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WORLD ORDER: QUO VADIS? IN SEARCH OF A GLOBAL WESTPHALIA

Dmitry Suslov

About the author:

Dmitry Suslov

Programme Director of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club, Deputy Director of the Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics

1. Universal Resentment

In October, 2016, the Valdai Discussion Club held a conference titled “The Future in Progress: Shaping the World of Tomorrow”. The first session, “World order: quo vadis?” was devoted to what can be viewed as arguably the most important and urgent topic in terms of global development trends. For several years now, and especially over the last several months, there has been a growing feeling across the world that everything is not as it should be, and that we are on the verge of a global disaster.

As recently as ten or fifteen years ago, global great powers still viewed conflicts and disputes among them as a thing of the past, but global tension has all of a sudden erupted with new vigor. Great power confrontation on a global scale is again a norm of international relations. If developments in Syria are any guide, war between global powers – which the world has not seen for the last seventy years and which seemed impossible after 1989–1991 – is back on the global agenda. In the years to come, relations between the US and Russia and China are expected to be marked more by rivalry and containment than cooperation. At least before Donald Trump’s election as the next US president, Washington was preparing to take a more resolute stance to contain what they call “Putin’s Russia.” On its part, Russia is bracing itself for a lasting confrontation, if not war. New global dividing lines now span Europe and Asia, while only a quarter century ago their unification was regarded as a symbol of the onset of global harmony and the advent of a rule-based world order.

The Greater Middle East has sunk into chaos that gets worse by the day, with no solution in sight. Past political and international orders in the region have gone to pieces, and new ones have yet to be devised, with both global and regional players creating obstacles. In fact, seeking to benefit from the collapsing old order, they rushed in and are now tearing the region apart. The very concept of the state as a foundation for an organized political community is now being questioned in the region. Radical Islam has emerged in the region and even dominates vast territories, offering an alternative vision of politics and international relations. There is no doubt that the Middle East is doomed to remain a hotbed of terrorism, Islamic radicalism, uncontrolled migration, WMD proliferation and other scourges for decades to come.

Once heralded as a guarantee of peace and stable relations and praised for creating a new logic in interstate relations that would facilitate a transition from rivalry towards shared prosperity and progress, the interdependent and open nature of the global economy was turned into a weapon of war. In fact, unilateral sanctions have become a universal foreign policy tool aimed at exploiting economic interdependence and interconnectivity for political gain. Restrictions imposed on Russia by the US and the EU show that the purpose of sanctions is less about forcing an opponent to rethink its foreign policy, than weakening a competitor. Instead of doing away with wars, globalization has transformed the world economy into a battlefield.

The global information space and its open nature, the internet and the recent progress in ICT¹ failed to create a *homo globalicus*, a new type of person identifying as a citizen of the world with universal values and a sense of ownership in and responsibility for everything happening around the world. Just like the global economy, they are now weapons of war. Warnings about cyber warfare in recent years have not prevented a cyberwar from breaking out between global

¹ *Information and Communication Technology, ICT.* – Ed. note.

nuclear powers. Cyberattacks have spared military and civilian infrastructure in Russia and the US, at least for the time being. The information space has become the scene of the dirtiest information war since the 1940s, unprecedented in the level of deceit and hatred.

Finally, Western democracies and the liberal world order they spearheaded, which were viewed over the last seven decades as a bulwark of stability and order, at least on a regional scale, and regarded by many as a guiding star, have begun falling to pieces. Cracks are appearing in the Western political foundation under pressure from global competition, deregulation of the global financial markets and uncontrolled migration. All this benefits a narrow elite class, while eroding the middle class, the bedrock of Western democracy. People in the US and European countries are no longer able to assimilate growing numbers of migrants, which has become even more obvious against the backdrop of economic stagnation and sluggish growth. This has given momentum to forces situated on the far-right and far-left of the political spectrum alongside populist leaders representing native-born Europeans and white Americans. The political center has become virtually nonexistent. The angry white population in both the US and the EU have entered into “rebellion” against the traditional elites. Donald Trump’s victory in the US presidential elections became the major manifestation and as of now the apotheosis of this trend. One of the major pillars of US global influence and of the US-led “liberal international order” was shaken: a faith in the US political system as the most progressive, balance and adaptive in the world, capable of finding most rational solutions and to successfully overcome most severe crises.

