simultaneously both documents emphasized that “a new world order” was not a fact, and a new era held both great opportunities and great dangers.

According to the next U.S. President Bill Clinton (1993-2001), ironically, many of the factors that made the post-Cold War period a time of a great hope also made the world more vulnerable to forces of destruction. “The disintegration of the Soviet Union eliminated the preeminent threat but exposed many others: and increasingly tangled and dangerous web of international terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking; the aggression of rogue states and vicious ethnic and religious conflicts; the spread of dangerous weapons, including nuclear, biological, and chemical ones, and transnational threats like disease, overpopulation, and environmental degradation”⁴.

The period of unprecedented American dominance didn’t last long. The collapse of the USSR ruined the global balance of power. Many nations of the Global South or rivalry groups within them lost their sponsor and were looking for the ways to survive. They mostly opposed American dominance and Western political and cultural values, and considered them as a threat to their own beliefs and the way of life. These perceptions generated forces whose destructive activity influenced greatly on the further transformations of the post-Cold War international system.

Contemporary international transformations were accompanied with a dynamic acceleration of globalization. This process was inseparably connected with the end of the Cold War and a technological revolution in communications that enabled the rapid movement of goods, capitals, information, technology, ideas and people across the borders and around the world. Globalization made the world much more integrated and interdependent, the global ties in different spheres became stronger, more intense, and more influential. They were the most evident in the economic and cultural spheres⁵.

² *National Security Strategy of the United States*, Washington D.C. 1991, p. 5.

³ *National Security Strategy of the United States*, Washington D.C. 1993, p. 21.

⁴ B. Clinton, *Between Hope and History. Meeting America’s Challenges for the 21st Century*, New York 1996, p. 143.

⁵ On globalization find more in: N. Gorodnia, *Globalization: Emergence and Evolution*, “Global South”, SEPHIS e-magazine 2009, vol. 5, no 2, <http://sephisemagazine.org/current/current.html>, [15.11.2015].

In the Global South nations globalization was widely seen as the U.S. project to diffuse American culture and values and to get free access to their national markets. However globalization was an objective process, independent on people's will. It created both economic opportunities and new challenges, including devastation of uncompetitive industries in developing countries and deindustrialization of developed countries. Simultaneously it made much easier to shape global criminal and terrorist networks. In the new international environment many security issues acquired transnational character, and went to the regional and global level.

The new international environment facilitated dispersion of power among different states and emergence of new centers of power. Japan had become a successful competitor of the U.S. in the Asia Pacific, China was on its rise and Europe proclaimed its unification. Some other potential regional centers of power took shape. The trend was shaping a multipolar international system.

A prominent American expert on International Relations Henry Kissinger predicted in 1994 that the new multipolar world order would have many similarities with the European international system of the 18-19th centuries with several great powers pursuing their foreign policy, based on their current competing interests. The competition between the new centers of power in the pursuit of national interests would make multipolar world more unstable and vulnerable than bipolar and unipolar ones⁶.

More dangerously the new centers of power included not necessarily great powers, but also non-state entities such as Transnational Corporations, NGOs, drug cartels, terrorist networks, individuals-hackers etc. The most influential results of such developments were September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the U.S. which took 2977 innocent lives. They dramatically changed the American society, the U.S. policies, and the whole world.

The U.S. global war on terror showed its overwhelming military superiority. Simultaneously the concept of preemptive strike on any potential threat to the U.S. national security, outlined in the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (George Bush's Doctrine), and American unilateral actions in Iraq revealed vulnerability of any nation to its might. In such circumstances the essential part of the world community regarded American domination as a threat to its own security. Such developments caused a rise of strong anti-America's moods globally, including some of its allies and partners.

Another negative result of the prolonged U.S. wars, mostly in Afghanistan and Iraq, included drain on the resources and disruption of American finance and economy. Finally the U.S. was heavily affected by a financial turmoil in 2008 which spread rapidly to become a global.

The 2008-2009 global financial and economic crisis had a significant impact on the transformation of international system. It significantly weakened many nations, including the U.S. and the European Union, and revealed a new role of emerging nations in the global economy and politics. Unlike the previous crises,

⁶ H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York 1994, p. 733, 736.

successfully managed by the developed nations (the G-7), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, this time developed nations could not deal with the crisis on their own. The financial support of other nations, foremost China and Saudi Arabia, was crucial. That is why the G-20 as a group of nations with the largest gross domestic product (GDP) was first convened in November 2008. It established a new forum of global governance on financial and economic issues, which for the first time in history included both developed and developing nations.

During the crisis China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam managed to maintain relatively high growth rates that confirmed the role of a “larger East Asia” as a center of global economic growth. China invested heavily into the U.S. government bonds to save American financial system and simultaneously its own export-oriented industries. The growing economic interdependence between China and the U.S. a British historian Niall Ferguson coined as an emergence of “Chimerica”. Increasingly important China’s role in the world finance and economy strengthened its regional and global position. Zbignev Brzezinski’s suggestion about establishment of the G-2 (the U.S. and China) got a great international response⁷.

