

Russia's idea of the multipolar world order: origins and main dimensions

[Elena Chebankova](#)

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In this article

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Abstract

Contemporary international relations are rife with the ideological struggle over the potential nature of the rapidly changing world order. Two distinct paradigmatic positions have surfaced. One champions economic, cultural, and political globalization conducted under the leadership of the Western world. The other advocates a more particularistic approach that fends for a balance of interests, multiplicity of politico-cultural forms and multiple centers of international influence. The latter doctrine, often referred to as the multipolar world theory, is the subject of this paper. The discussion argues that the idea of a multipolar world order has emerged as Russia's main ethical and ideological position advanced in the international arena. Its philosophical tenets buttress Russian society intellectually at home, providing the expedients to pursue the country's foreign policy goals abroad. The paper examines a substantial value package with roots in both Russian and Western philosophy that sustains the multipolar world order theory.

Keywords: [World order](#), [globalization](#), [multipolar world](#), [Russian foreign policy](#)

Introduction

Deliberations on the nature of the current world order are becoming increasingly important in global political discourse. Two competing interpretations dominate this debate. The first is seen in the idea of monopolarity, buttressed by the global advance of liberal democracy and capitalism. The second interpretation lies in the idea of multipolarity. It advocates multiple centers of political and economic influence. The existence of these multiple centers of influence is sustained by normative pluralism in the cultural and ideological spheres and a multiplicity of political forms in the institutional sphere. It is significant that both approaches have deep intellectual roots in Western philosophy and international relations theory. A close examination of Russian philosophical and political debates reveals that Russia has become an ardent defender of the multipolar world order, both in the global and domestic public spheres. This is due in part to pragmatic considerations and in

part to metaphysical deliberations of a historic and contemporary character that concur with some Western theories on the subject.

This paper examines the main dimensions of multipolar world order theory as developed in Russia and explores how Western debates on world order have influenced this line of thinking. It begins with a discussion of the chasm between the universal and particular as argued by Western philosophers, highlighting authors who advocate the particular. The paper then focuses on historic Russian debates of a similar nature and the deliberations over the significance of cultures and civilizations in world affairs. A final part examines Russia's contemporary reflections on the multipolar world order, its main theoretical and practical dimensions. Given that multipolarity is evoked to address the caveats of the unipolar world order, the paper concludes with a meta-theoretical analysis of problems posed by both architectures of international affairs.

Debates within the Western literature: in defense of particularity

The moral and philosophical core of the multipolar world order evolves from the Western philosophical debate over the universal and the particular.¹ Some thinkers might insist that the rift between the multipolar and monopolar world architectures boils down to economic factors. Kenneth Waltz argues that the idea of polarity stems from applying neoclassical economics to the realm of international relations. At the same time, there is a plethora of authors who could, without denying the importance of economic factors, claim the utmost significance of ideological variables. It could be argued that the debate over the primacy of either economic or ideological factors in the discussion on polarity in international relations is reminiscent of the discussion between rationalists and empiricists. This article will accentuate the ideological and philosophical line of reasoning and eschew the extensive examination of economic factors. This chasm stems from modernity's struggle to devise a universal political arrangement for human collectives via logical deduction. Most recently this belief was demonstrated in Francis Fukuyama's famous text *The End of History and the Last Man*, written after the end of Cold War in [1992](#) Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press. . This work stated that history had come to its logical conclusion because humanity was finally able to deduce the most harmonious world order based on the ideals of liberal democracy and progress. When the subsequent reality showed that the universal spread of these ideals had stagnated, some policy-makers attempted to encourage it politically and militarily. This led to turmoil in various areas, clearly demonstrating that the end of history still remained a distant goal and that alternative metaphysical deliberations were necessary.

Many Western writers and intellectuals urged a reconsideration of the use of political theory and the philosophy of ethics in the praxis of international relations. The argument was that a sense of egoism had begun to reign in contemporary interstate interaction at the expense of considerations for justice, ethics, and morality (Lebow [2003](#) Lebow, R. N.2003. *The Tragic Vision of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.10.1017/CBO9780511491504 , 16; Williams [2005](#) Williams, M. C.2005. *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.10.1017/CBO9780511491771 , 4–6). Such justice and ethics demand the recognition of various regional and state interests, as well as the recognition of difference in world political cultures (Kaplan [2002](#) Kaplan, R.2002. *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*. New York: Vintage Books. ; Kagan [2003](#) Kagan, R. 2003. *Of Paradise and Power*. London: Atlantic Books. ; Lieven and Hulsman [2007](#) Lieven, A., and J. Hulsman. 2007. *Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books. ; Kissinger [2014](#) Kissinger, H. 2014. *World Order. Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*. London: Penguin Books.).