At the same time, the basic institutional and legal foundations of the Western world order have also come under pressure. The European Union which is thus far the most advanced incarnation of the liberal dream of a rule-based order, and arguably the single most important achievement of the Western system since the Second World War, now, however, is facing the deepest crisis in its entire history. It is unclear whether it will succeed in overcoming the current crisis and the rising nationalism and populism across EU member states, as well as the failure of the European dream in which the EU and its “civilian power” were to serve as a model for the whole world.

In the US, those who no longer want to pay for the security and economic development of the country’s allies and partners are becoming increasingly vociferous, calling for a more US-centric foreign policy and global economy. Donald Trump’s victory in the US Presidential elections became a major strike against the US global alliances system, which for has been for a substantial part of the world one of the major pillars of international order for decades. Today many of traditional US allies in Europe, Asia and the Middle East have justified doubts in credibility of the US defense and readiness to fulfil its international obligations in general. Remarkably, Donald Trump is hardly the first or the last US political figure to question the value of the US alliance system, above all NATO. In fact, similar statements could be heard back in 2012 from then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. The US is openly preaching economic mercantilism in an effort to enact rules that would guarantee growth and prosperity for itself, instead of promoting it for all within the system.

What makes the current situation different from the past is the generalized resentment towards the existing status-quo. Not a single major player is satisfied with the current state of the global economy or politics. In fact, the demands and aspirations expressed by various

players run counter to each other. The West is irritated by the revisionist push by the new centers of powers, who are unwilling to join the Western order (itself in tatters, by the way). The BRICS countries voice misgivings over the unwillingness of the traditional West and primarily the US to share power and renounce global leadership. And both sides tend to hold each other responsible for their domestic and international woes. Russia is accused of sponsoring radical parties and populist leaders in the West, and blamed for the growing chaos in the Middle East (above all Syria), while its president is portrayed as the “godfather of global nationalism.” Moscow, in turn, denounces the US for its goal of regime change in Russia and its policy of ‘managed chaos’ across the world.

In this regard, I find it hard to disagree with the first panelist to take the floor at “World order: quo vadis?” session, Sergei Karaganov, Dean of the Faculty of International Economics and Foreign Affairs at the National Research University – Higher School of Economics – , who said that the current global environment can be viewed as prewar. Growing disputes and, even more importantly, universal resentment across all key centers of power, their elites and populations are characteristic of prewar periods. It is not uncommon for the solution to come from a major war.

2. A New Thirty Years’ War?

Recently, a number of Russian and Western experts have been comparing the current situation with the run-up to the First World War: the colliding interests of great powers, the inability to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner, regional chaos and the fact that all these problems were intertwined. However, today’s disputes run even deeper.

Back in the early 20th century, there was a great deal of similarity among the combatants. Even though the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, British, and Ottoman empires, as well as France and Italy, had little in common in terms of their political systems, when it came to foreign policy they played by the same rules and shared the same vision of what the world order, its rules, norms and key features should be. Nobody questioned the basic principles of the Westphalian system, i.e. sovereignty, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs and maintaining a balance of power. Not a single combatant attempted to encroach on the legitimacy of the opponent’s political system. In other words, the world war resulted from a collision of great-power interests within the existing world order. The confrontation was not aimed at reshaping the basic foundations of the then world order or conferring political legitimacy on it.

Today, disputes among the key centers of power and regions are fueled less by incompatible national interests than fundamental disagreements about the basic norms, values and rules which should form legitimacy of the world order and striking a balance of power needed to sustain it.

What is state sovereignty and when can it be restricted? What does the principle of non-interference in internal affairs mean and do we need it in the current situation? What are the rules regarding the use of military force? Which political regimes are legitimate and which are not? Can a state or a group of countries unilaterally designate regimes as legitimate or illegitimate, switching the labels at will? What does the term “vital interests” mean for a great power and how should other powers respect them? Do great powers have the right to advance their own regional economic and security agendas? What should be at the core of the international order in Europe, Asia and Eurasia? Does the world need the US to act as the “global leader” and does the US have the right to assume the role of the world’s policeman? Is the world moving towards a balance of power, or can the unipolar world order last and be beneficial? The fact that Russia and the US have opposing answers to these questions has resulted in the tensest standoff between the world powers since the end of the Cold War and ultimately brought about a new system-wide confrontation. Disputes of a similar nature exist in the US-China relationship, which also exacerbates their rivalry. In general, this applies to all relations between the US and non-Western centers of power.

