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THE GLOBAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE NEW MULTIPOLARITY

Unipolarity is a type of world order in which power is concentrated in one centre – the hegemon. The collapse of the USSR and the socialist camp at the end of the last century meant the collapse of the bipolar system of international relations with its norms and rules.² For a while, the US remained the only superpower and was able to solve international problems at its own discretion.

Multipolarity implies the presence of several poles of power in the world, which are the most powerful powers. Multipolarity is an objective reflection of the trends of world development. Its foundation is the growth of economic, military and political potential of non-Western powers and the weakening of the US position as a global leader.

British expert David Blagden describes this changing international reality quite comprehensively. He argues that the system of international relations is returning to multipolarity, i. e. the coexistence of several great powers. The scientist explains the phenomenon of multipolar world formation by the shift of economic potential from the West

to the East, to new industrial centres. From the researcher's point of view, the new multipolarity is likely to include great powers of different levels. In his opinion, the first-order countries should include the United States, China and partly India. They are followed in the following order by Russia, Brazil, Japan, the UK, Germany and France.³

American researchers Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon argue that the economic growth of the People's Republic of China, the creation by Russia and China of an alternative order of a number of regional institutions, and the loss of the US "monopoly on the patronage" of small states contribute to the fading of US hegemony in world politics and changes in the international order. In this regard, multipolarity is considered as one of the possible scenarios of the future.⁴

A similar view is held by Hugh De Santis, a former high-ranking US State Department official and now a professor of international security policy. He argues that in the emerging multipolar world, the United States will play the role of one of several great powers that determine the structure and rules of international politics, but will no longer be the sole arbiter.⁵ A number of researchers from Russia⁶, South Africa⁷, Italy⁸, and Pakistan⁹ agree with the fundamental position that the decline of US hegemony and its relationship with the world developing towards multipolarity.¹⁰

The main reason for the emerging shifts in the realisation of the new reality is primarily related to the consequences of the systemic crisis in the world.

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² See: Солуянов В. С. Концепция многополярности: многообразие подходов и интерпретаций // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Сер. «Политология». 2021. Т. 23. № 3. С. 424–445.

³ Солуянов В. С. Op. cit.

⁴ Cooley A., Nexon D. Exit from Hegemony: The Unraveling of the American Global Order. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020; Cooley A., Nexon D. Why Populists Want a Multipolar World // Foreign Policy. 2020. URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/25/populists-multipolar-world-russia-china> (accessed: 20.04.2024).

⁵ De Santis H. The Right to Rule: American Exceptionalism and the Coming Multipolar World Order. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021.

⁶ Супома Н. М., Мохоров Г. А. Полицентризм в контексте глобальной трансформации // Инновационные технологии нового тысячелетия: сб. ст. Междунар. науч.-практ. конф. 2016. Т. 3. С. 170–175.

⁷ Rapanyane B. M. The new world [dis] order in the complexity of multipolarity: United States of America's hegemonic decline and the configuration of new power patterns // Journal of Public Affairs. 2020. e2114. DOI: 10.1002/pa.2114.

⁸ Valli V. The American Economy from Roosevelt to Trump. L.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

⁹ Muzaffar M., Yaseen Z., Rahim N. Changing Dynamics of Global Politics: Transition from Unipolar to Multipolar World // Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal. 2017. Vol. 1, № 1. P. 49–61. DOI: 10.47264/idea.lassij/1.1.6.

¹⁰ Солуянов В. С. Op. cit.

It is hard to deny that Europe and the world have faced in recent years not only cyclical financial and economic shocks, but something broader and deeper, namely a systemic crisis. It is shaking the foundations of neoliberal concepts, which are characterised by the absolutisation of unrestricted market relations and a clear underestimation of the role of state regulation in the socio-economic sphere.

The population's dissatisfaction with the course of the Western ruling circles aimed at reducing social expenditures, the ineffectiveness of their measures to combat increased unemployment and other problems of modern society has grown.