An influential American political expert Farid Zakaria in his famous book “Post-American World” argued that the Iraq war and the 2008-2009 crises weakened America and coincided in time with the “rise of the rest”. The latter was an economic phenomenon, but it also had political, military and cultural consequences, including a rising self-confidence of emerging nations and their different position on international arena⁸. If previously any nation of the world had to make a choice between integration into Western world order and becoming a rogue state, as a result of the crisis it could join the world order on its own terms and transform the system from inside. It could also form ties with other nations bypassing the Western center⁹. These developments meant the end of global American domination. The “Post-American world” was ruled from different centers and by many people¹⁰.

A loss of America’s global leadership was a dangerous development as there was no other center of power, capable to fulfill this crucial role, including the United Nations and other international institutions. The concept of “non polar world”, proposed by Richard Haass, reflected the idea of global disorder and chaos as a principal feature of the shaping international system.

Barack Obama’s administration came to office in 2009 with the goal to renew global American leadership and largely reached the goal. It rejected unilateral actions and hard power approach, “responsibly” finished wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, returned American economy on track, resumed international allies and partnerships. B. Obama’s administration embraced the idea that the U.S. could not be the only global leader. The U.S. leadership role was seen as a promoter of rules and regulations for the new global architecture, and as a founder of

⁷ Z. Brzezinski, *The Group of Two that Could Change the World*, “Financial Times” 2009, Jan. 13, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d99369b8-e178-11dd-afa0-0000779fd2ac.html>, [15.11.2015].

⁸ F. Zakaria, *The Post American World*, New York 2008, p. 17-18.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 10.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 28.

international alliances, capable to solve emerging problems. The key idea of the new global architecture included engagement of the emerging nations into the new international system to enable their influence and contribution.

The U.S. National Security Strategies of 2010 and 2015 underlined the idea of collective leadership and the U.S. cooperation with regional leaders and any nation of the world to shape various alliances and address collectively different issues of concern. The concept of “multipartner” (instead of “multipolar”) world emphasized great powers’ common interests that promote their cooperation instead of rivalry and confrontation among them.

All these developments represented fundamental changes in the international relations and establishment of a multipolar world order with a new America’s role in it. However the multipolar international system appeared to be more unstable and unpredictable than previous ones. It was proved by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the emergence of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the Middle East. It was a new strategic environment of multipolar world order that enabled these two new centers of power (a revisionist state and a terrorist organization) to act aggressively and reach essential success.

Another important international developments of the new era included processes of regional integration that were largely intensified in the late 20s – early 21st century. Globalization made the nations of the world more interconnected and interdependent globally, however first of all it enhanced their ties within regions. As a result a globalized world had become more regional-centered.

Regional integration helped to enhance positive effects of globalization, and decrease the negative ones, mostly in the economic realm. In some regions it went beyond the limits of economic integration and covered other spheres – finance, politics, security, development, people-to-people ties etc.

The process of regional integration can be described by two principal concepts of regionalization and regionalism. Regionalization is run by market forces without deliberate government policies. This trend was presented by a spread of Japanese foreign direct investments in the East and South East Asia in 1970-1990s that contributed greatly to the “East Asian Miracle” of the late 20th century. Regionalism concerns the ideas, identities and ideologies related to a regional project. The concept includes deliberate government policies and establishment of regional institutions – forums, organizations, free trade regimes etc. Its implementation has started in the North America, Asia Pacific, South East Asia and Europe since the late 1980s.

In the North America the U.S. and Canada signed a bilateral Free Trade Agreement in 1988, Mexico joined it in 1992. Their multilateral agreement – North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – was ratified in 1993 and entered into force in January 1994. In Asia Pacific the inter-government forum of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was established to accelerate regional economic cooperation and integration. In Southeast Asia regional organization ASEAN, created in 1967, set new goals and strengthened its structure, based on the specific “ASEAN way” approach and a “soft” concept of integration. In the early 21st century the trend continued and intensified. In Europe the Maastricht Treaty,

signed in 1992 and entered into force on November 1993, created the European Union, which presented the highest level of regional integration. In some cases regional integration embraced not all regional nations and not all parts of participant-states but some of their areas and segments which formed different regional organizations and “triangles of growth”.

Within regional regimes, forums and organizations it was much easier to address some non-traditional security issues and transnational threats. The 1997-1998 Asian and 2008-2009 global financial and economic crises revealed the importance of financial and economic security. Russian “gas wars” against Ukraine presented risks for energy security. All these challenges could be addressed collectively much more efficiently.

Besides economic and security benefits, regional integration provides a tool for a defense of middle and small nation’s interests against great powers. The effective model of interaction with great powers is represented by the Southeast Asian (SEA) nations and their Association (ASEAN). They managed to establish a regional institution without any great power participation to make them stronger as they spoke with one voice on the international arena. ASEAN enabled SEA nations to use competition among great powers for regional influence in their own interests. As a result ASEAN became an untraditional regional leader in the “larger East Asia”.

Disintegration of the Soviet Union contradicted the processes of regional integration. Russian empire and then the Soviet Union formed a region on the basis on common form of governance and ideology, interconnected economic ties, shared history etc. When a common government and state borders didn’t exist anymore, the post-Soviet area constituted a region. As any other region it was a subject of constant changes – integration, disintegration and reintegration.