The discord among major powers is rooted in the conscious refusal of the United States and its European allies to abide by the classic Westphalian principles and rules since the end of the Cold War and in the unwillingness of other power centers and non-Western regions in general to accept what is offered in their place. The victorious West opted to build a universal world order based on new principles that derive from a belief that Western democracy and human rights are universal, state sovereignty is relative, and the West, as the main promoter of universal values, is entitled to act as some kind of a supreme authority in deciding whether a state is legitimate or not, and hold a monopoly on deciding questions of war and peace. Already during the Cold War the Westphalian principles were no longer fulfilled inside the Western system. The US could not relate to these principles for ideological reasons, and gave up on them by shifting from isolationism to an internationalist policy in the 1940s. European countries followed suit as they engaged in European integration. Both the US and the EU countries assumed that the political order they promote would ultimately triumph as the dominant political model for humanity.

The biggest mistake of the US, Soviet, Russian and European leaders is that they failed to agree on the basic principles for a new international order as the Cold War was winding down in late 1980s and early 1990s, especially regarding the definition of legitimacy and the distribution of power. For some time, it seemed inevitable that all non-Western countries would join the Western system that had existed since 1940s. Many in the US still believe in this illusion.

As a matter of fact, Russia and China, followed by other non-Western powers, have rejected the post-Westphalian model of the West in favor of classical Westphalian principles and rules. It is these principles and rules that currently prevail throughout most of Eurasia and Asia. The allies of the US in Asia also remain committed to Westphalian principles. These countries choose to remain in the American military and political (but not ideological) fold primarily because they fear China and don’t want to live under Chinese hegemony in the region.

Thus, the international community has split along these lines. There are now regions and communities that stand for different models, rules, values and norms, and promote different

visions of political legitimacy. On the one side, there is the Euro-Atlantic post-Westphalian world and, on the other, the Westphalian post-Soviet space, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and Africa. The attempt to convince Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union to join the post-Westphalian Euro-Atlantic community failed.

Another divide surfaced in 2011 when the Greater Middle East split away from the Westphalian world. However, instead of opting for a post-Westphalian liberal democracy, the region plunged into medieval chaos, giving rise to the revival of the concept of the caliphate – a traditionalist, Islamist interpretation of a legitimate world order that prevailed between the 7th and early 20th centuries. The new force behind this concept is the so-called Islamic State, a terrorist group banned in Russia that pretends to be a state and even has some attributes of one. At the same time, the notion of state as defined within the Westphalian system of international relations has come under assault in the region. Radical groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra, which is also banned in Russia, have assumed full or partial control over vast territories in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Egypt. Together, these groups form what can be designated as the Islamist “terrorist International.” In fact, Russia’s military campaign in Syria can be viewed as a desperate attempt to prevent the Westphalian concept of the state from disappearing as the main form of political organization in the Middle East. The effort may be doomed to fail.

It is also telling that the Euro-Atlantic community and the Greater Middle East, as the two regions in the world that moved beyond the Westphalian system to shape post-Westphalian frameworks, deny political legitimacy to all other regions, including each other. The US and the EU still insist on all other powers joining their “liberal world order” and following their principles and rules. The foreign policy establishment in the US believes that Russia’s foreign policy, which they dislike so much, is a product of Russia’s political regime. Consequently, they believe that as long as this regime remains in place, containment is the only possible US policy approach to Russia. At the same time, Islamists in the Middle East, just like their predecessors from the 7th century, insist that the world will not live in harmony unless everyone adopts the version of Islam they believe to be the right one.

The situation we are witnessing is not so much reminiscent of the early 20th century as the 16th century on the eve of the Thirty Years’ War. Back then, countries denied each other legitimacy, insisted on their own understanding of order, and wanted to be able to decide what states should be viewed as legitimate. Just as today, back then some countries even aspired to system-wide, i.e. European, hegemony.

The collision of actors of different political natures is another feature that makes the current situation similar to that on the eve of the Thirty Years’ War and sets it apart from the prewar period in the early 20st century. In the 16th century the war involved the Holy Roman Empire, the Catholic Church represented by the Holy See, Catholic and Protestant monarchs (some of whom formally recognized, while others openly rejected, the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor), as well as feudal lords, cities, etc. Today, the battle for the right to shape the world order is being fought by states with diverging interpretations of sovereignty; the European Union as the most advanced integration entity with powerful, albeit weakening, supra-national and pro-federalist features; and finally the Islamic State and other transnational terrorist networks.

It took the world a quarter of a century after the end of the global ideological confrontation of the 20th century to find itself on the verge of a second Thirty Years' War that will be global this time around. It has already begun in the Middle East.

3. A 'Multi-Order' World

Prospects for overcoming the global dividing lines are still nowhere in sight. On the contrary, the trend towards further consolidation of territories sharing similar visions for the world order is expected to continue in the decades to come. Donald Trump's election as the US president is making this trend quite ambiguous and less certain, but it is still unlikely to overcome it whatsoever. Henry Kissinger, the realist guru and US foreign policy patriarch, was among the first to discern this trend. In his book *World Order*, he argues that the international system in the 21st century will consist of a number of regional orders (Atlantic, Asian, Middle Eastern, Eurasian, etc.) that differ from one another in terms of rules, norms and how power is distributed. It seems that his predictions are coming true.

The place and role of the US will remain among the central issues in global politics and the global economy throughout the first half of the 21st century. Although the project to build a US-leaning liberal world order has failed, and many countries have rejected US aspirations to global leadership, the US persists in its attempts to impose both the liberal world order and its leadership, or at least to keep this illusion alive. Odds are that this will carry on until the mid-21st century and may even spill over into the second half of the century, as long as the US remains the most powerful nation on the planet.

It remains to be seen how the US will adapt to an environment of growing animosity, where its ideological stereotypes do not apply, and what crises and conflicts will break out along the way. The only thing that is clear is that these crises and conflicts will come. It is also unknown thus far, how the Trump administration will actually understand "greatness" and security of the United States, their global leadership, and on this basis, how will it formulate US national interests. There is no doubt that the Trump administration will be more resolute in promoting these national interests and global leadership compared to the Obama administration, including both on the global level and in its relations with the key allies and like-minded countries, as well as Russia and China, whom the US foreign policy establishment, both Democrat and Republican, views as the main disruptors of the US-led world order.

In fact, US foreign policy establishment regards greater political and economic consolidation in the Western world as one of the surest ways to achieve this (and respond to the challenges coming from non-Western centers of power unwilling to accept the global leadership of the US). This trend took shape during the Obama presidency. During Trump

presidency it might slow down, as US foreign policy unilateralism is likely to increase, but it is doubtful that this trend would disappear at all.

The logic of the US establishment (which will inevitably play a crucial role in Trump's foreign policy) is the following. Facing system-wide challenges from Russia, China and other revisionist powers, the West has to consolidate, take a firm stance, stand by its principles and, most importantly, overcome its rivals on all fronts by once again proving the supremacy of its political system and economy just as during the Cold War. This has brought about efforts by the US and its closest allies to reinforce and strengthen Western military and political alliances across Europe and Asia and create mega-regional economic blocs (TPP and TTIP). Other countries, including Russia and China, cannot join these mega-regional communities unless they agree to their existing rules.

Trump administration, at least in the beginning, will probably claim that it renounces mega-regional trading blocks and will turn to a more critical and egoistic policy towards allies in general. Mercantilism and protectionism will rise in the economic field. In politics and security it will pursue a more unilateralist and utilitarian approach. This would reduce unity inside the part of the world which Obama administration was persistently bringing together under Washington's umbrella and, as a result, impede US global influence and leadership. Thus, Washington might in time return to the current course under some variations.

The second way for the US to promote its leadership largely builds on the first one and consists of transforming globalization in such a way that, instead of benefiting everyone, it becomes a weapon for fighting geopolitical rivals and encouraging economic development in the interests of the US. In an effort to overcome their rivals on all fronts, Western countries and primarily the US rely on economic interdependence, openness and complementarity as political tools to weaken their competitors. They do so by imposing unilateral sanctions, which have become in recent years their preferred tool, and a nearly universal one at that.

For the very same reason, Washington is seeking to change the rules of trade and the economy to its advantage. Seeing that globalization and above all the current WTO rules increasingly benefit developing non-Western powers in today's world, primarily China, the US is intent on inserting rules and regulations that would benefit it and make globalization work for the US once again. This would deprive China and other developing countries of the multiple advantages they have under the current trade and investment regime. But since there is no way rules of this kind can be adopted on the global level, Washington tried to use whatever opportunities it has to enact them, primarily in the relations with its traditional allies in Europe and Asia, who depend on the US much more than they do on any other power. This has led to the idea to establish mega-regional trade and economic communities: the Trans-Pacific Partnership was signed in February 2016, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which was actively discussed, though unsuccessfully, up to now.

Although Trump administration is likely to renounce these communities at the early stage, the very idea that rules of trade and economic relations must provide benefits to the US itself first and foremost, and not to its partners or especially non-Western power centers, will become even stronger. For instance, the new administration will make its policy towards China

substantially tougher – both in economic and security fields. Similar steps are likely to be taken vis-à-vis other developing countries.

