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Modern System of International Relations and Role of the USA

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Abstract

The whole twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st century has been unique in modern history; for three centuries the structure of international politics remained multipolar, in the twentieth century it has changed three times. Multipolar at the outset, it became bipolar after the Second World War, unipolar with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and as the new millennium dawns it is gradually becoming multipolar once more. In this regard, by the presenting of the comparative analysis of the different international systems in the world, it is important to determine the role and place of the USA within the modern international system.

Keywords: Bipolarity, International System, Multipolarity, Unipolarity, USA, World Order

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Introduction

The modern political world, which is under the research of the world politics, is very complex and contradictory, which has been developing within the thousand years. The social-political organization of the human society was changing, there were developing the mechanisms of the interrelations among the people. The heritage of the past in the different forms is presented in the modern times, therefore, to understand what was going on the planet is possible only through the historic development. Historic analysis gives the answers on the questions, what and why were the changings in the political structure of the world and, on the contrary, what was remaining unchangeable; what is the common vector of development and what is possible to expect in the future.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the main principles of the modern system of International Relations and world political order and determination the role of the USA within the first half of the 21st century.

Research Questions:

1) What type of the world political order is existed in the post cold war period?

2) What are the main strenghts and weaknesses, taking into consideration economic, political, military and other factors which should determine the current status of USA as a superpower?

3) What are the main differences between unipolar, bipolar, tripolar and multipolar worlds?

With regards to the research methods, the following methods have been used:

1) Quantitative research methods were used in the research paper, particulalry determination the share of USA in the Gross Domestic Product of the World, volume of US GDP etc.

2) Methods of comparative analysis – related to the analysis of the differences between unipolar, bipolar, tipolar and multipolar systems etc.

3) Content analysis - the study of for example the content of the researches of leading diplomats and political analysts such as Z. Brzezinski, S. Huntington, H. Kissinger, J. Nye, K. Findlay, S. Strange, K. Waltz.

4) Narrative analysis – related to the deep analysis of all those processes, which are going on in the modern world.

As for the **methodological framework** of the paper, the concept of the International System is used, also the paper is based on the different concepts related to the strengths of the states and its elements within the world politics – for example, analysis of the economic, military, cultural, information etc. Potential of the United States on the international arena.

With regards of the findings of the paper – it analyzes in detail the different version related to the modern world political order and the role and place of the USA within this system.

Modern System of International Relations

In the second half of the 20th century, despite the activity and plurality of TNA (Trans National Actors), complication of their interaction, the system of *the international (interstate) relations* (IR) still remains the most significant structural element in modern political system of the world that is defined by a key role of the states. But at the end of the 20th century, there are also important changes in this area. With the end of the Cold War, the era of the *bipolar* world dividing the world into two camps has been ended. But what succeeded this IR system? In the 1990s the discussion about the nature of the IR new system returned. Disputes, mainly conducted by the researchers working in realistic tradition went around two main points of view on the new system of the international relations:

- the world became *mono-polar (or unipolar).*
- the world became *multipolar (multi-polar)* where several centers of force are allocated.

In the early 1990s, during the war in the Persian Gulf, the president of that time of the USA George Bush said that in connection with disintegration of the Soviet Union one of the “poles” disappeared (Chitadze, 2011). This idea was picked up by Z. Brzezinski in the book “The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives” (Brzezinski, 1997). Author mentioned, that “as a result of the rival’s crash, the United States fell into a unique state: they became the first and the only world power”. Further he specifies that “even when superiority of the USA will begin to decrease, it is improbable that any state will be able to achieve that world superiority which the USA has now” (Brzezinski, 1997).

This point of view gained support of a number of researchers and the practitioners mainly in the USA, with these

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or those nuances, remarks and explanations. There were talks about formation of Pax Americana - the unipolar world led by the USA. At the same time, there were researches who claimed that unipolarity of the world does not mean the existence of the one pole being presented by only USA. It can be much more difficult. For example, a number of authors consider that this pole began to be developed even during the Cold War and represents certain coordinated actions of the management of the world by the group of seven leading states which turned subsequently into "Group of Eight" (G-8) at the end of 90-th, but have again transferred to the "Group of Seven" after the occupation the Crimea by Russia.

Nevertheless, general works, especially the works of the end of 1990s - the beginning of the 2000s, are devoted to discussion not only unipolarity and leaderships of the USA in the post-bipolar world, but also so-called policy of unilateralism, assuming that foreign policy decisions are adopted even without positions of close allies, as for example was held during the making decision about starting the military operation by the USA in Iraq in 2003.

In the beginning of the 2000-th intensive discussion begun on the topic, how the policy of unilaterality of the USA had to be proved. According to S. Huntington, leadership of the USA is justified by the fact, that this country is the most free and liberal (Huntington, 2004). K. Waltz in the work "Intimations of Multipolarity", which was published in 2000, approaches to each other the concepts of "unipolarity" and "unilaterality" (Waltz, 2000). He connects unipolarity with lack of serious threats for the USA from any other state and consequently an opportunity to act proceeding from own positions. At the same time a number of authors emphasized responsibility of the USA for the events in the world, taking into account the US leading position on the global level.

