

M. Sanaei¹**THE NEXT WORLD ORDER: THE NECESSITY OF CULTURAL MULTILATERALISM**

Reviewing the changes in the liberal world order, the features of power and the civilizational paradigm of the contemporary era, this report anticipates the possibility of the change in the current Liberal international order under the leadership of the U. S. By examining the aspects of power in the global arena and the divergence of the civilizational paradigm, it seems that the world will face increasing international tensions and disputes in the near future. Under such circumstances, a peaceful transition to the new world order, would be a long shot. Using the constructivist school, this report tries to provide a solution for a peaceful transition to the future world order, and considers cultural multilateralism as one of the requirements to this end. By respecting other cultures, cultural multilateralism negates cultural unilateralism and provides the basis for reducing identity tensions and improving relations and cooperation in the world.

Signs of change in the current world order**1. Demise of Liberal International Order**

After the end of the Second World War, the United States established the world order and its main governance institutions based on the liberal international order, and after the end of the Cold War due to the beginning of America's unipolar era, the liberal order became the world order. But now there are signs of the demise of the liberal world order, which can be considered as the signs of the transition of the world order.

Nationalism substitutes internationalism

As one of the foundations of the liberal international order, free trade among the countries of the world has a significant importance, both in the Western discourse and in the economics discipline. Despite the benefits of global trade in the theoretical field and its promotion in the liberal international order, during the last two decades, there have been signs of increasing nationalism in the world economy.² The initial signals of shift from internationalist economy to nationalist economy were observed in the financial crisis of 2008. To

reduce the destructive effects of the financial crisis on their economies, the countries of the world moved towards nationalism, and economic self-reliance.³ This process continued during following years and some of the most considerable evidences were conducted by the western governments.

Experts consider the American trade war against China to be a part of the process known as Decoupling between the two countries, which means reducing the economic interdependence of the two.⁴ Also, Britain's withdrawal from the European Union was another example of weakening internationalism by Western countries.⁵

This trend became more obvious after the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic. The widespread quarantine engulfed the global economy in stagnation and unemployment, the spillover effects of these dynamics resulted in the decrease of global trade.⁶ At the same time, international organizations could not assist to put an end to the crisis.⁷ For managing the Corona crisis, Societies could not rely on international community. All these factors led to strengthening of nationalism in the global economy.⁸ Due to the increasing geopolitical tensions during recent years, it seems that the process of expanding nationalism and weakening internationalism will continue in the future.

Erosion of international organizations and emergence of parallel international frameworks

Today, organizations in charge of world order play a lesser role in international relations. The United States, the guardian of the liberal world order, weakened the institutions responsible for world governance and withdrew from some international frameworks and agreements, During Trump's presidency.⁹ One of the main manifestations for the reduc-

³ Colantone I., Stanig P. The surge of economic nationalism in Western Europe // Journal of economic perspectives. 2019. Vol. 33, № 4. P. 128–151.

⁴ Johnson K., Gramer R. The great decoupling // Foreign Policy. 2020. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/14/china-us-pandemic-economy-tensions-trump-coronavirus-covid-new-cold-war-economics-the-great-decoupling> (accessed: 25.05.2023).

⁵ Ihalainen P., Sahala A. Evolving Conceptualisations of Internationalism in the UK Parliament: Collocation Analyses from the League to Brexit // Digital Histories: Emergent Approaches within the New Digital History. Helsinki : Helsinki Univ. Press, 2020. P. 199–219.

⁶ Aktar M. A., Alam M. M., Al-Amin A. Q. Global economic crisis, energy use, CO2 emissions, and policy roadmap amid COVID-19 // Sustainable Production and Consumption. 2021. № 26. P. 770–781.

⁷ Gostin L. O., Moon S., Meier B. M. Reimagining global health governance in the age of COVID-19 // American Public Health Association. 2020. Vol. 110. P. 1615–1619.

⁸ Bieber F. Global nationalism in times of the COVID-19 pandemic // Nationalities Papers. 2022. № 50 (1). P. 13–25.

⁹ Copelovitch M., Pevehouse J. C. International organizations in a new era of populist nationalism // The Review of International Organizations. 2019. № 14. P. 169–186.