As a result, trade and investment activities around the world are increasingly subject to regional and even subregional, not global, regulations. It is on the regional level that trade and economic relations are seeing the most momentum. Faced with the US pressure, China will intensify trade and investment relations with the South East Asian and Eurasian countries even further, thus creating an economic community of its own even if the US would reject creating the TPP. Globalization is losing its universal character and geographical footprint in terms of rules and norms regulating the flow of goods and capital.

Although American establishment may have hoped that the rules the US was about to enact within TPP and TTIP would cover non-Western players in the future and become global, these efforts on the part of the Obama administration served as an incentive for non-Western countries to set up their own mega-regional communities. This leads to even greater fragmentation of the global economy and global economic regulations.

Russia and China responded to promotion of the TPP and TTIP projects by announcing the Comprehensive Eurasian Partnership, whose major pillars are coordinated development of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Economic Belt of the Silk Road project, expanding and upgrading the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, signing free trade agreements between EAEU and ASEAN countries or ASEAN in general, etc. At the same time, China, together with its main trading partners in Asia, is working on its own TPP alternative, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an advanced free-trade framework without the US. Although their creation was largely a reaction to the TPP and TTIP, they have already acquired a meaning and content of their own. Their formation will now continue in any case – even if the Trump administration renounced the Atlantic and Pacific partnerships.

Unilateral sanctions, as the West's primary and universal foreign policy tool, are just as effective at bringing non-Western powers closer together and motivating them to set up mega-regional blocs. Seeing that the US is seeking to weaken the geopolitical standing of non-Western countries through their integration into the global economy, these non-Western countries are trying to be less dependent on the West and Western economic mechanisms and global governance institutions. This trend has resulted in the emergence of alternative tools and institutions within BRICS, SCO and other organizations and forums that are beyond the reach of the West.

Consequently, the world is currently witnessing the emergence of regional and mega-regional frameworks with varying rules, norms and standards. In a number of cases, in Europe for example, the dividing lines are quite clear. One country can hardly be part of both TTIP (if it emerges one day) and the Eurasian Partnership. In Asia and APR, the dividing lines are less obvious, especially between the Eurasian Partnership and RCEP, since their participants have committed themselves to coordinating and aligning these two initiatives. Those behind TPP and RCEP have not expressed any intention to link these projects. Still, the two are intertwined, since there are countries (Vietnam, for example) that are part of both communities at the same time. That said these are two distinct frameworks with different rules and norms.

It is telling that the rules and norms that are at the core of these communities have to do as much with politics and security as they do with the economy. Countries that are members of the same economic community tend to share similar visions of the basic principles and norms regarding international relations and world order (sovereignty, use of military force, national interests, relations between great powers, etc.), while countries that are parties to other mega-regional blocs may have a different vision. In fact, countries within the Eurasian Partnership (Russia, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian countries) remain committed to traditional Westphalian principles and rules, and are critical of US policies and practices such as interventionism, spreading democracy and denying legitimacy to countries that the US refuses to view as democracies or allies. Euro-Atlantic countries, on the contrary, mostly share the post-Westphalian vision that human rights take precedence over state sovereignty and believe in the universal nature of Western values and the need to shape the regional and world order based on Western rules and institutions. Finally, in the Middle East there are a number of territories that have fallen back to a pre-Westphalian Islamic vision of politics and political legitimacy, challenging the very idea of the state.

Just as Henry Kissinger wrote, the world is about to split into a number of regional orders with rules and norms of economic and political behavior that vary from one region to another. It is not uncommon for the economic and political outlines of these orders to coincide. With the centers of gravity in Eurasia, the Euro-Atlantic, APR and the Middle East gradually shifting from specific great powers towards regional political and economic communities and coalitions, the world order of today and tomorrow is not so much “multipolar” as it is a “multi-order” with a number of specific regional frameworks.

4. Searching for a New Treaty of Westphalia

Can the current “multi-order” world be prevented from sliding into a new global Thirty Years’ War? This a complicated question, taking into account, first, that open rivalry escalated between the leading major powers in recent years not only and not so much for the control of specific countries or regions, but for setting the basic rules and norms of foreign policy and international relations. Second, at least two regional orders, the Euro-Atlantic and the Middle East, want their rules and principles to become universal, while denying all others any legitimacy.