Broadly speaking, we began to witness a deepening of the intellectual chasm between the ideologies of universalism and particularity. Universalism sees the possibility of summing up the experience of human beings and binding it into a totality of universally applicable laws. In contrast, the ideas of particularity see the development of a bounded political community that can only be judged by the standards of its internal culture and history. This chasm transfers the discussion of international *relations* theory to the discussion on international *political* theory (Beitz [1979](#) Beitz, Ch. 1979. *Political Theory in International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ; Linklater [1982](#) Linklater, A. 1982. *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*. London: Macmillan.10.1007/978-1-349-16692-3 ; Brown, Nardin, and Rengger [2002](#) Brown, Ch, T. Nardin, and N. Rengger, eds. 2002. *International Relations in Political Thought*. Cambridge: CUP. ; Williams [2007](#) Williams, M. C. 2007. *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Morgenthau in International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ; Shilliam [2009](#) Shilliam, R. 2009. *German Thought and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.10.1057/9780230234154). International relations theorists opened broad dialogs with writers on political philosophy, invoking the logic of Aristotle, Machiavelli, Burke, Weber, Kant, Hegel, Foucault, Strauss, Schmitt, Oakeshott, and others. This debate builds upon a never-ending series of “hidden dialogues” concerning fundamental meanings of truth and knowledge, freedom and responsibility, ethics and justice.

With the emergence of the Cambridge School of historiography (led by Quentin Skinner, John Dunn, and J.G.A. Pocock), a philosophical approach to knowledge has become increasingly contextual, thus somewhat exonerating the ideas of particularity. Skinner contends that knowledge is produced, not in the framework of a search for a universal philosophical position, but as an exercise conducted within a specific context (Skinner [2002](#) Skinner, Q. 2002. *Visions of Politics*. Vol.

1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. , 104–105; see also Tully [1988](#) Tully, J. 1988. “Pen is a Mighty Sword.” In *Meaning and Context. Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, edited by J. Tully, 7–29. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. , 5–8; Shilliam [2009](#) Shilliam, R. 2009. *German Thought and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.10.1057/9780230234154 , 10; Ward [2009](#) Ward, I. 2009. “Helping the Dead Speak: Leo Strauss, Quentin Skinner and the Arts of Interpretation in Political Thought.” *Polity* 41 (2): 235–255.10.1057/pol.2008.29.). Dependence on context is further reinforced in poststructuralism and postmodernism (Lyotard [1989](#) Lyotard, J. F. 1989. *The Post-modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester, NH: Manchester University Press.). Foucault is perhaps the most vocal example. He goes further than Skinner by “depriving authors of significant agency and claiming that the “author” *qua* subject disappears” and that “the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse” (Foucault [1991](#) Foucault, M. 1991. “Orders of Discourse.” In *Post-structuralist and Post-modernist Sociology*, edited by S. Lasch, 134–167. London: Routledge. , 148–149; see also Foucault [1991](#) Foucault, M. 1991. “Orders of Discourse.” In *Post-structuralist and Post-modernist Sociology*, edited by S. Lasch, 134–167. London: Routledge. , 144–146 and [2002](#) Foucault, M. 2002. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge. , 112–116; Shilliam [2009](#) Shilliam, R.2009. *German Thought and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.10.1057/9780230234154 , 11).

Practitioners of the Cambridge School and related theorists have sparked debates with liberal universalists (such as Leo Strauss) who often claim to uphold some ubiquitous principles of transcendent “morality.” The realist opponents of this liberal position claim that the idea of different moral foundations within different cultures, as well as an awareness of context dependence, represent a moral position in itself. It is a position of mutual recognition and respect, which prevents full-scale conflict. In this light, Isaiah Berlin’s observation that Machiavellian values are moral but not

Christian raises the possibility of several just but incompatible value systems existing side by side (Kaplan [2002](#) Kaplan, R. 2002. *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*. New York: Vintage Books. , 62; see also Gray [1995](#) Gray, J. 1995. *Berlin*. London: Fontana Press.). Max Weber, the “first modern thinker to systematically develop a realist approach to international relations” (Smith [1990](#) Smith, M. J.1990. *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press. , 15–16), proposed the study of the international environment with the assumption that one could not undertake value comparisons across different cultural systems and that each system had to be critically appreciated by its own standard (Barkawi [1998](#) Barkawi, T. 1998. “Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies.” *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 159–184.10.1017/S0260210598001594, , p. 163; Shilliam [2009](#) Shilliam, R. 2009. *German Thought and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.10.1057/9780230234154 , 128).

Hans Morgenthau, on whom Weber had formative intellectual impact (Barkawi [1998](#) Barkawi, T. 1998. “Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies.” *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 159–184.10.1017/S0260210598001594, ; Pichler [1998](#) