

The inevitability of a multipolar world

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1. The crisis of the modern version of globalization.

The current international situation may be characterized by the following parameters:

- There has been a withering of the basic premise of globalization: the confidence that the economic model, built on the dictates of financial capitalism, is unshakable.
- A new legal space is being formed, American legislation is being globalized, and international law is being replaced by “rules” determined by the United States and its closest allies.
- The “collective West” has constructed a “coalition of democracies” based on a system of liberal values.
- There is a termination of a dialogue between Russia and the “collective West”.
- Elites in the West managed to create an alternative reality for their societies, in which the democratic world is opposed to “aggressive totalitarian” Russia, and this is a life-and-death struggle.
- The picture of “the civilized world against aggressive Russia” does not fit into the expected “image of the future” in the eyes of a significant part of the countries of the world, that have been named - the Global South.
- Globalism and equality of sovereignty turned out to be incompatible things.

2. World development: main trends.

Many countries (for example, Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Turkey, South Korea, Australia) were able to form their own industrial and technological potential, which sees creation of new markets and financial and investment freedom. The most successful among them is China, which has become the new center of global capital accumulation, a technology hub, and a global investor.

The initially successful integration model of the European Union began to falter in the second decade of its existence. The vulnerabilities that undermine the sustainability of this project are the dependence on raw materials and the disproportionate development of the national economies of the EU member countries.

The world is rapidly transforming into a system of integration zones, each of which gravitates towards several technological and economic centres, at once. The focus of interests – are the global integration projects, which are designed to create new long-term and sustainable economic ties, international co-operation and division of labour.

There is an obvious disunity between the interests of the “team of evolutionists” (China, Russia, Iran, most Arab states, and almost all developing countries) and the “Western democracy coalition.” Competition between them is destroying the unipolar world, as well as the old

structures of global governance. Trade wars, sanctions, protectionism, managed “hot conflicts”, and hybrid wars, - have become a new tool of competition.

In the newly emerging multipolar world, global power and influence have become scattered and disseminated. The distributed power of global multipolarity makes it possible to create qualitatively new relationships between different “centers of power,” and this competition is gaining high significance. In a multipolar world, mutual (collective) strengthening is possible, provided that there is no basis or reason for internal mistrust and rejection, where there is in fact an actual basis for trust and dialogue.

3. Multipolarity

The shape of a multipolar world has not yet taken shape, but its outlines are visible.

1. The UK-US alliance vs. the European Union.

The internal split of the “collective West” into the transatlantic alliance of: Great Britain and the United States, and the old core of the European Union (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg) is becoming increasingly obvious. Despite the continued unity in the sphere of security and defense (NATO), the parties have entered into a competitive race for technological advantages and economic spheres of influence.

“(…) our [European] prosperity was based on China and Russia. Clearly, today, we have to find new ways for energy from inside the European Union, as much as we can, because we should not change one dependency for another. (...) On the other hand, we delegated our security to the United States... who knows what will happen two years from now, or even in November? The United States take care of our security. China and Russia provided the basis of our prosperity. This is a world that is no longer there. (...) The world has entered a disorderly multipolarity”. – Josep Borrell, 10 October 2022.¹

2. UK-US alliance vs. China.

The confrontation between the UK-US alliance, and China together with North Korea, is becoming complex. China, North Korea and India have acquired a strategic ally - Russia. Russian-Chinese, Russian-North Korean and Russian-Indian relations have frightened the West.

3. Geo-cultural project “Great Turan”.

The crisis and gradual collapse of the “collective West” created the pre-conditions for the ambitious geo-cultural project of the “Turkic world” (“Great Turan”). So far, this project looks

¹ *EU Ambassadors Annual Conference 2022: Opening speech by High Representative Josep Borrell.* European Union External Action. The Diplomatic Service of the European Union, Brussels; https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-ambassadors-annual-conference-2022-opening-speech-high-representative-josep-borrell_en (accessed 23 July 2024).

like Turkey's geopolitical ambition, a country which never became a member of the European Union. Ambitious Turkey is becoming a serious deterrent to Eurasian projects.

