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IDEOLOGY AND CIVILIZATIONAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The current world order is undergoing a profound change in its structure, in the composition of the leading participants, and in the socio-cultural discourse that buttresses the political evolution of international relations. Two factors are essential to understand this process. First, several new states, or groups of states, entered the league of the leading world powers and began to exert a significant influence over global politics. Analysts often consider these players as civilizations, in that many such states aspire to proposing an alternative spiritual, cultural, political, and even economic developmental model. Second, the West and its followers began to experience a significant civilizational transformation at the socio-political and socio-cultural levels, placing such countries at a crossroad that could determine their existential future. Contextual transformations of this magnitude must always deploy ideology to legitimize ongoing political change, because ideology can question the prevailing conventions of the age to reflect fundamental shifts in society. From this point of view, the arrival of civilizations in the contemporary narrative of international relations invariably involves ideological doctrines that legitimize this process. This paper examines the emergent ideology of civilizational discourse, focusing on its central tenets, and discusses the political shifts that such an ideology seeks to justify.

Keywords: political ideology, civilisations, culture, multipolarity, international relations.

The contemporary architecture of international relations is moving away from a unipolar moment established in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union to an invariably more complex structure with several centres of political and cultural influence. Civilization has emerged as a new framework of reference, thus reinforcing cultural politics and challenging, at least from a normative point of view, the existing conventions around the extant world order led by the United States [Mouffe 2009; Stuenkel 2016; Cocker 2019; Higgott 2019; Acharya 2020; Haas, Kupchan 2021]. Wallerstein [1992: 215] defines civilization as a 'particular concatenation of world view, customs, structures, and culture (both material and high culture) which forms some kind of historical whole and which coexists (if not always simultaneously) with other varieties of this phenomenon.' Following this definition, civilization partly represents a discursive category involving cultural, religious, and socio-historic matters. Therefore, the new civilizational discourse began to shape contours of extant geopolitics [Acharya 2014] and the arrival of this discourse in the world political arena raises questions for further research.

This paper examines a political ideology derived from this civilizational discourse. The discussion will focus on a few practical questions. What were the reasons for the

arrival of a civilizational ideology in world politics? Which questionable developments/actions within the conventions of the existing order does the civilizational ideology seek to justify? What are the main tenets of the new civilizational ideology that is intended to buttress the new world order of multipolarity? The article departs from a proposition that ideology, above all other things, is an instrument of legitimating political action that evolves within particular historical and political conditions. To that end, this paper examines the contextual climate of our time that determines the main contours of the civilizational discourse. The discussion maps out motivations of the political actors who are attempting to vindicate new civilizational geopolitics and those who speak against them. The ideological clash of these parties reflects political developments taking place in the contemporary world. The authors examine the ideological foundations of this clash, as well as the value package of the new 'civilizational' ideology.

What is Ideology?

Ideology is most often treated as a means of legitimizing political action in the interest of either preserving or deconstructing the existing socio-political reality. In the first case, ideology provides guidelines for various ordering arrangements. These encompass multiple processes for the creation of rules and institutions, legitimization of the hegemonic order, strategies for maintaining power and subordinating dissenters, and the imposition of dominant discourses. In the second case, ideology reflects shifts in the discourse which justify those underlying changes that gradually take place within the society, but differ from the prevailing conventions of the age [Skinner 2002; Griffin 2006; Hamilton 1987]. In this latter case, ideology incessantly criticizes the reality, reflects on the past, and draws plans for future action. In the course of this process, ideology deconstructs social *logos* by questioning everything objective, scientific, and conventional. Ideology, therefore, presents social *logos* (or conventional rationality) as a 'social construct' and devalues its main positions with the aim of legitimizing new behavioural patterns. It is this subversive function of ideology that will interest us in this paper.

Another important way of understanding ideology is that it reflects a distinct moral and intellectual position, enshrined in a distinct 'value package'. The latter represents a carefully selected set of general ideas or concepts anchored to a specific mode of application of these concepts within the current cultural context. Taken in isolation, ideas could mean different things, yet the context within which abstract ideas appear and are applied makes them the basis of ideology. In this light, ideology is always a projection of an idea, in that it shows the application of a general concept to the existing social settings [Tully 1989; Skinner 2002; Hamilton 1987; Seliger 1976]. Here it is also important to distinguish between an ideological value package and a belief system that also produces values. Ideology is not completely equal to a belief system, even though both no doubt overlap at some junctures, since ideology often seeks to justify beliefs [Schull 1992: 733]. A belief system relates to the sphere of immediate self-consciousness and, therefore, encompasses the realm of feelings. Ideology no doubt intrudes into the sphere of self-consciousness, but represents a product of the *rationalization* of feeling and the individual mind. Hence, ideology appears as an artificial rational construct, which is used to reflect on the immediate experience as cogently as possible, albeit without the need to correspond to scientific truth or spiritual revelation.

