

The Plan for a New World Order Stumbles on Geopolitical Realities

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on

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The slow formation of an international order

The idea of a world or international order appeared in the seventeenth century, although the phrase "world order" has been introduced only recently in political discourse. It was discussed whenever an opportunity presented itself to organize and sustain peace.

It was in 1603 that King Henri IV of France had his minister, the Duc de Sully, develop a first draft. The objective was to constitute a Christian republic including all the peoples of Europe. It would have ensured the preservation of nationalities and religions and been responsible for resolving problems between them.

The Grand Design stipulated the redefinition of state boundaries to balance their power, the creation of a European confederation of 15 with a supranational Council with the power of arbitration and an army capable of protecting the confederacy against the Turks.

However that dream was interrupted by the assassination of Henri IV and resurfaced only at the end

of the wars launched by Louis XIV. The Abbot of Saint-Pierre published his Project for perpetual peace among the Christian rulers.

The plan, which was presented to the Congress of Utrecht (1713), consisted in adopting in full all the decisions taken at that conference as the basis for the determination of the borders between the belligerent countries, and the establishment of a league of European nations (International Federation) whose mission was to prevent conflicts.

Apart from this utopia, and more important at the time, there were the Peace Treaties of Westphalia, signed in 1648. They intervened at the end of a Thirty Years' War, conducted under religious banners, resulting in an accumulation of hatred and in the destruction of 40% of the population.

The negotiations lasted four years (1644-1648). Ultimately, they enshrined the principle of equality in negotiations between all parties in conflict, whether Catholic or Protestant, republican or monarchical.

The Treaty of Westphalia laid down four fundamental principles:

- 1. The absolute sovereignty of the nation-state, and the fundamental right to political self-determination.
- 2. Legal equality between nation-states. The smallest state is, therefore, equal to the largest, regardless of its weakness or its strength, its wealth or poverty.
- 3. Compliance with treaties, and the emergence of binding international law.
- 4. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

Certainly these general principles do not determine an absolute sovereignty, but there never was such a thing. However they did delegitimize any action likely to abolish the sovereignty of a state.

Political philosophers have all supported these projects. Rousseau strongly called for the constitution of a single state contract involving all European countries. Kant published Towards Perpetual Peace in 1795. For him, peace was a legal construct that required the codification of a general law applicable to all States. Bentham, the English utilitarian, stigmatized secret diplomacy in that it placed itself above the law. He also called for creating an international public opinion able to force governments to comply with international resolutions and submit to arbitration.

The creation of international regulatory institutions

The idea of an international order has progressed steadily, always based on the rules of sovereignty adopted by the Westphalia Treaties. It gave birth to the Holy Alliance proposed by Tsar Alexander I in 1815, as well as to the Concert of Europe proposed by the Austrian Chancellor Metternich in the nineteenth century to prevent "revolution" which means chaos in the rational political language.

It was from this moment that states began to hold summits to solve problems outside of war, favouring arbitration and diplomacy.

It was with this objective in mind that the League of Nations (LoN) was founded after the First World War. It emerged as a mere manifestation of the dominant power relations serving the victors. Its moral values were relative. Thus, despite its stated goal of resolving disputes between nations by arbitration rather than war, it declared itself competent to supervise underdeveloped peoples or politically, economically or administratively colonized peoples pending their own self-determination. This naturally led to the legitimization of mandates. In assuming this position, the League of Nations embodied the colonial reality.

The artificiality of this organization was revealed when it found itself unable to cope with serious international events like the conquest of Manchuria by Japan, that of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and

the annexation of Corfu (Greece) by Italy, etc..

Although the idea of the League, conceived by Leon Bourgeois, had been promoted by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, Washington never joined. Challenged, Japan and Germany withdrew. In this way, the institution proved worthless.

Moscow Declaration, adopted by the Allies on October 30 1943, announcing the creation of "an organizational structure based on the principle of sovereign equality of all peace-loving States." The project was developed at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference held in Washington from August 21 to October 7, 1944.

The principles of the Atlantic Charter were approved during the Yalta Conference (February 4-12, 1945), before being enshrined in the San Francisco Conference (June 25 and 26, 1945) .

The ideology of globalization was thus embodied in the UN which, upon its creation, claimed to establish a system of collective security for all, including States that were not members. In reality, the UN isn't any more a contractual society of equals than the League was, but rather a reflection of momentary power relations in favour of the victors of the day.

That said, the whole world bowed to the will of the UN.

This organization, which claimed to be world-wide, was in practice only the expression of the desire for domination by the victorious powers to the detriment of the world's peoples whose will was not taken into account.

This geopolitical reality was confirmed upon the creation of the Security Council consisting of five major powers (the victors) as permanent members, and other members, not permanent, but elected on a geographical basis, resulting in the under-representation of Africa and Asia.