This phenomenon, as well as in general the latest shifts in public consciousness, is now stated by many sober-minded Western scientists. It has become a widespread opinion, as recognised, for example, by the well-known political scientists David Held and Courtney Jung, "that the financial crisis shows the failure of neoliberal ideology with its belief in the omnipotence of markets and the policy of deregulation."¹

The world is in transition, and the word "uncertainty" expresses the essence of the current processes: the old system of international relations, which was created 60 years ago, is collapsing. It is clear that it cannot be preserved as it existed before, when the five great powers largely determined the course of world development.²

The process of regional, sub-regional and trans-regional interactions in the economic, financial and communication spheres is expanding, which leads to the emergence of new governance structures and mutual penetration and enrichment of cultures and civilisations.

As Russian scientist Vladislav Soluyanov notes in his article "The Concept of Multipolarity: Diversity of Approaches and Interpretations":

– *"the foundation of multipolarity should be the growth of economic, military and political potential of new centres of power – states and/or their alliances;*

– *in this case, the impossibility for the US to continue playing the role of hegemon in the international arena becomes clear;*

– *the emergence of the relative power of the new centres of power and the withering away of US hegemony will promote a more independent foreign policy with a focus on the realisation of its own interests.*"³

End quote.

World history is a common civilisational flow, which includes all peoples and countries with their unique culture, worldview and historical experience. This contradictory unity is the integrity of the world – "E pluribus unum"⁴ ("unity in diversity"). It determines its viability as a complex dynamic system.

The information and technology revolution and globalisation have made the world extremely interdependent and interconnected. The world community faces an increasing number of common challenges. The world is changing rap-

idly, and the coming years will be even richer in political upheaval.

The conclusion that Western civilisation is experiencing a deep crisis is generally accepted. New states and groups of countries with the potential for global influence, the ability to change the balance of power, and the involvement of millions in the historical creativity are coming to the forefront of world politics. These are China, India, the countries of Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Islamic world. The East is undergoing modernisation, and it is important that this process is not following the recipes of Westernisation, but its own unique way.⁵

In the last decade of the 20th century, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington came up with the idea of a "clash of civilisations". Pavel Afanasievich Tsygankov, a prominent Russian authority in the field of international relations theory, believes that Huntington became one of the first exponents of a new version of realism, according to which civilisations assume the role of the main factors in world politics.⁶ At the same time, the principle provisions of realism remain valid. In an anarchic international environment, relations between civilisations, as well as between states, are of a conflictual nature, explained by the diversity and contradiction of values.⁷

In modern Russian political thought, the studies of the civilisational factor in the transformation of the world order are given special importance. Within this direction, such researchers as, in particular, Martynov⁸, Ableyev, Zolkin, Marchenya⁹ and Popov¹⁰:

– agree with the multi-civilisational basis of multipolarity;

– consider Eurasian (i. e. Russian) civilisation as a pole of the multipolar world order;

– reflect on the substantive side of Russian civilisation.¹¹

In this context, it is necessary to return to the question of Russia's role in the formation of the new multipolarity. As the above-mentioned authors stress, in civilisational terms Russia is a successful multi-confessional and multi-ethnic country. We have not had religious wars, Russians have never lived alone on their territory.

Muslims in Russia, unlike in Western Europe, are indigent. Russia is called upon to play the role of a civilisational bridge in the processes of creating a multipolar world. Mendeleev, in particular, wrote that Russia is able to fulfil the role of a reconciler of Europe and Asia. Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev did not accidentally use the term "East-West" in relation to Russia.

⁵ Тимофеев Т. Т. О.р. cit.

⁶ Цыганков П. А. Тенденции классических парадигм в западной теории международных отношений // Общественные науки и современность. 2004. № 2. С. 119–130.

⁷ Солуянов В. С. О.р. cit. С. 432.

⁸ Мартынов Б. Ф. Многополярный или многоцивилизационный мир? // Международные процессы. 2009. Т. 7, № 3 (21). С. 60–68.

⁹ Аблеев С. Р., Золкин А. Л., Марченя П. П. Геополитические угрозы и суверенная Россия: столкновение цивилизаций нарастает? // Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. Философия. Психология. 2019. № 1. С. 4–9.

¹⁰ Попов В. В. Роль России как Евразийской цивилизации в формировании нового миропорядка // РСМД. 2018. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/rol-rossii-kakevraziyskoy-tsivilizatsii-v-formirovanii-novogo-miroponyadka/> (accessed: 20.04.2024); *Idem*. Хрупкий, уязвимый и многополярный мир // РСМД. 2020. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/khrupkiy-uyazvimy-i-mnogopolyarnyy-mir/> (accessed: 20.04.2024).

¹¹ Солуянов В. С. О.р. cit. С. 433.

¹ Тимофеев Т. Т. Эволюция реформизма в кризисных условиях // Перемены в Европе: возможны ли альтернативные модели = Changes in Europe: are alternatives possible / под ред. Ал. А. Громыко, Т. Т. Тимофеева. М.: Ин-т Европы РАН: Рус. сувенир, 2012. С. 16–17.

² Тимофеев Т. Т. О.р. cit.

³ Солуянов В. С. О.р. cit. С. 430.

⁴ Цицерон «Об обязанностях». I, 17, 56: «...quod Pythagoras vult in amicitia, ut unus fiat ex pluribus» («...what Pythagoras sees as the essence of friendship is for a single one to arise from many»).

It is obvious that the nature of the crisis is connected not only with purely economic factors, but also with laws of a more general order – cultural and political traditions, peculiarities of labour ethics and their combination with modern forms of production organisation.

There are many indications that new actors capable of historical initiative and their own socio-economic and socio-cultural models are entering world history. Perhaps this is the main challenge to modern humanity, which over the past centuries has been developing mainly under the influence of centripetal tendencies.

On the whole, one of the greatest contemporary theorists of international relations, Professor Amitav Acharya¹, is quite optimistic about the ongoing transformations. For him, the ideal world order is a product of interaction and mutual learning between different civilisations and states, rather than a clash between Western “liberal civilization” and non-Western civilisational states. The expert does not deny the existence of conflict potential, but stresses the need for a dialogue based not only on differences, but also on values that unite civilizations.²

Advanced models of political organisation have been able to offer the highest form of maintaining social stability and regulating social conflicts, without abolishing cultural competition, but giving them the opportunity to realise their fundamental property of forming conglomerates and interacting without losing their identity.

As many researchers have noted, successful nations that have managed to create more comfortable living conditions and a more stable and lasting social peace are gradually becoming points of attraction and poles of consolidation of regional spaces. This process is especially noticeable in the example of the ever-growing regional representativeness of such a multi-regional structure as BRICS – a new space of dialogue of cultures and civilizations.

In the past, human culture saw the main source of its own growth in expansion, which, until a certain time, was usually carried out violently. But sometimes it took place voluntarily through the borrowing of knowledge, material tools, skills and abilities, religious ideas, if they increased the comfort of life. The spillover of cultural achievements ensured the progressive movement of history over the millennia, becoming the most important factor of development.

As practice shows, the initial motivation for integration processes in Asia and Latin America, as well as in Europe, was only partly economic. An equally important motive for integration aspirations is the feeling of historical proximity, civilisational affinity and the trust based on this.

Changes in the world as a result of globalisation, the recognition of the viability of Asian and other models, as well as European integration in the second half of the twentieth century showed that the current model of history is being replaced by another one that recognises the subjectivity of several world centres.³

According to Oxford professor Dace Janowska, “...the Western world as a whole has lost the vision of the future as a steady development of humanity in the sense of a controlled movement towards a certain idea of the good life. The twentieth century was dominated by the ideology of

progress, both socialist and capitalist. The future promised a better life, overcoming inequality and poverty. But Western elites have not yet come up with a new ideology other than the free market,”⁴ she concluded.

Well, there is another force that can provide an alternative answer to the challenge of creating such an ideology. It is both trans-regional and supranational.

Trade unions, as the most massive and representative associations of workers around the world, are called upon and can actually make a fundamentally new contribution to the concept of dialogue among civilizations within the framework of building a multipolar world.