Ideology is also united with political culture, almost converging with it in advanced capitalist societies. Gramsci claims that, in developed democracies, political power rests on political culture impregnated with liberal, capitalist, and nationalist ideology, rather than on despotic force and subjugation [Griffin 2006: 88; Hoare and Smith 1971:

376-377]. Althusser [1971: 54-55] also claims that ideology and culture almost merge by allowing the socio-political order to function as a 'total culture'. From this point of view, counter-culture can also produce its distinct ideology, which can enter into a mortal clash with the prevailing hegemonic culture to produce a new ideology that justifies new political action. Deploying the Gramscian approach, we could talk about the extant cultural hegemony of the neo-liberal, globalist West, as well as the possibility of slowing this hegemony down at the cultural level by the means of alternative ideas and values.

Based on this discussion, ideology is seen in three distinct ways: (1) contextual, as part of a prevailing political culture or gestating counter-culture; (2) political, as the means of legitimizing political goals and action; and (3) anthropological, as a rationalist value package that reflects particular aspirations and beliefs. Therefore, to grasp the essence of contemporary ideological change in international politics, we need to place this new civilizational discourse, as well as actions based upon it, into the contextual climate of our age and map out the intentions and motivations of the political actors who are attempting to vindicate new civilizational geopolitics. The final endeavour will be to ascertain the value package of the ideology of civilizations.

Current Context of International Relations

The current context of international relations is marked by a significant civilizational transformation taking place within the United States, as the world's dominant power. Many authors believe that the acting geopolitical and cultural hegemon is in crisis [Cocker 2019; Ferguson 2004; Fukuyama 2015, 2021; Haas and Kupchan 2021; Wilkinson 2019], and this process invokes changes across various planes of international life, accompanied by a reactive response from the weakened leader[1] [Clinton 2011; Zakaria 2019; O'Keefe 2018; Higgott 2019]. Academic literature observes that the decline of any leading civilization takes place at two distinct, but interconnected, levels: material [economic, military, and socio-political] and cultural-metaphysical [Toynbee 1946; Braudel 1993; Jung 1991; Spengler 1922; Sorokin 1985]. Toynbee [1946: 383-384; 422-423] argues that the first level emerges with the attempts of the leader to create a universal state, or global empire, encompassing all states composing the civilization, under the aegis of its civilizational core. Usually, the establishment of such an empire is accompanied by increased militarization. The latter requires financial and social resources, while the windfalls obtained from the submergence of other states go back to sustaining territorial control and further militarization. Pauperization of the general public and the emergence of a dominant elite that cuts a sharp rift between the rulers and the ruled follows as a result.

The second level is manifest in the fading of symbols of cultural and religious expression and their gradual replacement by a new faith or creed [Jung 1991: 16]. The decline of the foundational religion and the waning of symbols of ideational importance represent mortal danger to functioning civilizations. Toynbee [1946: 375-403] shows that this process often goes hand in hand with the emergence of a new religion endorsed by the internal proletariat. Such developments are linked to the mode of functioning of the universal state. He [ibid.: 421-424] further claims that the universal state is led by a dominant minority, as opposed to a creative minority that drives the development of a civilization during the periods of genesis and growth. The dominant minority is devoid of inspiration and religious symbols. It tends to retain its position by force, and it detaches itself from the rest of the society, making class stratification

[1] Clinton H. US Is Losing the Global Information War. – *RT*. 03.03.2011. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1p-E2xmpjA (accessed 27.03.2021).

morally and politically explosive. Accordingly, symbols of the collective unconscious and the main markers of the former religious morality fade one by one. The spiritual emptiness of social and political ideas becomes apparent, while the void is filled with movements and policies marked by their intellectual bleakness [Spengler 1922: 32].

Western civilization accelerated the creation of its universal state following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which had been an economic, military, and metaphysical alternative to the West and acted as a balancing world force, keeping in check the geopolitical appetites of both contenders. For many observers and politicians of the age, the end of the USSR was tantamount to the 'end of history' in its ideological and political magnitude. In the United States, exaltation, coupled with the blindness of success, was transformed into a licence to create a unipolar world based on the globalist America-led liberal order [Kaplan 2002; Kagan 2003; see Lieven and Hulsman 2007; Stuenkel 2016 for critique]. The US consensus over its benevolent mission on the planet was 'bipartisan at home' [Darden 2017], and the idea initially found a positive response in Europe. The process of the universal state construction was manifest in the unprecedented expansion of NATO to include Eastern European and some former Soviet Union members and in America's growing assertiveness in European affairs: open political and financial support of civic networks that led popular uprisings and established Washington-friendly regimes across the globe, rhetorical and legal justification of foreign democratization as a primary national-security interest, and explicit advocacy of interference in the international affairs of other states [ibidem].