The failure of this system appeared during the Cold War. The conflict between the two superpowers was imposed upon small nations who supported all the consequences at the local and regional levels.

This structuring of roles was evident in the functioning of the UN whether with respect to applications for membership or for the treatment of conflicts, as was seen with regard to Palestine, Korea, the nationalization of Iranian oil, the Suez Canal crisis, the Israeli occupation, Lebanon etc..

The UN was created by proclaiming "faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, to create the necessary conditions under which justice and respect for obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law". However, the veto system has deprived other nations of the right to be involved equally.

Ultimately, international institutions have always shown the balance of power far from any idea of justice in the philosophical or moral senses.

The Security Council is a global directory (a continuation of the one installed by Metternich). It reserves the ability to impose resolutions only by the Allied victors of World War II, not by those who seek peace.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was crucial to change the international system.

The reshaping of international relations by the U.S.

It is at this time that the disciples of Leo Strauss triumphed in the U.S. with the help of neoconservative journalists. In their view, society is divided into three castes: the wise, the lords and the people. The wise alone possess the truth and reveal only part of it to some politicians (the

lords), while the people should submit to their decisions.

They have continued to promote their ideas and call for the repeal of the principles of the Treaty of Westphalia, namely respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.

To enforce Western hegemony, they invoke a "right of humanitarian intervention" and a "responsibility to protect" incumbent upon the wise, executed by the lords, and imposed on the people. Revising the language of the Second World War, they also call for the replacing of "Resistance" by negotiations.

In 1999, the calls of the neoconservatives were relayed to several Western countries including the UK and France. Tony Blair presented the attack on Kosovo by NATO as the first humanitarian war in history. In a speech in Chicago, he argued that the UK did not seek to defend its own self-interest, but rather to promote universal values.

His statement was hailed both by Henry Kissinger and by Javier Solana (who was then Secretary General of NATO and not yet of the EU). Soon after, the UN appointed Bernard Kouchner as administrator of Kosovo.

There is no significant difference between the theory of the Straussians and the Nazis. In *Mein Kampf*, Adolph Hitler was already stigmatizing the principle of state sovereignty asserted by the Treaty of Westphalia.

In economic terms, this vision has already triumphed with the IMF, World Bank and WTO. Since their inception, these institutions have sought to interfere in the economic, budgetary and financial policies of states, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. Some Arab states have been victims of their advice on economic liberalization, privatization of the public sector and sell-off of natural resources.

Washington hesitated over what to do after the demise of the USSR. Gradually the U.S. has established itself as the sole superpower, as "hyper-power" in the words of Hubert Vedrine. Thereafter, the UN system inherited from the Second World War was regarded as *passé* by the US. Not content to ignore the UN, the US ceased to fulfill its financial obligations, has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, has refused to join the International Criminal Tribunal and has humiliated Unesco repeatedly.

Concepts from the Second World War were swept away by the attacks of September 11, 2001. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, issued by President George W. Bush on September 20, 2002, proclaimed a new law: "pre-emptive action against rogue states."

The U.S. strategy was accompanied by a conceptual upheaval.

- The notion of resistance, after the French Resistance to Nazi occupation, was de-legitimized in favour of a requirement for conflict resolution through negotiation, independently of the inalienable rights of the parties. Similarly, the concept of terrorism – never defined in international law – was used to de-legitimize any armed group in conflict with a State, whatever the causes of this conflict.

- Repealing the laws of war, Washington has revived the days of "targeted assassinations" abandoned after the Vietnam war and practiced by Israel for over a decade. According to their lawyers, these are not strictly speaking "assassinations", but "murders in self-defence", even though there is no need to protect oneself, nor any relation between the threat and the reaction, nor proportionality in the response.

- Humanitarian intervention, or responsibility to protect, has been placed above the sovereignty of states.

- Finally, the notion of rogue states has emerged.

These states are defined by four criteria which are largely within the realm of speculation and presumption of guilt:

- Their leaders oppress their people and loot their belongings.
- They do not respect international law and constitute a permanent threat to their neighbours.
- They support terrorism.
- They hate the United States and its democratic principles.

A decade after the disappearance of the USSR, the U.S. launched its remodelling of international relations. Concerning the Middle East, the neoconservative philosopher Bernard Lewis and his disciple, Fouad Ajami, set out the main objectives: to put an end to Arab nationalism by striking at the tyrannical regimes that have cemented their tribal, sectarian, and religious mosaics.

The destruction and dismemberment of the states of this region would lead to "constructive chaos", an uncontrollable situation in which any social cohesion dissolves and where man is returned to the brute state.

These societies then return to a pre-national, or even pre-historical condition from which spring ethnically homogeneous microstates that are, by necessity, dependent on the United States. A leading Straussian, Richard Perle, assured that the wars in Iraq and Lebanon would be followed by others in Syria, Saudi Arabia, and would culminate triumphantly in Egypt.