The idea of unipolarity and especially policy of unilaterality sparked criticism both in the USA, and beyond its borders. Under the question was the expediency for the United States to assume all burden of such leadership and also need to play a role of "the international police officer". During the argumentation on the USA taking more restrained behavior on the international arena, as an example were presented George Washington's statements, for example, concerning the fact that America has to avoid the involvement into realization of the purposes, alien for it. By the way Z. Brzezinski, noting leadership of the USA after the end of Cold War, points also to the restrictions connected with its realization. He sees them in the most American society as, according to the results of polls, carried out in 1996, the vast majority of Americans (74%) prefers "that the USA equally should solve the international problems with other states" (Brzezinski, 1997).

It is worth to mention that concepts of "unilaterality" and "unipolarity" are quite often coinciding or differing from each other, but it is obvious that the policy and unilaterality can be implemented at any system of the international relations, and a powerful state can consider its interests and actions in coordination with other countries, etc., i.e. to be oriented on versatility in the solution of the international problems.

Nevertheless, the criticism of the policy of unilaterality was often followed by instructions on multipolarity of the modern world where along with the USA, there are also other centers, just as it was in Europe, for example during "the European concert". G. Kissinger reminds to the society the fact, when he writes that "the international system which existed the longest term without great war was that had been arisen at the Vienna congress in 1815" (Kissinger, 1994).

By the way, the model of a multipolar system of the international relations was discussed in the western science even during the Cold War period in connection with the recession of power of the USA, having been assumed then the emergence in the world of the new centers of force. Then this idea did not get support in the Soviet Union.

In the 1990s, the ideas of multipolarity of the world had a response among the political analysts from the different countries. After the end of Cold War, several scholars considered that there was the common time for the formation of the new centers, or poles, and China and Western Europe, in particular, have become some of those. At the same time, the multipolarity in several scientists works acted not so much as the developed reality after the crash of the bipolar world, but as system, to which it is necessary to aspire, using the developed conditions and directing all foreign political and diplomatic efforts.

The idea of multipolarity of the world as a reference point of an official foreign policy gained development in the late 1990s in several countries, for example in China, Russia etc. that found reflection in several official documents.

According to several political analysts, this understanding of the concepts of "multipolarity" and "unipolarity" are devoid of sense. The speech has to go more likely about the centers, but not about poles. However, terms of "polarity" are widely used not only in journalism, but also in scientific literature. J.T. Rourke generalized the research conducted in this area, presenting various options of systems of the international relations.

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1. **Unipolar World.**

Characteristics of the unipolar world:

- the central (main) power establishes "rules of the game" and dominates, using military and economic levers;
- the central power resolves disputes between "subordinates";
- the central power prevents to "subordinates" in their aspiration to find independence.

In literature unipolarity is usually offered to understand as such situation on the world scene, when one power according to military, political, economic and other indicators is in an obvious separation from other countries. The hypothetical option of world federal system at discussions about unipolarity is considered much less often.

2. **Bipolar system**

Characteristics of bipolar system:

- rather hostile relations between two poles;
- attempt to reduce influence of the opposite block;
- strengthening of power in relation to other block due to involvement of new members.

3. **Three polar system**

Characteristics of the three polar world:

- Intention to keep good relations with the two other participants, or, at least, attempt to avoid the confrontations with them;
- Intention not to admit to improvement the relation among the two other participants of the process.

4. **Multipolar system**

Characteristics of the multi polar world:

- To oppose to the each of the participants, who intends to be a leader;
- Intention to strengthen own position, or at least, not to admit its weakening (it is implemented by the way of the negotiation procedures, but, if it is inevitable, by the force methods too;
- Even in case of confrontation, to intend, not to admit the destabilization of the system.

As a whole, during the multipolarity of the world, it is the balance of the potential of the several countries, but under the condition of unipolarity, one country stands away from the other states. Thus, the discussions about the polarity of the world is constructed from the different suggested schemes and variations and are traditionally constructed on the following basic principles:

- The pole is the state (non–state actors during the discussion about the polarity of the World are not taken into consideration);
- Strength of the pole is first of all determined by its military-political character. Only within the last years it was started to be taken into consideration the economic factor too.
- Usually, during the consideration of the poles, it is mentioned the three groups of the states: superpowers, middle states and small countries;
- The ideas about polarity of the world in the classical version are oriented mostly on the concept of realism and neo-realism (Rourke, 2007).

If during the development of the state-centrist model of the world, the economic and military-political potentials of the states have coincided, at the end of the 20th century economic factor has become comparatively independent. It was shown, for example, during the energy crisis of 1970-th, when the western countries, which had comparatively huge military-political potential, were forced to conduct negotiations with OPEC member countries. Today many researchers point out the role of the economic factor, calling the Japan as one of the poles, despite the fact, that this country does not possess the strong military-political potential. Several researchers consider the China as a pole, first of all due to the economic factors.