At the same time, it was often overlooked that the USSR's dissolution was largely self-imposed [Krauthamer 1991 argues that the USSR 'called off' the Cold War], elite-driven, and baffling at the time for many Western politicians and Sovietologists, who had been unable to accurately predict this turn of events [Breslauer 1992; Bunce 1995]. As a result, no legal treaties that finalized Russia's 'capitulation' have been produced and no official rules of the game have been drafted to reflect the victory of the West. The 'victory' remained at the intuitive, self-evident level, and the traditionalist-patriotic line in Russia, which called to abandon the defeatist sentiments, has gained prominence[2]. Russia began to reconsider the perilous fate of her civilization by attempting to regain her cultural and political distinctness and to fulfil her historical trajectory as an alternative to the West [Chebankova 2020]. Zbigniew Brzezinski [2004] was continuously wary of the possibility of Russia's resurgence as a great civilization capable of challenging the hegemony of the United States. Yet, he argued that to 'resist American hegemony, Russia needs to mobilize international support and that in turn requires a compelling intellectual case.' Indeed, in just over a decade after its dramatic fall Russia, supported by China, India, Iran, Turkey, and some other states unwilling to be co-opted into the global neo-liberal empire, began building her new intellectual case around the idea of civilizational multipolarity and geopolitical plurality [Acharya 2020: 139-156].

The spread of America's dominance and the intellectual reawakening of Russia have been accompanied by another qualitatively new process, seen in the rise of alternative poles of economic influence. At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the richest industrialized countries – then cumulatively referred to as 'the West' – accounted for 80 per cent of the global economy; this figure stood at just 40 per in 2019, due to the growth of the emerging centres[3]. Accordingly, the world began to gravitate toward the

[2] Михаил Леонтьев в "Начале" [Mikhail Leontyev v "Nachale"]. – *RadioVesti.ru*. 10.08.2015. (In Russ.) URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku6FNIybN78 (accessed 22.01.2021).

[3] Nikonov V. 2019. *Conference Presentation at the Rhodes Forum 2019.*

formation of new macro-regions, united by economic and cultural-political ties. The economic potential of these regions, their robustness and cultural-political might, seriously challenge the monocentric globalized world order. Among such tightly knit economic clusters are the European Union and the members of the North American Free Trade Agreement (known after November 2018 as the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement), who despite being Western pivots show significant signs of political and economic divergence; the South American Mercosur; and the Eurasian Economic Union. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and China-led economic initiatives further reconfigured the outlook of Western-centric world politics. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) alliance is a peculiar arrangement, in that it is composed of inter-civilizational members that are geographically detached from each other and have different cultures, religions, and political systems. Yet the emergence of this organization only reinforces the general spirit of the age.

It could be argued that today's world has been hijacked by two conflicting forces: one driven by US-led neo-liberal globalization and the other *alternative globalization*, driven by the emerging powers[4] [Stuenkel 2016]. At the practical level, alternative globalization rests on the emergence of economic alliances – financial, lending, and trading institutions – free from the Western influence. Of particular importance are the Eurasian Development Bank, the Development Bank of South Africa, the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Development Fund, the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund, the China Development Bank, the China–ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Investment Cooperation Fund, and the New Development Bank. At the ideological level, alternative globalization relies on a civilizational-cultural understanding of the world based on an appreciation of difference, rather than on a search for convergence on the Western neo-liberal model. To give a more nuanced picture, we could argue that the world is becoming tripolar, anchored around the three largest political powers: the United States, Russia, and China. There is also a significant lack of balance in the relationship among these poles, in which the latter two enjoy an intellectual alliance and come close to a political union against the former. The United States has a tense relationship with both Russia and China and *de facto* pursues the policy of double containment. While Russia and China do not plan to create any military alliance, they pose as allies in the realm of political ideas focused on the defence of the polycentric world structure, appreciation of civilizational differences, and transparent rules of the game [Lavrov 2019].

The time is ripe to create greater international stability by altering the extant system to reflectchanges that that have taken place in past decades. Yet, changing those rules will have to reflect the new diminished status of the West and the re-emergence of other great civilizations as viable competitors. The reluctance and resistance of the departing hegemon to acknowledge and conduct that change determines much of the dialogue and conflict between these two competing trends of globalization. At the international level, such resistance is manifest in the politics of sanctions, military threats, arms races, and the clutching at control by the extant hegemonic power. Economic conflicts over European energy supplies, seen in the battles over the North Stream 2 and South Stream pipelines, have become a test for European political and economic sovereignty. Proposed sanctions 'from hell' (as they were termed in the US Congress) against Russia and attempts to declare Russia a terrorist

[4] Lissovolik Ya. BRICS-Plus: Alternative Globalization in the Making? – *Valdai Working Papers*. 12.07.2017. Paper N. 69. URL: http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/valdai-paper-69/ (accessed 25.05.2021).

state, lack of respect for Iran, despite it being one of the world's oldest civilizations, and the economic war with China demonstrate the attempts of the hegemon to resist the ongoing global power change [Cooley and Nixon 2020].