Three stages

In any case, the construction of the New World Order has gone through several stages.

1. 1991-2002 was a phase of uncertainty. Washington hesitated to assert itself as the sole superpower and to unilaterally decide the fate of the world. Although this period spanned over a decade, it represents only one brief moment in history.
2. In the years 2003-2006, Washington tried to apply at any cost the theory of "constructive chaos" to extend its hegemony. It fought two wars, one with its own troops in Iraq, the other by proxy in Lebanon. The Israeli defeat in 2006 temporarily interrupted this project. Russia and China twice employed their veto in the Security Council (relating to Myanmar and Zimbabwe) as if to timidly demonstrate their return on the international stage.
3. In the period from 2006 to today, the unipolar system has given way to a non-polar world. Power is widely dispersed. China, EU, India, Russia and the United States alone account for over half of the inhabitants of the world, they hold 75% of global GDP and account for 80% of world military spending. This fact justifies to some extent a multipolar functioning because of persistent competition between these poles.

The nebula of a non-polar world

Overall, these powers must face challenges from both above (the regional and global organizations) and below (the militias, NGOs, multinational corporations). Power is everywhere and nowhere, in several hands, in several places.

Beyond the six major world powers, there are numerous regional powers. In Latin America, there is the case of Brazil, more or less Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela; in Africa: Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt; in the Middle East, there are Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia. There is Pakistan in Southeast Asia; Australia, Indonesia and South Korea in East Asia and the Western Pacific.

Many intergovernmental organisations belong on this list of forces: the IMF, the World Bank, the WHO and the UN as such; regional organizations like the African Union, the Arab League, ASEAN,

EU, ALBA, etc.. not to mention clubs such as OPEC.

Certain states within nation states should be included, such as California or Uttar Pradesh [India's most populous State], and even cities like New York or Shanghai.

There are also multinational companies, including energy and finance firms; and global media like Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN as well as militias like Hezbollah, the Mahdi Army or the Taliban. Political parties must be factored in, as well as religious institutions and movements, terrorist organizations, drug cartels, NGOs and foundations. The list is endless.

The United States remains the main concentration of power. Its annual military expenditures are estimated at over \$ 500 billion. This figure may reach 700 billion if we take into account the cost of on-going operations, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. With their annual GDP estimated at 14 trillion dollars, they are ranked first in the world economy.

However, the reality of U.S. power should not mask its decline both in absolute terms and relative to other states. As noted by Richard Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, the progression of countries like China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE reaches \$ 1 trillion per year. This is of course due to the energy market. Given the exploding demand from China and India, this amount will continue to grow. The weak dollar against the pound sterling and the euro will not only result in a depreciation of its value against Asian currencies, but a possible transformation of the oil market that will pay for itself with a basket of currencies or in euros.

And when the dollar is no longer the currency of oil trade, the U.S. economy will find itself vulnerable to inflation and currency crises.

Two basic mechanisms have supported the non-polar world:

- A number of financial flows have found their way outside legal channels and without the knowledge of governments. This suggests that globalization weakens the influence of major powers.
- These flows have been widely used by the oil states to secretly fund non-state actors.

Therefore, in a non-polar world, being the strongest state in the world does not guarantee the monopoly of force. All kinds of groups or individuals can accumulate influence.

According to Professor Hedley Bull, international relations have always been a mixture of order and chaos. According to his theory, the non-polar system left to itself becomes more complex. And that's what has happened.

In 2011, the exacerbation of tensions over Libya showed that the non-polar system was no longer viable. Two competing orientations have emerged.

The first is US centred. It aims to build a new world order corresponding to Washington's strategy. It involves the abolition of state sovereignty as established since the Peace of Westphalia and its replacement by foreign interference rhetorically justified as humanitarian intervention, in reality a Trojan horse for the "American Way of Life".

The second, supported by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS economies, is Sino-Russian. It calls for the maintenance of the principles of the Treaty of Westphalia, with a forward look. The idea is to determine the new rules of the game based around two nuclei, which rotate around a number of poles.

Clearly, control of resources, including renewable energy, is the ideal gateway to the creation of a new system, whose emergence has been blocked since 1991.

It is also clear that control of gas and transportation routes is at the centre of the conflict over Syria. Undoubtedly, the polarization of the powers on this topic goes beyond internal causes, and

surpasses the issue of access to warm waters, or the logistical interests of the Russian naval base in Tartus.

The energy imperative

The battle over energy was the big story for Dick Cheney. He conducted it from 2000 to 2008 in clear confrontation with China and Russia. Since then this policy has been pursued by Barack Obama.