The Turkic unification is becoming a new "sanitary belt" that will perform the same function of containment and demarcation on the Euro-continent as the countries of Central Eastern Europe do in Europe.

4. The "Alternative New Middle East" project.

The Islamic world, which has been fragmented after the bloody wars in Iraq and the resurgence and defeat of ISIS, holds an enormous potential. Theocratic Iran and Afghanistan can become new attractions for various radical technologies in the Islamic world, creating the preconditions for an "Alternative New Middle East", opposing colour revolutions and external interference of the "collective West."

Iran became a member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (in 2022); essentially a military alliance between Russia and China. Such an alliance with the two nuclear powers of the UN Security Council, will allow Iran to achieve the gradual completion of its nuclear programme and deeper entry into the Eurasian economic community. The downside is another violation of relations with the United States, Great Britain, and the European Union, the threat of disruption of the "nuclear deal," and an escalation of tension with Israel.

5. The "Autonomous India" project.

Indian politicians talk about India's strategic autonomy. India has its own unique relations with Russia as with the United States, and is striving for special positions both in the Indo-Pacific region, and in Asia. Possessing demographic capital, a competitive industrial sector, India has a unique opportunity to "contain" China at a regional level, contain the Afghan-Pakistan relations, and influence on the current security of the Indian ocean rim countries, which are key for world trade.

India's participation in BRICS and economic co-operation with Russia - have created a real illusion of India's autonomy. At the same time, India can make the most of its participation in the new Indo-Pacific strategy, which the United States and Great Britain have begun to implement.

6. "Unification of East-Asian States" project.

A centre of global competition is emerging, which encompasses the growing East-Asian states that are united in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - there are 10 members, including Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and others). In 2020, a new association was created with the core of ASEAN (free trade area), which included China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and others. The potential of this association could significantly influence the plans of the UK-US alliance to create local managed structures, like the Trans-Pacific Commonwealth or the Indo-Pacific Community.

7. The “Greater BRICS” and Shanghai Co-operation Organisation projects.

The alternative association “Greater BRICS” and systems potentially gravitating towards it - are formed on the basis of the values of sovereignty and on the coincidence of specific interests of the participants.

The expansion of BRICS in Southeast Asia could change the balance of power in the region, and strengthen the process of international influence, including the replacement of the US dollar.

Note: It is proposed to connect the national payment systems of the BRICS countries. In June 2024, BRICS began preparing to launch the BRICS Bridge platform for settlement and payment infrastructure in national currencies, including digital ones.

The accession of the countries of Southeast Asia opens up new prospects in a multipolar world, where these countries will be able to act together in response to the geopolitical blockade from the “collective West”. Southeast Asia is becoming a key focus in the geopolitical arena, causing concern for the “collective West”.

The group of BRICS countries, even in an expanded format, does not claim political and economic dominance. Most countries in the Global South are not adversaries of the United States, but are seeking to change their position in the world order, as dictated by Washington. This creates new challenges and opportunities for all participants on the international arena.

“The Shanghai Co-operation Organization together with BRICS are the main pillars of the emerging world order. These associations act as a powerful locomotive for the processes of global development and the establishment of true multipolarity,” - President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, July 4, 2024, Astana, Kazakhstan.²

4. Options for a new world order and global competition.

The New World Order implies a certain time-stable structure of relations at the global level, and its institutions.

Option A – UK-US Alliance.

Option B – “Dark Decades”.

Option C – “New Peace of Westphalia”.

Option A. UK-US Alliance - Probable Events.

² Astana, Kazakhstan, 4 July 2024, RIA News; <https://ria.ru/20240704/putin-1957291397.html> (accessed 23 July 2024).

The basis of the American and new global policy of the UK-US alliance is the suppression of the development of competitors, for example, China and the European Union.

In the new structure of the UK-US alliance, those countries that “fall out” of the new system of global governance will find themselves in the position of rogue countries, whose economic activity and participation in the global division of labour (supply of raw materials, industrial co-operation) will be strictly regulated by sanctions. Rogue countries will be limited in their opportunities for innovative and technological growth and international co-operation.

A financial system of this order would continue to rely on a select set of reserve currencies: the US dollar, the European euro and the British pound (likely in the form of digital currencies).