In the military sphere, offensive strategic ideas are increasingly discussed in the United States, and rhetoric has shifted to make a limited nuclear exchange a possibility. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that, for the first time in modern history, the West, instead of leading, is trying to catch up with Russian competitors in the military field, particularly in the spheres of supersonic equipment, air-defence systems, and strategic missiles[5]. The domestic situation also evokes concerns. The efforts to sustain global domination invariably impact political and economic stability at home by detaching political elites from the general public, compromising living standards and fuelling inter-ethnic tensions because of increased migration. Indeed, the dominant political elites within the United States and in several European countries often place ideology above reason, and hope that 'careerism will ensure complacency' [Light 2008: 126; Volker 1989; Volker 2003; Fukuyama 2015: 460]. The migrant crisis experienced by both Europe and the United States, as well as the rise of radically alternative parties on both the right and left of the political spectrum, further increase these already-existing tensions.

A more nuanced and centuries-long process of transformation has been unfolding in the West at the religious level, culminating at the turn of the twentieth-first century. This was a gradual transformation of the Western civilizational foundation that has rested, for the past two thousand years, on Abrahamic religious values. This process of deconstruction was launched in the Renaissance with the opening of a grave debate between the Counter-Reformation movement led by the Order of Jesus and Thomists on the one hand and humanism and Reformation inspired by their respective key figures Erasmus and Luther on the other [Skinner 2002: 4-6; Spitz 1963: 231-232]. Among these parties, humanists (Erasmians) and reformists (Lutherans) have won the privilege of determining the subsequent dominant discourse, and with it, the main trajectory of socio-political and economic development [Trevor-Roper 1967: 24-26]. The touchstone of Erasmian-Lutheran disagreement concerned the centrality of the doctrine of original sin. Reformation theologians, led by Luther, believed in the weak nature of the human soul and the impossibility of individual salvation without the intervention of a divine force, hence supporting the doctrine [Cassirer 1979: 158-159]. Humanism, on the other hand, shifted away from such thinking and believed that individual salvation was possible via the human spirit alone. This in many ways was the beginning of the process that placed human reason above God and revelation in the Enlightenment.

Consequently, as Cassirer [1979: 167-168] notes, 'a window for the revision of the Bible was open'. The Enlightenment thinkers, who absorbed the message of humanists, considered that 'those Biblical positions that contradict immediate calls of morality must be forgone in favour of morality.' In the event, secularization and anthropocentrism became evident in all spheres of human life, including philosophy, natural science, and even theology. The process was uneven, in that the Erasmus-Luther debate was carried through the Enlightenment by Voltaire and Pascal [Cassirer 1979: 145-146], and the nineteenth century partially stalled its unfolding by the reactive flight to Romanticism [Nineteenth-Century... 1985]. Nevertheless, the trend altering Western religious foundations toward the formation of a new 'natural' religion, in which the human stands at the centre of everything, was victorious, and it led the twentieth century in that direction.

[5] Luhn A., Oliphant R. Vladimir Putin Claims Russia Has Developed Nuclear Weapons 'Invulnerable' to US Missile Defence. – *The Telegraph*. URL: 01.03.2018 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/01/vladimir-putin-promises-halve-russias-poverty-six-years/ (accessed 25.05.2021).

Aware of that dynamic, and reflecting on contemporary Western conventions, Alexander Solzhenitsyn was concerned about the 'moral poverty' of Western civilization. His June 1978 Harvard speech, entitled 'A World Split Apart', claimed that the West is heading toward a point at which the delivery of unbridled freedom that gratifies personal sentiment must be valued above all else. Solzhenitsyn argued that 'a total liberation occurred from the moral heritage of Christian centuries with their great reserves of mercy and sacrifice.' He argued that self-seeking behaviour, endorsed by the ideology of human rights, shifted focus to the primacy of material life and pleasures, leading Western civilization to 'a harsh spiritual crisis and a political impasse'. At the same time, 'after the suffering of decades of violence and oppression,' he continued, 'the human soul longs for things higher, warmer and purer than those offered by today's mass living habits, introduced by the revolting invasion of publicity, by TV stupor and by intolerable music. All this is visible to observers from all the worlds of our planet.' Solzhenitsyn [1978] concludes that 'the Western way of life is less and less likely to become the leading model.' The more recent literature on ideational transformations within the West, which corresponds to such observations, is rather voluminous [Mahoney 2018; Milbank, Pabst 2016].

These metaphysical changes within the West began to assume an almost religious expression, involving a serious recasting of popular understanding of human nature and the core aspects of human life. The new trends sometimes seem to hark back to Europe's pre-Christian history, during which a multiplicity of deities, both male and female, were responsible for every possible human expression, blurring the difference between Creator and creature [Ratzinger 2007: 140]. This may well be suited to the contemporary realities of Western men and women living in a world composed of endless possibilities enhanced by scientific innovations. Yet, attractive as it may be for the West itself, this new model is shifting away from the traditional image of the West that the rest of the world knew and followed in the heyday of its influence. It is also significant that our understanding of a civilization hinges upon its religion. Without a knowledge of religion, one cannot form any nuanced understanding of a civilization, and its driving force becomes ambiguous to an observer. John Dunn [1969: 15] notes that 'human society is subjected to constant and violent centrifugal forces; and of these, a religious dispute is the most dangerous precisely because of its moral plausibility.' This brings us to the suggestions often expressed in the literature that civilizations are built roughly around religious borders, and backtracking on religion invariably alters the relationship of any given civilization with the outside world [Toynbee 1946; Dugin 2012: 110; Wallerstein 1992].