For Cheney, energy demand is growing faster than supply, which ultimately leads to a shortage. Maintaining U.S. dominance thus depends primarily on control of the remaining reserves of oil and gas. In addition, more generally, if current international relations are structured by the geopolitics of oil, it is the supply of a state that determines its rise or his fall. Hence his four-point plan:

- Encourage, whatever the cost, any local production by vassals in order to reduce the dependency of the United States vis-à-vis unfriendly suppliers and increase Washington's freedom of action.
- Control oil exports from the Arab Gulf states, not to monopolize them, but to use them as leverage against both clients and other suppliers.
- Control shipping lanes in Asia, that is to say, the supply lines of China and Japan not only in oil but also in raw materials.
- Encourage the diversification of energy sources used in Europe in order to reduce European dependence vis-à-vis Russian gas and the political influence thereby derived by Moscow.

Moreover, the Americans have set energy independence as their prime target. That was the gist of the policy developed by Dick Cheney after extensive consultations with the energy giants in May 2001. It requires a diversification of sources: local oil, domestic gas and coal, hydro and nuclear power. And it is also achieved through a strengthening of trade with friendly countries in the Western Hemisphere, including Brazil, Canada, and Mexico.

The secondary objective is to control the flow of oil in the Arabian Gulf. This was the main reason for triggering Desert Storm (1991), then the invasion of Iraq (2003).

The Cheney plan focused on controlling waterways: the Strait of Hormuz (through which passes 35% of world trade in oil), or the Straits of Malacca. To date, these waterways are essential to the economic survival of China, Japan, North Korea and even Taiwan. These corridors permit the conveyance of energy and raw materials to industries in Asia and the export of manufactured goods to world markets. By controlling these, Washington guarantees the loyalty of its key Asian allies and restricts the rise of China.

The implementation of these traditional geopolitical goals has led the U.S. to strengthen its naval presence in the Asia-Pacific, and to enter into a network of military alliances with Japan, India and Australia; always with a view to containing China.

Washington has always regarded Russia as a geopolitical competitor. The US exploited every opportunity to reduce Moscow's power and influence. It particularly feared the increasing dependence of Western Europe on Russian natural gas, which could affect its ability to oppose movements in Eastern Europe and Russia in the Caucasus.

To offer an alternative, Washington has pushed the Europeans to source in the basin of the Caspian Sea by building new pipelines through Georgia and Turkey. The idea was to bypass Russia, with the help of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, thus avoiding the use of Gazprom pipelines. Hence the idea of Nabucco.

To enhance the energy independence of his country, Barack Obama has suddenly turned into a nationalist autarkist. He has encouraged the exploitation of oil and gas in the western hemisphere, regardless of the dangers of drilling in environmentally sensitive areas, such as the coast of Alaska

or the Gulf of Mexico, and regardless of techniques used, such as hydraulic fracking.

In his speech on the State of the Nation 2012, President Obama proudly declared:

[blockquote]"Over the last three years, we've opened millions of new acres for oil and gas exploration, and tonight, I'm directing my administration to open more than 75 percent of our potential offshore oil and gas resources. Right now — right now — American oil production is the highest that it's been in eight years. That's right — eight years. Not only that — last year, we relied less on foreign oil than in any of the past 16 years".

He spoke with particular enthusiasm regarding the extraction of natural gas by fracking of oil shale: "We have a supply of natural gas that can last America nearly 100 years."[/blockquote]

In March 2011, Washington increased its imports from Brazil to wean itself off oil from the Middle East.

In fact, Washington has continued to ensure U.S. control of vital sea lanes that extend from the Straits of Hormuz to the South China Sea and has built a network of bases and alliances that encircle China-the emerging global power-in the form of an arc stretching from Japan to South Korea, Australia, Vietnam and the Philippines in the South East, then India, in the Southwest. All this is crowned by an agreement with Australia to build a military facility in Darwin on the north coast near the South China Sea.

Washington is trying to include India in a coalition of regional countries hostile to China to wrest New Delhi from the grasp of BRICS, a strategy of encircling China which is of very serious concern in Beijing.

Studies have shown an unexpected distribution of global gas reserves. Russia ranks first with 643 trillion cubic feet in western Siberia. In second place, Arabia, including the deposit of Ghawar, with 426 trillion cubic feet. Then, in third place, the Mediterranean with 345 trillion cubic feet of gas to which must be added 5.9 billion barrels of liquid gas, and 1.7 billion barrels of oil.

Regarding the Mediterranean, the essential is found in Syria. The deposit discovered at Qara may reach 400,000 cubic meters per day, which will make the country the fourth largest producer in the region, after Iran, Iraq and Qatar.

The transportation of gas from the Zagros Belt (Iran) to Europe must pass through Iraq and Syria. This has completely upset American projects and has consolidated Russian projects (Nord Stream and South Stream). Syrian gas has escaped Washington which must now fall back on Lebanese gas.

The war goes on...