In fact, in the totality of their diversity, they are a kind of “civilization” with their common goals, aspirations and principles.

Every era has its own “genetic code”. The imperative to build a new multipolar world can be expressed in one word – “Justice”: it is what is most lacking today for billions of people in all regions.

It is this moral concept that can cut the knot of economic, social and environmental problems, and defeat the poverty that is eating away at the fabric of society amid unprecedented technological progress.

Justice is at the heart of decent work. Social justice must become a central feature of the future world of work, whatever form the new technologies and ways of organising production may take.

The postulate of justice must become a constant of the United Nations. Only a comprehensive and integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals can lead this organisation to survival and real progress.

The ILO should become the crystallisation point of a new multilateral system encompassing the WTO, IMF, World Bank and other global structures. Let us not forget that it is the factor of labour activity that makes a person a citizen. Therefore, speaking about the labour sphere, we inevitably touch upon the foundations of the social structure of the future – neither more nor less.⁵

The paradox of today is that the enormous growth of the global economy’s capacity in principle makes it possible to end poverty and, as never before, to meet people’s needs.

But the current structure of society is based on the maximum exploitation of the planet’s resources, including the vast majority of its population as the main resource for the insatiable greed of the “absolute minority” on the Forbes list.

We do not live in a society of equal opportunities, and the risks of some are at the expense of the gains of others. Flexible and non-standard forms of employment actually shift to individuals the risks that were previously borne by private business and the state.

Even today, many MNCs claim that they are not responsible for compliance with ILO standards in end-to-end supply chains that are lost at their source in the urban jungle of underdeveloped or authoritarian countries. Tomorrow we will be told that the artificial intelligence that has replaced the human manager “does not have to read ILO conventions”.

¹ Acharya A. The Myth of the Civilization State: Rising Powers and the Cultural Challenge to World Order // *Ethics & International Affairs*. 2020. Vol. 34, № 2. P. 139–156. DOI: 10.1017/s0892679420000192.

² Солуянов В. С. *Op. cit.* С. 433.

³ Тимофеев Т. Т. *Op. cit.*

⁴ Почему мы потеряли будущее // *РосБалт*. URL: <https://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2020/01/21/1823707.html> (accessed: 20.04.2024).

⁵ Шамаков М. В. Именно люди – вот главная ценность, ради которой стоит тратить наш творческий потенциал // *Без формата*. URL: <https://saratov.bezformata.com/listnews/lyudi-vot-glavnaya-tcnennost/75804544/> (accessed: 20.04.2024).

Our world is changing at a rapid pace, and it is therefore essential that the tools we use to protect labour rights change just as rapidly.

The first step towards this goal should be to eliminate outdated and artificial distinctions between labour rights and human rights in general. Labour rights are human rights, and the ability to exercise these rights in the workplace is key to workers' enjoyment of their many other rights – economic, social, cultural, political and others.¹

Trade unions include sustainable economic growth in the concept of decent work. It should guarantee everyone a decent wage, safe working conditions and a fair level of social protection. But in many countries, the social and economic policies of governments are at odds with social justice.²

The Statement of the 2018 World Trade Union Forum in Copenhagen emphasises that *“social justice in the post-war period has never been under greater threat than it is today.”*

To respond to this threat, we need a development model with workers' rights, decent work, fair distribution of

wealth, representative democracy, gender equality and social protection at its core.

Meeting these challenges requires a “21st Century Social Contract”. We have spoken about this many times at meetings of the BRICS Trade Union Forum, an important factor in the development of a new multilateralism in the trade union dimension and in the humanitarian development of humanity as a whole. The expanding BRICS Trade Union Forum is an innovative association of the “global majority” aimed not at creating new instruments of cross-border diktat, but at an equal search for new forms of social harmony and dialogue of a special civilization – the world of people of work.

The 13th BRICS Trade Union Forum, which will be held in Sochi in September this year, is intended to be a new step in this direction.

The new multipolarity can and should be served by a new interaction of independent and sovereign trade unions as points of crystallization of the dialogue of civilizations at the present stage.