The collective West subjugated and influenced foreign cultures when its core was based on its original Judeo-Christian civilizational basis, which later embraced the ideals of the French Revolution as foundations of its secular state. This particular *type* of West was an example for others to follow, and it is in that particular form that the West was a legitimate leader for the rest of the world. As the weight of its former legitimacy fades, and the change of the paradigm becomes clear, the post-Christian West will need to prove its ability to lead. The right to power is usually consolidated following a deeply divisive socio-political, military, or cultural conflict. The divisive religious conflicts of early Christianity, the crusades, religious wars, and republican revolutions bear witness to this. The *new* West, which has disparaged Christian discourse in many ways, has not yet won such international legitimacy – either discursively or by force. To that end, potential followers of the West express concerns as to what *type* of West they are going to follow. The lack of clarity on these matters dissuades potential followers and creates a sense of a multiplicity of civilizations, in which each culture and civilization pursues its own chosen path.

ACTORS, GOALS, AND CONCERNS

Those who pressure for civilizational dialogue are the so-called 'revisionist' countries, their officials, and pundits – in other words, growing powers and their elites. They aim to change conventions established around the current Western-centric order. Therefore, the main trajectory of the civilizational discourse is seen in the *divergence* of social systems, as opposed to the previously adopted path of *convergence*. It is interesting that the argument in favour of civilizational divergence is reinforced by the actual process of economic convergence. The latter could be described as the narrowing of the rift between the regional economic well-being of the world's North and South. For the first time in half a millennium, the average gap in GDP per capita has stopped widening and started to close, at least for several major economies [Popov et al. 2017]. We may further suggest that the economic catching-up process, or the process of economic convergence, requires less political/policy convergence, thereby sustaining the actual 'divergence' from the current global trend. To explain this phenomenon, many authors agree that accelerated growth requires a stronger state, along with its institutions, and a greater policy flexibility, reflecting a local/regional, social/civilizational, and geographic environment [ibidem].

Those who defend the existing 'global liberal' order are the elites and ideologues of the 'older democracies,' which are now forced to share economic and political influence in the existing international arena. Regardless of some disagreements on detail, Western strategists have adopted a conservative goal of seeking to preserve the international situation as it is, at any cost [Ferguson 2004]. The ideological clash between the revisionist and the status-quo parties reflects the political developments taking place in the contemporary world. The goals, motivations, and fears of these players form their respective ideologies.

Ideologists of civilizational discourse pursue multifarious goals of a globalist-geopolitical, civilizational, national, and regional nature [Nau, Ollapally 2012: 12-17]. Globalist-geopolitical goals seek to change the international balance of power in favour of developing countries, and reflect this shift in the new rules of international conduct. Advocates of these goals oppose US-led globalization, because it endangers sovereignty and increases inequity. They vie for reciprocity in economic relations and favour an alignment with other developing countries in political negotiations. Their institutional strategies include the establishment of new structures that can buttress their dissenting behaviour. Of particular importance are financial networks capable of creating an alternative to the Bretton Woods system, challenging the supremacy of the US dollar and establishing rules that can make international trade less dependent on unilateral national sanctions.

Civilizational goals seek to achieve the equal treatment of world cultures. Critics of universalism argue that standardization of the way of life will invariably diminish local cultures, create alienation and anomie, and could even profoundly alter Western culture itself, in that the conquerors always become invariably compromised by the cultural-religious ways of the conquered. It is argued that unilateral attempts to achieve cosmopolitanism might result in a greater political division of the planet, the presence of military forces, a threat of coercion, a loss of local self-determination, and a stratification of society. The goal is to create a world willing to examine the multiplicity of cultural traditions that are focused on the promotion of peace and prosperity across the world. Geopolitical and civilizational goals must be interwoven with regional and national ones. Geopolitical and civilizational objectives are targeted that promote an alternative developmental model: national, or even nationalist, goals of the independent development of nations, liberation from homogenizing pressures of neo-liberal globalization, and free transmission of cul-

ture, religion, and traditions within the bounds of one nation. These aims also extend to the regions that fall within the realm of civilizational reach.

It is also important that all such objectives rest on the particular fears of political agents, because fear usually cements power relations and aids the development of ideology [Dutkiewicz, Kazarinova 2017: 10; Bauman 1997]. Many democratization theorists [Dahl 1998; Linz, Stepan 1996] insist that fear over the lack of elite stability is the foremost driving factor behind the ideological and political transformation of non-democratic systems. Within the conditions of physical and material insecurity, when all things, including the lives of higher-ranking politicians, depend on one leader, political elites strive to recast the system toward greater collegiality and plurality. Likewise, at the international level, political elites of non-Western states feel insecure in dealings with the world hegemon, in that regime changes – via popular revolutions supported financially and politically by that hegemon – jeopardize the position of the elites of those countries, often threatening their physical and economic safety. Consequently, such players seek to alter the rules of the game toward greater transparency, either by joining with dissenting countries or by balancing between the hegemon and dissent, in both cases publicizing the discourse of the dissent.