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² Murray P. Nationalist or Internationalist? Socialists and European Unity // Visions of European Unity. Routledge, 2019. P. 159–182.

tion in the power of the international organizations, is the expansion of bilateral or multilateral relations in the frameworks outside the institutions responsible for the world order in the last decade.

2. American decline and the ambiguity of the balance of global power

The transformation of the world order is not only happening due to the erosion of the liberal international order, but also regarding the American decline as the guardian of the world order and the only surviving superpower of the Cold War, could lead to great consequences in the future of world order in various dimensions.

Military Power

The military conflicts of the past two decades beside America's failure in the West Asian wars, and Russia's problems in the Ukraine war, have been interpreted by some experts as the collapse of the previous military hierarchy among nations which could be regarded as a change in the paradigm of military power.¹ On the other hand, the spread of new technologies, especially cyber technologies in the world, has produced a new generation of weapons that can disturb the strategic balance.² All these factors make the future of military dynamics more ambiguous, hence complicating the prediction of military conflicts.

Economic power and dimensions related to it

The reduction of the U. S. role in the world economy and the increasing economic power of the emerging markets, especially China, can be extended to monetary and then financial areas and affect other aspects of the world order. One of these issues is the supremacy of the dollar as the world's key currency as the foundation of the world's monetary system and the most important currency of the international financial system. The increasing role of China in the global economy and international trade has caused RMB to enter the special drawing right.³ Also, the emergence of new financial markets such as Shanghai oil market, and China's financial innovations can be the beginning of reducing the prominent role of American and Western financial markets in the world economy.⁴ Although there is still no certain prospect for the end of the American economic superiority or its monetary and financial components,⁵ the discourse of American decline has entered the monetary and financial disciplines, and there are predictions about the multipolarity or bipolarity of the future world economy.

Technology

The beginning of the age of artificial intelligence has changed the position of countries in the field of technology and has disrupted the past hierarchies of knowledge be-

tween nations. Although the U. S. still owns the best universities, best research institutes and scientific centers of the world, rival nations are heavily investing in new technologies. Russia's ability in cyber hacking and China's increasing ability in AI and other emerging technologies are a source of concern for the West.⁶

Divergence of civilizational paradigm of the current era

1. Decline of the West as a hegemon of civilization

Erosion of liberal democracies

For many years, liberal democracies claimed to be the most advanced political systems, which were able to maintain social order along with individual and civil liberties, while at the same time providing an environment for peaceful and stable changes. But during the last decade, Western political systems faced many social unrests and political tensions, which indicated the emergence of wide-ranging crises.

Increasing social conflicts, the spread of populism, political bipolarity in western societies, are symptom of problems encountering liberal democracies such as containing social energies and political demands of the masses, and as a result, the erosion of the social contract.⁷

Unresolved issues in political economy

Globalization and the increase in international trade have not led to the expansion of prosperity and economic opportunities for all sectors of the Western economy, during the past years. American workers and employees continue to live by the standards of past decades, while many lose their jobs as globalization transfers jobs to the lower-wage countries. On the other hand, globalization has reduced costs and increased revenues for the owners and managers of large companies.⁸

Today, the American dream about opportunities for middle-class people in America and having a prosperous life is fading.⁹ Dissatisfaction caused by economic inequality and increasing class gap has led to increasing disputes over liberal democracies. Popularity of socialism, reviewing the role of the state in the economy, both in academic circles and in western populist streams during the third decade after the end of Cold War, is a sign of reexamining the possibility of reform of liberal democracies, and concern about the future of this system.¹⁰

Identity crisis in the West

Currently, the West, as the global cultural hegemon, is going through a period of very intense and social changes and controversial identity debates. Post-Modern ideas which during the 60s, were outside of the main frameworks of identity, gender and lifestyle, have become the official dis-

¹ Kortunov A. Restoration, reformation, or revolution? Blueprints for the world order after the Russia-Ukraine conflict // China International Strategy Review. 2022. № 4 (2). P. 183–208.

² Johnson J. Artificial intelligence & future warfare: implications for international security // Defense & Security Analysis. 2019. № 35 (2). P. 147–169.

