

The Impact of Globalization on the Formation of the Global Political System

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The aim of this paper is to analyze the impact of globalization on the formation of the global political system. Taking into account the fact of global political evolution, the authors of the article point out that global political structures tend to change. During the past century the global political architecture changed greatly from the state of the low degree of cohesion and a simple structure to a fairly high level of unity and strong structure of today. Moreover, this development of the global political order was not just a simple change in the system of world relations, but also a directed search for such forms of organization that will be acceptable for a growing population. Furthermore, the development of a global political order was evolutionary in the sense that it took place as a 'natural' process of 'trial and error' (it can be viewed as a phenomenon of the deployment of evolution), which does not require a postulation of a general plan or focus.

Keywords: *global political system, globalization, political globalization, global political processes, global political order, global problems, world politics.*

Over many centuries, human societies across the globe have established progressively closer contacts. Recently, the pace of globalization has dramatically increased. Unprecedented changes in communications, transportation, and computer technology have given the process new impetus and made the world more interdependent than ever.

What is 'globalization'? Roland Robertson, the Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland) and Distinguished Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh (USA), defines it as 'the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (Robertson 1992). According to George Modelski, the Professor Emeritus in the University of Washington (USA), globalization is 'a set of processes by which global institutions, economic, political, social, and cultural, emerge to handle a rising load of global problems and transnational interactions' (Modelski 1996). The experts of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) refer this process to 'the present worldwide drive toward a globalized economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments'.¹

As we can see, globalization is a many-sided process which covers all areas of human activities. Thus, we define globalization as a dialectical, dynamic and non-linear process of socio-natural integrity, characterized by an increasing complexity and interdependence of all elements of the global system (Ilyin and Ursul 2012).

¹ International Forum on Globalization. San Francisco: The IFG; [cited 2006 June 1]. Homepage available at <http://www.ifg.org/analysis.html>

Taking into account the process of global political evolution (Modelski 2002), we would like to emphasize that the development of the global political order has not been just a simple change in the system of world relations, but also a directed search for such forms of organization that will be acceptable for a growing complexity. Thereby, let us try to define the essence of the global political system.

Global political system is a system of global stratification of the world political actors, a set of interacting and/or interdependent 'global institutions' (Attina 2011: 224) of political power and governance. When analyzing Fulvio Attina's book *The Global Political System*, William R. Thompson underlines the fact that the modern world may not have a fully functioning central government but it has many of its characteristics like leadership, institutions, and concerns about authority and legitimacy. In other words, we are talking about a system of elements of a global political order with a certain structure (architecture) and hierarchy.

How can we characterize the impact of globalization on the formation of the global political system? As globalization is a worldwide process we can emphasize several key points of such an impact:

Global political processes are an integral part of global processes (Holsti 2004), and therefore they affect the structure of relations in the world. Thus, the global political process could be defined as a change of state, structure and hierarchy of a global political order (global political system) and/or elements that influence the dynamics of the global development.

On the one hand, global political processes are the result of global political actors' collective activity, the product of reproduction and changes in the global political system and its individual components.

On the other hand, the global political processes lead to changes in policy and related economic, social, cultural, legal, ideological, moral and other relations between the countries and regions of the global world.

In this case, global political system acts as an open system, and its non-equilibrium state is characterized by the instability of the functioning of the global political institutions of government and administration, as well as the global economic crisis. There is an intensive exchange of resources – material (raw materials, energy, and commodities), technologies, ideas, culture achievements *etc.* – between political actors in the global world, which is the sum of its sub-systems.

By globalization processes we also mean the processes which cause the structural transformation of the world order; their aim is to remove obstacles for the mobility of all factors of production, as well as for the growth of number and diversity of actors and the increasing interdependence between them in the sphere of economy, politics, culture *etc.* In this respect, we consider *political globalization* as a global political, dynamic and nonlinear process of reinforcement of interdependence between all the elements of the global political system.

However, we should especially emphasize the complexity and contradictory character of political globalization as a process of 'global political evolution' (Modelski and Devezas 2007), which should be defined as a long-range process of the formation of a global polity (short for global political system), exemplified by structural change in the global polity, from leadership to organization (Modelski 2009).

Along with the trends that contribute to the convergence of certain countries and regions of the world we can see the processes leading to the divergence of its key players' status. For example, there are deep gaps between different countries within political, economic, social and technological fields. Being a highly controversial process, political globalization is constantly changing its specific forms, mechanisms and methods of implementation. We also face changes in manifestation of political globalization: 'old' global problems are transforming into 'new', more complicated global issues. By global problems we mean issues that are common to all humankind and affect interests of every individual, every human group, and humanity in general; these are negative effects of global processes in the social sphere.

Two major trends that have had an overwhelming influence on the strategic landscape deserve mention. These are the collapse of the bipolar system and the resurgence of globalization. The global world is changing due to the acceleration and deepening of globalization; new categories appear for characterizing its structure. However, some terms have not received an 'institutionalized' status yet.

Thus, such important categories of political global studies like the '*pole*' and '*centers of power*' (Lukyanov 2010) are not generally acknowledged and do not have a precise definition.