The fear of losing territorial integrity is less motivated by self-interest, yet it still figures as one of the most important triggers inspiring a search for change. This consideration could also be regarded as partly personal, as politicians assume responsibility for their states, territory, and people – and, above all, for their subsequent role in history. While territorial acquisitions are not acceptable in the twenty-first century, a large number of states still face the threat of dismemberment or civil wars that are instigated with the assistance of third parties. North Africa, the Middle East, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Afghanistan all suffered territorial losses in the wake of military or civil interventions. It is important that larger players, such as Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, and even the European Union, experience similar fears, despite their political weight, developed economies, and advanced military capacities. The European Union seeks greater economic, political, and cultural independence from the United States, and desires greater freedom from the bounds of Euro-Atlantic solidarity in its decision-making. Europe is also afraid of falling prey to intense battles for economic influence fought on its continent between the United States and China, since that could result in the political destabilization of the Union. Russia had to reverse its strategic convergence with the West, planned and executed since the 1970s, due to the fear of further territorial losses, stretching beyond those suffered in the fall of the USSR. The main concern was that the United States did not consider Russia a full-fledged member of Western civilization, and, if anything, preferred that Russia access the West in dismembered – and preferably disarmed – parts.

On a broader level, scholars of ontological security argue that globalization caused 'a state of disruption', in which 'individuals or collectives of individuals', lost 'their sense of security and the ability to ... answer questions about doing, acting and being' [Kinnvall, Mitzen 2017: 7]. The systemic contradictions that we have just described could induce a general fear that individuals are no longer masters of many processes at all levels of governance. Thus, many observers share a feeling that the general public is no longer able to act decisively in protecting domestic individual or group interests, and as a result has been deprived of the ability to shape its future [Dutkiewicz, Kazarinova 2018]. Thus, fear ceases to be a merely expedient *ad hoc* political tool; it has become the essence of politics. Fear begins to replace legitimating discourses around democracy, justice, and the common good. It is in this context that *fear as politics* may also have a *transformational*

capacity vis-à-vis norms and institutions. Such a fear acts as an enabler of a multiplicity of *the civilizational arrangements* as a potential solution for regaining (or gaining) influence, control, domination, and primacy by engaging culture as a tool of transformation.

Value Package

Civilizational ideology seeks to create a platform for communication between different cultural and political traditions. It adopts a narrative of pluralism, or a 'polyphony of narratives' [Kazarinova 2018], that rejects the imposition of universal ideologies on the rest of the world and endorses the language of plurality, multiplicity, and difference [Primakov 2003]. At the same time, this work of deconstruction has its limits, as difference can not be practised indefinitely. The extreme application of such difference runs the risk of debasing the entire system of human relations, turning it into a chaos ridden with a plurality of realities and truths [Chebankova 2021]. The relativism hidden in this approach could lead to extreme nihilism, repudiation of reason, and ultimate degradation of human civilizations, reminiscent of the Foucauldian proposal of 'aesthetic existence' [1989: 309-316] and the 'art of living' [Foucault 1986: 93-94]. To that end, the ideological endeavour of civilizational discourse is to build a new structure based on the dispersed cultural parts of the world. Instead of globalist universalism, a new system of thought is created out of their central suppositions. Here, the 'spirit of systems' largely comes into play, in which one meta-system provides a dialogical platform for several coherent systems of thought and tradition. Methodologically, civilizational thinking rests on the Leibnizian philosophical platform.

Leibniz, as we remember, proposed the concept of a 'pluralistic universe'. He divided the world into specific *monads* – living centres of energy – whose infinite abundance and diversity constitute the unity of the world. At the same time, Leibniz deployed the notions of Cartesian dualism and Spinozian monism to emphasize that the world requires unity just as much as diversity. This is because 'the ultimate aim of all knowledge lies in the "external truths", which express a general and necessary relation between ideas, between the subject and predicate of a judgement' [Cassirer 1979: 30]. From this angle, the monadic view of the world provides a picture of a new organic whole that 'does not merely represent a mechanic sum of its parts but is presupposed by its parts and constitutes the condition of the possibility for their being' [Nineteenth-Century... 1985: 18]. The monadic approach to the world has an instrumental significance for civilizational thinking in explicating the possibility, even the desirability, of differing *viable* systems of being that exist side by side and form the ultimate unity of the world. The adjective *viable* is emphasized, because history nominates only *viable* systems and interpretations for survival and propagation [Peterson 2018: 312]. Leibniz argued that monads are indifferent to division and disintegration, because non-viable monads will invariably split and form more-viable structures by joining other monads that could give rise to new forms. In the same vein, civilizations outlive their metaphysical basis, disintegrate, and join other worlds to construct more viable cultural formations.