³ Chen Y.-L., Xu K. The impact of RMB's SDR inclusion on price discovery in onshore-offshore markets // Journal of Banking & Finance. 2021. № 127. P. 106–124.

⁴ Liu Z. Z., Papa M. Can BRICS De-dollarize the Global Financial System? Cambridge Univ. Press, 2022.

⁵ Winecoff W. K. "The persistent myth of lost hegemony," revisited: structural power as a complex network phenomenon // European Journal of International Relations. 2020. № 26 (1 suppl.). P. 209–252.

⁶ Kissinger H. A., Schmidt E., Huttenlocher D. The age of AI and our human future. Hachette UK, 2021.

⁷ Galston W. A. The enduring vulnerability of liberal democracy // Journal of Democracy. 2020. № 31 (3). P. 8–24.

⁸ Wang Z., Sun Z. From globalization to regionalization: The United States, China, and the post-Covid-19 world economic order // Journal of Chinese Political Science. 2021. № 26. P. 69–87.

⁹ Mortimer J. T., Mont'Alvao A., Aronson P. Decline of "the American Dream"? Outlook toward the future across three generations of Midwest families // Social Forces. 2020. № 98 (4). P. 1403–1435.

¹⁰ Musto M. The Marx Revival: Key Concepts and New Critical Interpretations. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2020.

course of identity and life in the West, which has caused many changes in various fields such as law, science, culture, and politics, while its impacts on the changes in other cultures are also noticeable.¹ Today, identity politics in the domestic affairs of Western countries are becoming household streams. Women, homosexuals and different identities who consider themselves the oppressed class of the society want to assert their rights by changing the laws and try to advance their desired agendas by playing a greater role in the domestic politics.²

These dynamics are in contrast with the beliefs of other sections such as religious groups, conservatives or even those who believe in the white supremacy. The orthodox sections of society consider legalization and expansion of social changes a threat to their values and lifestyle.³ Upheavals of the recent years indicate that the reaction of the more traditional sectors to the efforts of the liberal stream for advancing social shifts has moved beyond academic debates, and became a subject of social unrest.

Today, the West is divided over the concept of identity, hence the West cannot be the only promoter of the identity paradigm in the world.⁴ The demise of the western discourse about identity will make the discourse of identity in the current world more divergent, and non-western interpretations or other discourses will have more opportunities for expansion.

2. Augmentation of unofficial players and the end of the monopoly of official institutions over the civilizational discourse

Previously, there were a few powerful institutions such as governments or religious institutions had the required facilities and resources for creating discourse. In every society. Discourses against the official stream did not find a window to emerge or be heard, except in the times of social riots. Today, the emergence of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and social networks has made it possible for every citizen to produce content and promote it, and power for promoting discourse in the contemporary world has eliminated the monopoly of official institutions.⁵ Dissidents of the mainstream can easily create their desired content and spread it on social networks. Therefore, citizens are exposed to discourses against the mainstream more than before.

Beyond the fact that different discourses are easily heard in the current world, what makes the contemporary civilizational paradigm more scattered and ambiguous is the power of social networks. Social networks that provide a platform for social networks that provide a platform for disseminating different opinions are considerable powerful actors in the field of discourse creation.⁶ Due to their policies, agenda, or even technical issues such as their algorithms, they can ban content, or make a message more

prominent.⁷ Conflicts between countries over social networks are a sign of their importance in the contemporary world and their role in international relations, and the rise of pervasive non-western networks like TikTok will add to the divergence of today's civilizational paradigm. Conflicts between states over social networks reveal the importance of social networks in the current world and their role in international relations. The rise of pervasive non-western networks such as TikTok will add to the complexities of today's civilizational paradigm.

3. Resurgence of ancient civilizations as new civilization models

In a world where the American power is in decline, the ancient non-western nations, especially those who are among the emerging economic powers, will be less willing to accompany the values of liberal democracy and free market, at the cost of weakening their cultural values. Some non-western countries, due to their strong identity, can promote their special civilization model in the world.⁸ Today due to the weakness of the western civilizational discourse and the relative reduction of American power, the great non-western civilizations have a great opportunity for presenting their contemporary discourse and promoting it.