In 1990s the post-Soviet area took a back seat in the processes of regional integration. Russia was weak and underwent through hard democratic and market reforms. However it still could intervene in Moldova’s domestic affairs to create a frozen conflict zone on its territory. Heavily affected by the 1997-1998 Asian financial and economic crises Moscow gradually curtailed the reforms and established an authoritative form of government. The stabilization of economy and a rise of world energy prices in the early 21st century contributed to Russia’s economic growth and its entering into the group of influential emerging powers. Revived, it initiated regional integration projects to reunite the post-Soviet area, except the Baltic States, as its sphere of influence. The nations that chose another vector of regional integration were forced to submit. The developments are confirmed by many violent actions, including Russia’s August 2008 war with Georgia, “gas” and “trade” wars with Belarus and Ukraine, 2014-2015 aggression against Ukraine.

When Russia reemerged as a great power the nations of the post-Soviet area, unlike SEA states, were unable to create a regional institution to oppose Russia’s domination. The nations that had refused to integrate into Russia-led entities fell into the “grey zone” trap between two regional blocks – existing (the EU) and emerging (the Eurasian Economic Union) with dramatic consequences for their security and well-being.

Russian aggression against Ukraine was not the result of irrational thinking. On the contrary, Russia's leader deliberately exploited a contemporary international environment to reach his goals and enhance Russia's strategic positions in the international system. The 2008 war against Georgia was a trial balloon of a new Russian foreign policy. The U.S. and Europe's weak response on the aggression encouraged Russia for further expansion. Historical experience warns that failure to stop Russian aggression in Ukraine will result its further expansion. "Russian-speaking" people whose rights Russian authoritative and historically expansionist state pledges to defend live not only in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.

Do the international sanctions on Russia caused by its rude violations of fundamental international rules and the political tensions mean a start of a new Cold War in the international relations? American and European leaders deny the claim. Susan Rice, the U.S. National Security Adviser, presenting the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy in February 2015, emphasized a different approach to Russia, compared with the previous document, issued in 2010. However she had to admit that there was "the second piece of it", such issues as upholding arms control obligations and collaborating in the P5+1 with respect to Iran, where the United States and Russia had to work together. In her words, "Even as we necessarily increase the costs and deter the effects of Russia's actions, we will continue to cooperate where we can"¹¹. Similarly some European nations are ready to cooperate with Russia to defeat ISIS.

The situation reflects the complexity of the contemporary international relations in the interconnected and interdependent global system. However, if ideology still matters as it was during the Cold War period, Russia's present rhetoric largely resembles the Soviet past. Official media is blowing up an image of Russia as a besieged fortress, explains the annexation of Crimea by a desire to avoid a potential allocation of NATO base at the peninsular, etc. So the Cold War mentality is still alive. Today, as during Cold War period, NATO and Russia consider each other as strategic rivals. If Cold War is defined as primarily ideological confrontation between nations with different models of development, nowadays we are witnessing the battle of values, which is relevant in the international relations again. The Ukrainian revolution, which Russian intervention turned into the Ukrainian crisis, is the example of such struggle.

What does a majority of Ukrainian society stand for? It stands for the revolutionary changes in Ukraine towards a rule of law and liberal democracy, effective and responsible government, productive economy and a social state, actually for the values and models, represented by the European nations and the U.S. It contests corruption, ineffective government and criminal schemes. It also stands for the right of a choice of Ukraine's place in the international system and for its real sovereignty, and opposes Russian interference and pressure.

Growing interdependence of nations in a globalized world makes it more difficult to stop aggression, especially as the aggressor is one of the great nations with nuclear weapons and a permanent seat in the United Nations' Security

¹¹ The Brookings Institution, *The United States National Security Strategy*, Washington, D.C. February 6, 2015, p. 17, <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/02/06-us-national-security-strategy-rice>, [15.11. 2015].

Council with the veto power. However in spite of a crucial importance of international cooperation to address the issues of the mutual concern, aggression must not be tolerated. Concessions never made aggressors stop; they only encouraged their further aggressive actions and made the situation much worse.

Thus, for a short historical period the international system underwent significant changes and shifted from a bipolar to unipolar and then to multipolar world order. The emerged multipolar world more resembles a world disorder. The U.S. and European nations do not have a dominant position in the global affairs as they used to. Power is distributed between new centers, nations and non-state entities. There is no global leader acceptable for all centers of power. Such strategic environment enabled Russia's annexation of Crimea and its further aggression against Ukraine in the form of a "hybrid war", as well as ISIS' crimes in Iraq and Syria.

At the end of 2015 the international situation continued to be very complex and dynamic. The November 13, 2015 ISIS' terrorist attacks in Paris, Russia's interference into Syrian conflict, its provocative actions in other parts of the world, including Turkey – the NATO member, its attempts to split up the European Union and other destructive actions were increasing unpredictability of the international system development. Its further direction will be largely defined by the global community's response on Russia and ISIS challenges.

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