It is difficult to say, will the economic factor determine the strength of the "poles" in the 21st century or not? Probably, they will be other indexes, particularly the level of the development and using the new technologies, water and energy potential and also education, political activity at the international arena etc. For example, S. Strange supposes, that the future will determine not the armies and resources, but this, how the

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participant of the international interrelations will be influential during the introduction the new “rules of the game”, i.e. those norms and principles, on the base of which the interrelations will be constructed (Strange, 1996).

If we talk about the modern time, according J. Nye, in his book, which was published in 2002 “The paradox of American power: Why the World`s Only Superpower Can`t Go it Alone”, the polarity becomes multidimensional. He points at three levels. First – is belonged to the military-political field, and here the USA is dominant. Second – to economic. At this level there are three main centers: USA, Western Europe and Japan (in the modern period we can discuss about the China). Finally, third – level of transnational relations, where it is difficult definitely to point about leadership. J. Nye considers, that the mistake is the fact, that several politicians see only the first level, do not pay attention on the existence of others (Nye, 2002).

Determination the transnational level brings us to make the important conclusion about not consideration of the world political system only as the interstate relations.

The Possible Models of the World Political Order of the 21st Century

The configuration of the world order of the 21st century is not so obvious, as it seems, since the differently directed actions of many converting factors generates the different scenarios of the development of contemporary international relations. The establishment of one or another version of the global political order depends on the combination of the factors, which act during the relatively prolonged period.

The Model of the World Hegemony of the USA

The model is based on the domination of the USA in the economic, financial, technological, military and commercial spheres. This hegemony is connected with the supremacy of the USA in the formulating of the international standards and rules, attractiveness of ideology, skillful mobilization of the American resources and weakening the potential enemies. The global hegemony of the USA can be prolonged during the quarter of a century. To this contributes the position of the countries of the Western Europe, which do not dispute global US leadership. The European Union, till now, does not have united geopolitical purpose, but the institutes of NATO are presented as the effective control by the USA. Furthermore, the global elevation of the USA does not prevent China, since it more greatly is occupied with the internal problems and therefore it is interested in the American investments, technologies and markets for sale. Russia also cannot resist the American hegemony, since it needs Western investments, technological renovation, the admittance for the American market.

The Bipolar Model of the world

In the world with the bipolar structure there exist several centers of global influence, the opposition of two and more country-leaders. The world hegemony of the USA is disputed by the new global player-competitors as China or European Union. It can seem that forces for the opposition to the USA in the separately undertaken country will not be sufficient. In this case, the coalition of the countries can resist the hegemony of the USA. In particular, the expanding European Union as an economic can be compared with the USA: The share of the European Union in the world-wide gross product composes 19.8%, and the USA – 20.4%. However, the most serious challenge for the USA can compose China. According to the forecasts, by 2025, Asia, headed by China, will produce about 40% of the world gross product, and GNP (Gross National Product) of China will reach 20 trillion dollars. In this case the USA will be at the second place (Chitadze, 2019).

The Multi Polar Model of the World

This model is based on the balance of power. Such geopolitical structure is connected with the issue, that the phase of the hegemony of the USA cannot be infinite, which is connected with the limitedness of the resources, their liquidity. The Multi polarity will be formed in the framework of the fighting for the regional hegemony between the European Union and Russia, between China, India and Japan. Each of the centers will strive for the creation of its own zone of influence. The main process, proceeding in this direction, is connected with the forming of three blocks: European Union – NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association) – East Asia. In Russia in this respect are only military resources of influence, but economic and technological resources are absent.

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Poly-Civilization Model

The appearance of this model is connected with parallel existence of the seven civilizations –Western, Latin American, East-European, Muslim, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese. The global conflicts in the 21st c. will occur along the line of these civilizations, since each of them possesses the specific resources of influence on the competitor.

New Challenges and Risks in the System of International Politics

The radical changes in the world politics are dated to September 11, 2001; when the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon were destroyed by terrorist attack. This event fluoresced the number of the problems, which became in the center of the contemporary stage of foreign relations.

Conclusion

In general, the World after the ending of the cold has been turned out to become complex and non-predictable and the system of International Relations, which was formed within the post-cold war period, did not get any common and acceptable for everybody name, despite the attempts, to determine the base of the new world order. Due to the fact, that the USA remained the only state, which satisfied all requirements (political, economic, military, cultural etc.) to be superpower, which was reflected, for example, during the US military operations in Persian Gulf, against Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. It has even been appeared the term, which was characterizing the US foreign policy – unilateralism. Many considered that the post-cold war period was unipolar (under the US dominance). But neither the processes, nor the term covered the whole complex and base parameters of the all political processes, which were going on in the different regions of the World.

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