These categories are used by default (in the case of a multipolar world), sometimes these concepts fit together and appear as synonyms, causing some confusion and conceptual imprecision of futuristic models of the global world. Let us try to determine the relationship between these categories and their content.

There are two most common approaches to the description of the global world's pole (Leonova 2012; see also in this volume). The first approach emphasizes the political aspect of the content of this category, so we use the term 'political pole'. Thus, a political pole can be considered as a state in charge of a group of countries. Nonetheless, the 'in charge' aspect varies even within the aligned groups (all depends on the degree of hierarchy).

During the confrontation between the USSR and the USA, both states were the 'poles' and the leaders of two confronting systems – the 'socialist' and the 'capitalist' respectively. A significant number of countries (particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America) formed the so-called 'Third World'. That was a bipolar model of the world order. Striving for hegemony, both poles developed their military-industrial sectors as a priority task. However, having a huge nuclear arsenal, they came to realize that the war between them would lead to mutual assured destruction of two states, and perhaps the world. This ruled out the possibility of a large-scale military conflict between the two poles. The 'pole' in the bipolar world is the coordinator of actions within its sphere of influence and defines the internal and foreign policy of the states under its control.

In a multipolar world, the pole's role is the same as in the case of the bipolar world order. However, the relationship between the poles becomes more complex. In a bipolar model the poles are rivals; in a multipolar world a temporary tactical alliance of two poles against the third pole is possible. Such alliance allows leveling the distinct advantage of the third pole, slowing down the growth of its influence and stabilizing the situation on the international scene.

In terms of global security, both in bipolar and in multipolar systems of international relations no pole would dare unleash a global military conflict that could become not only a threat for the world economy, social and cultural ties between nation-states, but also the

annihilation of most of the world's population. The pole's power and responsibility are determined by its allies and satellites, so this actor of international relations is interested in the successful development of all its members, since this fact alone guarantees it the status of the 'pole' among other super-powers.

Within another approach, the 'pole' in a unipolar world is considered as a state with enormous political, economic or military advantage over most other states. Actually, the 'pole' is the most powerful state not only in a certain region, but it also has a global influence. Using its powerful influence, the 'pole' considers the entire planet as its sphere of interest. Such influence is pervasive: it is able to dictate terms to any state, using various kinds of sanctions (economic, diplomatic, *etc.*) or by providing direct military action.

Thus, analyzing the existing approaches to interpretation of the global world's 'poles', we offer the following definition of a 'pole' in the context of political Global Studies. The 'pole' is an element of the global political system, which has significant military, economic, political and civilizational resources to successfully interact/compete with other poles and actors of the global politics.

In the context of the global political system we can talk about the emergence of a new world order based on global stratification of the actors of the world politics (Kegley and Blanton 2011) and their network interaction. The process of organization, in contrast to self-organization, can be characterized by establishment of homogeneous stable structures (typical examples are global international organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, WTO; moreover, some major regional organizations like the European Union, NATO, Mercosur *etc.* show more signs of 'globality' [Robertson 1983]).

The result of self-organization is the emergence, communication, co-evolution and, possibly, the regeneration of dynamic objects (subsystems), which are more complex than the elements of the environment from which they arise. Global political system and its components are certainly dynamic entities. A striking example of such self-organization is the creation of European Banking Union² which involves launching the single bank supervisory mechanism and a system of direct bank recapitalization, which is also able to ensure a partial or complete bankruptcy of troubled banks without the risk of 'domino effect' in the whole European financial system. The European Union, therefore, is a dynamic, self-organizing supranational system of economic, political, social and cultural relations.

The accumulation of all kinds of poles (political, economic, military, cultural *etc.*) in the same local geopolitical space (Ashley 1987) forms a 'center of power' of the multipolar world. The power always has many faces. There is a military, political, economic, moral and other kinds of power. Therefore, the center of power, as opposed to the 'pole', has a certain polysemantic 'effect'; it is a multi-dimensional concept that combines a set of local characteristics of existing poles of a multipolar world (Leonova 2012).

The '*center of power*' can be defined as an element of the global political order, a set of military, economic, political, social and cultural resources of the state, the presence of which characterizes its geo-strategic, geo-economic, geo-political, social and cultural potentials and provides the possibility to actively participate in the processes of global

² 'Following months of tortuous negotiations, finance ministers from the European Union's 27 countries agreed to hand the ECB the authority to directly supervise the Eurozone's biggest banks and intervene in smaller banks at the first sign of trouble' (13 December 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financialcrisis/9741553/EU-nations-agree-to-eurozone-banking-union.html>).

governance (Leonova 2012) and to implement the function the international distribution of power (Wilkinson and Hughes 2003: 1–2).

Thus, we consider that the transition to a new structure of the global political system is possible only through the acceleration of political globalization. The world economic crisis of 2008–2009 has become a bifurcation point of the current structure of the global world. Perhaps, it has served as a ‘jump’ from unipolar world to a more stable system of multipolarity. So the crisis can be viewed as a phase transition to the formation of a new ‘crystal lattice’ (architecture) of the global political order.

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