Third, it has to be taken into account that a conflict akin to a Thirty Years’ War is already underway in the Middle East, with all the major regional powers taking part in it alongside the two leading global powers, the US and Russia. The war in Syria has become the epicenter of the global confrontation over the rules of the game and international norms. Islamists are fighting for a caliphate. The US (at least until Donald Trump’s inauguration) is promoting a world order based on the principles and rules of democracy, whereby Washington has an exclusive

right to determine whether a government is legitimate or not, uses military force at its discretion and in general exercises its “global leadership.” Russia stands for a classical Westphalian order in which sovereign states are viewed as the guarantors of stability within their sovereign territory. Within this framework, decisions on war and peace are taken collectively. Regional powers (Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey) promote different visions of their spheres of influence in the region using different versions of political Islam to legitimize their aspirations.

Fourth, assuming that the confrontation goes beyond the region, the new global Thirty Years’ War will have little in common with the stereotypes of war we have before our eyes, namely the Second World War, the Thirty Years’ War itself or a nuclear Armageddon. This will not be a “total war” aimed at complete destruction of the enemy in an all-out mobilization of national resources. It is also unlikely to feature epic tank battles or Russia and the US exchanging nuclear strikes. We are more likely to see local, albeit intense, clashes across the world, including in Syria, the outcome of which will have a decisive influence on the status, prestige and political will of countries to keep fighting, as well as efficient use of cyber weapons and, in the case of the US, total sanctions following the Iranian model.

This scenario could lead to an uncontained escalation of the crisis and bring about apocalyptic consequences. To prevent this from happening, a serious global understanding should be reached regarding the rules of the game. Regional orders must work out principles of interaction and coexistence. And since the leading players and countries that form these orders have diverging perspectives on what underpins their legitimacy, and attempts to impose principles on others could lead to a new Thirty Years’ War, the global rules of interaction should be exclusively procedural, not normative. Reaching universal consensus on state sovereignty, political legitimacy or the balance of power will remain an impossible task in the decades to come. Consequently, representatives of one order must accept that other orders have the right to exist, which will pave the way to a framework in which several different orders will peacefully coexist and cooperate.

In other words, what the world needs is a new, global Treaty of Westphalia whereby states will pledge to recognize the legitimacy of other international economic and political orders and principles they are based upon, renounce attempts to impose their own principles and orders on others and, finally, agree on procedural rules of interaction between different international orders. These rules should regulate the use of force, including military interventions in failed states, collective decision-making, the boundaries of economic and security interests, the extent to which international orders will be exposed to outside interferences, etc. Taking into account global interdependence and the existence of transnational threats, these rules should enable not merely peaceful coexistence of different orders (as was mentioned in the Helsinki Final Act and other core documents on the Russia-US détente), but facilitate constructive cooperation between them.

By all accounts, the foundation for this new global Treaty of Westphalia is already in place. It is the UN Charter, which envisages the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, as well as rules regarding the use of force. In fact, the UN Charter was designed as the global Treaty of Westphalia, bringing the Westphalian principles to all countries of the world and creating a mechanism for protecting and enacting those principles by force (the balance of power) by setting up the Security Council and designating its permanent members.

Just like the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, the UN Charter states that a sovereign state enjoys political legitimacy regardless of its political regime or what it views as the “right” political order. The rules set forth in the UN Charter are mostly procedural, not normative.

However, the problem is that in the real world, it was rules and principles other than those enshrined in the UN Charter, that mainly governed relations within the Soviet and the US blocs during the Cold War, or relations between those blocs after the Cold War, not to mention international relations as a whole. Now that the world finds itself on the verge of a new Thirty Years’ War after the failed attempt by the US to establish a liberal order based on its vision of political legitimacy, it is high time to renew the commitment to the UN Charter and the principles it envisages. It is unlikely that a better mix of Westphalian principles can be achieved. In addition, renegotiating the UN Charter would only highlight the abovementioned contradictions between regional orders and countries representing them, invalidating any attempt to adopt a new or amended version of the document, while exacerbating international tensions.

It was not a coincidence that during his remarks at the 13th annual meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club and the discussion that followed, President Vladimir Putin highlighted the need to renew the commitment to the UN Charter and abide by it. The Valdai Discussion Club report prepared for this meeting delivers a similar message.

As Sergei Karaganov noted during the panel session “World order: quo vadis?,” these efforts should be undertaken alongside initiatives to consolidate the role of nuclear weapons and devise a concept of international strategic stability as the most reliable means for preventing war amid escalating competition between states and the division of the world into several regional orders.

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www.valdaiclub.com

valdai@valdaiclub.com



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