The structure of relations will be based on a consolidation of technologically-leading countries into a single entity of governments, global companies and private capitals - implementing a centralized policy of “financial and technological imperialism”.

Global collective security will be developed, based on the organization of blocs and alliances, that are focused on partnership with a globalized NATO (the first example is the AUKUS alliance, 2021).

Necessary prerequisites for this option:

- Russia's defeat in the war against Ukraine, Russia's isolation and Russia's exclusion from the UN Security Council;
- removing the issue of “strategic autonomy” from the agenda in the European Union, returning to the process of economic Euro-Atlantic integration;
- continuation of “colour revolutions” in Asia and the Middle East, political transformations in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria;
- involvement of African Union countries in infrastructure projects of the UK-US alliance;
- the policy of transforming Russia into a “soft federation”, supporting the segmentation of Russia into autonomous territories.

Option B. “Dark Decades” - Probable Events.

The option largely depends on what conclusions and decisions the main actors make when faced with a new disorder - “*a disorderly/messy multipolarity*” (Josep Borrell, October 10, 2022).

Old structures are losing their competence, legal norms and rules remain simply as declarations, and most regulatory processes are dominated by the power and interests of their executors.

“Double standards” continue to operate; the policy of forceful solutions (via economic, military means), constant geopolitical manoeuvring, and diplomatic and ideological hypocrisy – these continue.

Establishing rules based on the old principles of “balance of power” or “balance of interests” will simply be impossible. The leading principle will be the “changeable balance of power”, which will force performers to constantly adapt and take into account new opportunities and new competitors.

Military-economic alliances will take the first place: the NATO alliance based on the British-American alliance; Shanghai Co-operation Organization (primarily China-Russia-Iran-India); The European Union with the growing military-political ambitions of Germany (France-Germany-Italy); ASEAN countries will be forced to strengthen economic co-operation via regional security institutions.

The network of military and military-economic alliances will become serious competition among the main “centres of power.”

Key decisions in the field of the global economy, infrastructure solutions, trade relations and industrial co-operation will move to group formats - G7, G20, BRICS.

The international financial and trading systems will find themselves in a state of ongoing turbulence. Reserve currencies will be tied to regional “economic centers.” There will be a gradual withering away of the old global governance organizations, primarily those associated with the UN and the Bretton Woods (1944) and Jamaican (1971-1978) world monetary and financial systems.

Crises caused by protectionism and trade wars - will intensify competition and significantly reduce global investment opportunities. The gap between the “centres of accumulation” and the large poor South (periphery) will become even greater.

Migration waves associated with flight from war, hunger and poverty will become the norm, which will lead to segregation of the population (especially in the USA, Great Britain, EU countries, Canada, Australia, Japan).

There is a high probability of a general turn towards harsh autocratic and authoritarian regimes and “right-wing political deviations and movements” in the politics of both Western and Eastern democracies.

These are the necessary, basic prerequisites for the above:

- the Russian-Ukrainian war becoming endless;
- The European Union will enter a “right-wing political deviations and movements” zone in most states;
- Turkey and Iran are accelerating militarization and openly competing for ideological and territorial control in Asia and the Middle East. There is a high probability of new Middle Eastern wars (Syria, Iraq, the conflict between Iran and Israel);

- China will enforce a military solution to the issue with Taiwan, establish military control and a monopoly on trade routes in the South China Sea (more than 1/3 of the world's maritime cargo traffic);
- in Africa, the struggle between the old metropolises for influence on resource states (France, Belgium, Italy) will intensify;
- The countries of the Southern Common Market, like the EU countries, will find themselves in a period of internal political crises, the association may fall apart, ties with the EU will be undermined, and the idea of a “united America” will become attractive again.

Option C. “New Peace of Westphalia” - Probable events.

In 1975, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was held in Helsinki (Finland), which ended with the signing of the historic Helsinki Final Act. In Helsinki, the results of World War II were finally consolidated - recognition and guarantees of the inviolability of borders, principles of peaceful coexistence and non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, etc.

In a sense, Helsinki 1975 became the new “Peace of Westphalia 1648” of the era of nation-states with different social and political systems.