It is also important that every social paradigm rests one way or another on a spiritual foundation. Examining the proposed platform for inter-civilizational dialogue from this point of view, we may notice that it is indelibly linked to the Christian conception of the Kingdom of God. There are different approaches to understanding the Kingdom of God. One such approach focuses on the centrality of the Church by arguing that the Church represents the Kingdom of God. Another approach emphasises Christ by claiming that Christ himself is the Kingdom in person. Other approaches underscore the centrality of religions in our search for the Kingdom of God (*theocentrism*)

[Harnack 1986; Schmidt 1965: 574; Ratzinger 2007: 52]. A secular, or *regnum-centric*, understanding of the Kingdom of God, reflects the metaphysical basis of civilizational discourse more accurately than any other competing formulation. The *regnum-centric* interpretation, which has become dominant in the second half of the twentieth century, relies on the centrality of the Kingdom itself. The Kingdom has been understood not so much as a 'worldly place to be found on a map', but as the 'world governed by peace, justice, and the conservation of creation' [Ratzinger 2007: 53-54].

This world was supposed to be the goal of history, and *all* religions were to work together to achieve this task. At the same time, all world religions were 'perfectly free to preserve their traditions and live according to their respective identities as well, but they must bring their identities to bear on the common task of building the Kingdom – a world in other words, where peace, justice, and respect for creation are the dominant values' [Ratzinger 2007: 54]. The resemblance of this approach to the idea of civilizational discourse is remarkable. In this system, religious – and, as a result, cultural and political – tolerance becomes an important principle. It is achieved in the light of adherence to God and the religious principles of morality, but with the acceptance of all varying interpretations.

Also, ideologists of civilizational discourse inadvertently deploy the spirit of nineteenth-century Romanticism as conveyed by Hegel, Mohler, Coleridge, Schleiermacher, and others. Those thinkers 'rejected excessive individualism and rationalism and emphasized those features that helped people to form nations and cultures and differentiate them from each other. Among such features are language, tradition, literature, temperament, and above all, history' [Nineteenth-Century... 1985: 12]. Such thinking alerts us to the idea of the multiplicity of viable religious and cultural interpretations of the world. Having said that, just like the Christian *regnum-centrism*, focused on the conservation of creation, or Leibnizian monadism, welcoming *viable* interpretations of life, Romantics understood the limits of their religious diversity. They accepted the notion of a hierarchy of religions, in which religions develop progressively, along with the rolling out of the world spirit. Schleiermacher, Hegel, Caird, and other Romantics argued that Judaism, Islam, and Christianity occupy the highest place of all faiths, with Christianity being the most sophisticated, developed, and complex form of religion. Hegel further argued that Olympism and Judaism were preparatory stages for reaching this higher peak.

Our discussion has shown that civilizational thinking provides a framework for dialogue among different *viable* cultural interpretations of being, thus achieving a specific form of unity for the world. A number of ideological building blocks will be required to implement such a construction. These will represent specific positions that should reflect basic universals shared by all participants. In other words, these building blocks must represent meta-theoretical foundations of the paradigm that could externally enable the existence of our 'monadic' civilizations. We must choose broad universal ideas [Bluhm 1965: 13], in that, as we have already argued, ideas can be studied only in the cultural and historical context within which they have been put into practice [Skinner 2002: 58-59; Richter 1995: 9-10; Lovejoy 1960: 15], including our context of civilizational discourse. Hence, we must not only select foundational ideas for our platform, but also ascertain which particular cultural and political interpretations stand behind our selected universals in the context of civilizational discourse. We have distinguished the four main elements: (1) freedom; (2) equality; (3) sovereignty; and (4) respect for international law and order.

First, the idea of freedom is applied in the republican sense of *external freedom*, that is, freedom of countries or civilizational conglomerates from external interference. This

is a republican understanding of freedom of commonwealth articulated by Cicero and reasserted by Machiavelli and Spinoza. This freedom signified the absence of external interference and meant that 'the community is free in the sense of not living in dependence on the goodwill of anyone else, and is consequently free to act according to its own civil will' [Skinner 2002: 129]. In republican thinking, this type of freedom came before internal freedom, which was understood as freedom from domestic tyranny.

Second, *equality* is understood as equality of dialogical parties in international communication and in developing rules and agreements. This point is particularly important, as two broad types of treaties have been known since ancient times: those of *parity* and of *suzerainty*. In the first case, dialogue takes place and treaties are concluded between equals; in the second, treaties and agreements are concluded between unequals – 'the dominant party, whom we can term the *suzerain*, and the lesser party, whom we can call the *vassal*' [Levenson 1985: 26]. Even though all international arrangements now have the *form* of parity, they often have the *substance*, and display the *practice*, of suzerainty. It is from this point of view, that ideological advocates of civilizational dialogue usually lament the situation in which the Western group of states pursues a line of dialogue in which they are placed above other cultures and civilizations that are expected to tread the pro-Western socio-political and cultural path. Pluralism of civilizations, or *dialogue of civilizations*, should be the cardinal tenet of this thinking. Ideally, each civilization will be entitled to choose its own cultural and political pattern of behaviour and will be free to adhere to its values [Yakunin 2017].