Analyzing the current status of the world

Considering the erosion of the framework of liberal international order and the signs of divergence in the international economy, it seems the school of internationalism can explain the future global developments less than the era of the unipolar order under the leadership of the United States.⁹ The erosion of the current world order and uncertainty about the balance of power, from the perspective of the realism, would make the world more prone to spreading chaos and increasing tension between actors. Under these circumstances, finding a way for a peaceful transition to the future world order is a very serious issue which contains various dimensions.

Utilizing constructivist framework, this report examines the cultural dimension of peaceful transition and suggests a solution for it. Constructivism, which got academic attention in international relations at the end of the Cold War, unlike other theories that usually consider international relations as a function of material affairs, considers human factors such as identity and culture to be the main cause of changes in international relations.¹⁰ This school was also able to provide a theoretical framework for explaining the unrest after the end of the Cold War, which was articulated by Huntington with the clash of civilizations.¹¹

In Huntington's view, ideology was replaced by identity in the post-Cold War, and due to the vacuum of power after the collapse of the communist camp, the adjacence of different identities along with the increase in interactions in the age of globalization, led to multiple conflicts. Huntington believed, the increasing contact between Western civi-

¹ Gitlin T. The rise of "identity politics": An examination and a critique // Higher education under fire. Routledge, 2020. P. 308–325.

² Zajda J. L., Majhanovich S. S. Globalisation, cultural identity, and nation-building: The changing paradigms. Springer, 2021.

³ Gallagher C. A. White racial formation: Into the twenty-first century // Race and ethnic conflict. Routledge, 2019. P. 24–29.

⁴ Macdonald S. Identity complexes in Western Europe: social anthropological perspectives // Inside European Identities. Routledge, 2020. P. 1–26.

⁵ Kissinger H. A., Schmidt E., Huttenlocher D. Op. cit.

⁶ Fake news, social media and marketing: A systematic review / G. Di Domenico, J. Sit, A. Ishizaka, D. Nunan // Journal of Business Research. 2021. № 124. P. 329–341.

⁷ Kissinger H. A., Schmidt E., Huttenlocher D. Op. cit.

⁸ Nathan A. J., Zhang B. A shared future for mankind: Rhetoric and reality in Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping // Journal of Contemporary China. 2022. № 31 (133). P. 57–71.

⁹ Mearsheimer J. J. Bound to fail: The rise and fall of the liberal international order // International security. 2019. № 43 (4). P. 7–50.

¹⁰ Jung H. The evolution of social constructivism in political science: past to present // SAGE Open. 2019. № 9 (1), 2158244019832703.

¹¹ Haynes J. From Huntington to Trump: Thirty years of the clash of civilizations. Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

lization with Islamic and Chinese civilizations would be the constant cause of conflict, because these two civilizations, in his analysis, were so different from Western civilization that they could not adapt to the Western values. Thus, he predicted that the expansion of Western civilization in the unipolar world and its encounter with these civilizations will eventually lead to conflict and war.¹

Through the framework of the clash of civilizations, current world status is the opposite of the situation after the end of the Cold War. According to Huntington's theory, at that time, the United States as the victor of the battle of ideologies, promoted western values and civilizational discourse. Eventually, the expansion of Western values and its confrontation with Islamic and Chinese civilizations caused more conflicts. But in the contemporary world, the decline of the West and the erosion of its civilizational discourse will stop the expansion of Western civilizational values in the world. While the further divergence in the civilizational paradigm due to the augmentation of informal actors and the expansion of the ancient civilizations, makes the condition for amplification of identity and cultural tensions, American decline will increase armed conflicts. These factors will lead to more instability and unrest in the world, while the transition to a new world order in such conditions would become more difficult without war.

*Cultural multilateralism as a peaceful solution
for the transition to a new world order*

The decline of Western civilization in the world and the spread of other civilizational discourses, have provided the conditions for increasing identity and cultural tensions in the world. Regarding the importance of the factor of identity and culture in the current world and the divergence of the civilizational paradigm in the current era, one cannot expect the emergence of a new, superior discourse in the near future that can define the next civilizational paradigm.² Insisting on cultural unilateralism and believing in the superiority of one culture over others will escalate identity tensions. Therefore, the continuation of the cultural unilateralism of the West, will be one of the factors leading to increasing conflicts in the world.