Remark: The Peace of Westphalia is an agreement of 1648 that ended the Thirty Years' War in the Holy Roman Empire and established a new system of international relations.

Supporters of a “multipolar world” actively advocate an evolutionary reformist approach to the development of existing global governance structures. Countries - new leaders (for example, members of the BRICS), as well as countries that were defeated in World War II (primarily Germany and Japan) are the main stakeholders in the new system of balancing interests both at the level of the UN Security Council and in global governance structures.

The proposed transformation plan includes:

- a Helsinki-2 organisation;
- expansion of the permanent composition of the UN Security Council;
- UN institutions and organizations will acquire collective management functions and powers to manage large international investment programmes;
- the financial system will be transformed in favour of a “basket of currencies”, which will include the currencies of leading economic centers;
- strengthening the UN military and peacekeeping functions and developing a mechanism for comprehensive collective security;
- establishment of supranational control (e.g., collective structures created by the UN) over nuclear weapons and new types of weapons of mass destruction and environmentally hazardous projects;
- creation of mechanisms for the implementation of global programmes in the economy, education, and culture.

Russian initiative

Actions necessary to create a more just and democratic world order:

- it is necessary to eliminate the root causes of the crisis that has broken out in Europe;
- restore the regional and global balance of power;
- reform all institutions of global governance;
- actively use such associations as BRICS and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, as well as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the African Union, ASEAN, the Arab League and other international organisations to strengthen the multipolar world.

The UN-2 plan could become a prototype of a collective “global government” that would make anyone’s hegemony impossible and relieve tensions, related to the new bloc division of the world.

The idea of evolutionary reform of the UN is also supported by those who recognize the path of “competition of systems” and are ready to review the results of the Yalta-Potsdam-Helsinki system (1945-1975) in favour of a new “global Helsinki” - in favour of the “New Westphalian Peace” in international relations.

If an initiative group is created, representing the interests of all major alliances and groups, such a plan looks quite likely.

Necessary, basic prerequisites for this option:

- ending the Russian-Ukrainian war through non-military means (dialogue, negotiations, transition periods);
- “collective West’s” refusal of direct confrontation with Russia, participation in “détente”, rehabilitation of the idea of Greater Europe;
- strengthening the “strategic autonomy” of the EU, initiating NATO reform and beginning to create its own European security system;
- strengthening of “strategic autonomy” - the return of the United States to the conservative policy of “American isolationism” and the policy of “geopolitical deals” (revival of the Monroe Doctrine, - Donald Trump);
- collective policy of “détente” and the creation of new mechanisms for monitoring compliance with the nuclear parity of nuclear powers, new mechanisms for monitoring the non-proliferation of nuclear technologies, initiation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon - 2;
- creation of “territories without nuclear weapons” in Northern and Central Europe, Central and Southeast Asia, South and Latin America, Africa, Australia and Oceania;
- an international pact on the non-use of sanctions as a tool for the global isolation of countries, the development of a new code of global liberal trade;
- demilitarization of the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions;

- strengthening the autonomy of the African Union, developing collective integration mechanisms for control over the use of resources, a co-ordinated modernization policy, remote from the “centers of influence” (USA, UK, leaders of the European Union).

Conclusions:

1. The global world order under the auspices of the “collective West” began to collapse.
2. The current crisis of the world order is directly related to the transition towards a multipolar world.
3. The collapse of the “old order” and the transition to the not yet established “new world order” affected all societies and their social organizations in the world without exception.
4. The rule-based legal order of the “collective West” is a direct threat to multipolarity and international law.
5. A struggle is unfolding for the “collection of systems” and spaces that are similar in the “cultural code” of societies.
6. A multipolar world has become a reality. More and more states are advocating for a fair world order, and are ready to defend their rights and defend traditional values.
7. In a multipolar world, there is no one or several hegemons, but there is a disproportionate distribution of forces - from military and technological to cultural and ideological.
8. The BRICS associations, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and a number of other regional associations in Eurasia, Latin America and Africa are structures for a growing and accelerating multipolar world.
9. If countries of good will do not side with Russia, the world will remain on its knees before the globalist world order.

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