Third, civilizational thinking also advances the idea of *sovereignty*, understood at the two independent-but-intertwined levels demarcating nation-state and civilization. The idea of civilizational sovereignty figures as a new addition to our understanding of the sovereignty concept. In this case, international anarchy transforms to the anarchy of civilizations, as opposed to the traditional anarchy of states, which is becoming increasingly obsolete, according to the English School [Manning 1975: 177, 201; Bull 2000: 252]. Civilizations can engage in a productive dialogue by borrowing useful cultural elements from each other and discarding those practices that could be harmful to particular civilizational traditions. The other side of the coin, however, is that, within the conditions of the multipolar and multi-civilizational world, states – particularly those states that are located across geographical borders of civilizations – have greater leeway in choosing a cultural alliance. The relative freedom of the domestic behaviour of smaller states becomes possible in a multi-civilizational world in which no civilization exerts a commanding influence [Deutsch, Singer 1964: 394; Vayrynen 1995: 362-363; Buzan 2011; Higgott 2019].

It is also important that the state is still considered as a principal vehicle for stability, development, and growth[6] . From this point of view, civilizational ideology considers the state as the core instrument for the preservation of cultures, traditions, the historical memory of peoples, and normative patterns of a community – in the Hegelian vein. Moreover, many developing countries need the state as an instrument of modernization and growth, in that the state, as opposed to global businesses, can focus on the cardinal interests of its citizens. Therefore, civilizational thinking insists that two sovereignties – civilizational and national – must run in parallel and become mutually enriching, each responsible for its distinct sphere of application[7].

[6] Никонов vs Коэн. Поединок [Nikonov Vyacheslav, and Ariel Cohen. Poedinok]. – *Россия-1*. 22.06.2017. (In Russ.) URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bC9bwIhzJM (accessed 25.05.2021).

[7] For critique of this position see: Rachman G. 2019. China, India and the Rise of the 'Civilisation State'. – *Financial Times*. 04.03.2019. URL: https://www.ft.com/content/b6bc9ac2-3e5b-11e9-9beefab61506f44 (accessed 14.05.2021).

Finally, civilizational ideology claims that humanity must develop societal laws of international conduct enforceable around the world. International law must be based on the interests of the vast majority of countries, the balance of their interests, and the equality of all parties. It should not be drafted in the interests of a group of global corporations with Western profit centres, which aim to dictate their rules to the rest of the world and advance their global economic interests. Countries should also dispense with the discursive division of states into those who set the rules and those who do not have a voice in their formation. Every country must take part in establishing those rules; the supremacy of one country (or a group of countries) over others should not be permitted. All countries must be able to decide which cultural, trading, and political union or alliance they would like to join, and they must be able to choose their institutional frameworks on the basis of their history and political cultures[8].

To conclude, the ideology of civilizational discourse emerged in the context of an international climate formed at the turn of the twenty-first century. It seeks to legitimize the goals and intentions of emerging nations to redistribute power from the former world hegemon, largely seen as a collective West, led by the United States. This thinking rests on economic, cultural, and religious considerations and presses to accommodate polarity and pluralism, as well as greater equality of international dialogue. As we have already observed, each ideology gives a rhetorical platform for future political action.

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Аннотация. Мировой порядок претерпевает глубокие изменения в том, что касается его структуры, состава ведущих участников и социально-культурного дискурса, который является основой политической эволюции международных отношений. Для понимания этого процесса необходимо учитывать два фактора. Во-первых, несколько новых государств или групп государств вошли в лигу ведущих мировых держав и начали оказывать значительное влияние на мировую политику. Аналитики часто рассматривают этих игроков как цивилизации в том смысле, что многие такие государства стремятся предложить альтернативную модель духовного, культурного, политического и даже экономического развития. Во-вторых, Запад и его последователи начали испытывать значительные цивилизационные преобразования на социально-политическом и социокультурном уровнях, поставив такие страны на перекрестье, которое могло бы обусловить их экзистенциальное будущее. Контекстуальные преобразования такого масштаба должны всегда использовать идеологию для узаконивания наличных политических изменений, поскольку идеология может

[8] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016). – *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*. URL: https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248 (accessed 25.05.2021).

поставить под сомнение существующие в эпоху конвенции, отражающие фундаментальные изменения в обществе. С этой точки зрения приход цивилизаций в современный нарратив международных отношений устойчиво связан с идеологическими доктринами, которые узаконивают этот процесс. В статье рассматривается выявившаяся идеология цивилизационного дискурса, уделяющего основное внимание ее центральным принципам, и обсуждаются политические сдвиги, которые такая идеология стремится оправдать.

Ключевые слова: политическая идеология, цивилизации, культура, многополярность, международные отношения.

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