Considering the divergence of the civilizational paradigm of the current era, cultural multilateralism can provide a solution for reducing identity tensions and a peaceful transition to the new world order. Cultural multilateralism in international relations emphasizes the difference between the values of different nations, but unlike the Western cultural unilateralism, which believes in the superiority of civilization based on material progress, it believes that the traditions, lifestyle and beliefs of all nations of the world are respectable,³ because they have been shaped over the millennia through trial and error of many factors. While the experiences of imposing certain civilizational values on the rest of the world have resulted in nothing but increasing conflicts,⁴ cultural multilateralism recommends, chang-

ing the mentality of the actors, by which humans can live in a more peaceful world.⁵

In the modern era, multilateralism has shown itself, both in the theoretical field and in the context of relations between countries, in various situations and in response to the needs of the global community. By the end of the Cold War, multilateralism in the political relations of non-Western countries such as Iran, Russia, China, Turkey, and India have become a strategy not only for maintaining national interests in a unipolar world but also sometimes even for confronting the unilateralism of the West.⁶ The multilateralist approach of non-western countries has had various results, one of which is non-western international structures such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Belt-Road initiative.⁷ One of its examples in the field of theory is the dialogue among civilizations, which was presented in response to the clash of civilizations. The solution of this theory for peaceful globalization in the era of increasing communication was that the all nations should change their view about other civilizations and identities, and instead of struggling to impose their values on others, or eliminate other cultures, they should be more tolerant and try to learn from other civilizations.⁸ Cultural multilateralism has been one of the main agendas of the European Union. European policy makers believed without mutual respect for different identities and values in Europe, is the prerequisite of the monetary and legal mechanisms of the European Union.⁹

Conclusion

By reviewing the signs of change in the world order and the ambiguity of the balance of power, the increase of unrest and armed conflicts seems probable. Also, due to the divergence of the civilizational paradigm and the decline of the Western civilizational discourse, it is anticipated that identity and cultural tensions will rise. Considering these factors, the peaceful transition of the world to the future world order will be a difficult and challenging process. Regarding the strong effect of identity and culture on international relations, in such a context, cultural unilateralism can escalate identity and cultural differences and make civilizational conflicts more extensive. Cultural multilateralism provides a solution to reduce identity and civilizational tensions, in which accepting cultural and identity differences is a prerequisite for dialogue and cooperation among all countries, as well as a prelude to a peaceful transition from the current status and the emergence of the future world order. If cultural multilateralism is accepted by the big actors of international relations, we can hope that the next fundamental developments in international relations will be smooth and peaceful.

⁵ Mignolo W. D. De-colonial cosmopolitanism and dialogues among civilizations // Routledge handbook of cosmopolitanism studies. Routledge, 2012. P. 103–118.

⁶ Woods N. Multilateralism in the Twenty-First Century // Global Perspectives. 2023. № 4 (1) : 68310.

⁷ Winter T. Geocultural power: China's belt and road initiative // Geopolitics. 2021. № 26 (5). P. 1376–1399.

⁸ Mignolo W. D. Op. cit.

⁹ Carta C., Higgott R. Cultural Diplomacy in Europe between the Domestic and the International. URL: <https://brussels-school.be/publications/books/cultural-diplomacy-europe-between-domestic-and-international> (accessed: 25.05.2023).

¹ Haynes J. Op. cit.

² Lewis R. D. The cultural imperative: Global trends in the 21st century // Training, Language and Culture. 2019. № 3 (3). P. 8–20.

³ Brown C. Cultural diversity and international political theory: from the Requirement to 'Mutual Respect'? // Review of International Studies. 2000. № 26 (2). P. 199–213.

⁴ Benvenisti E. The US and the Use of Force: Double-edged Hegemony and the Management of Global Emergencies // European Journal of International Law. 2004. № 15 (4). P. 677–700 (doi.org/10.1093/ejil/15.4.677).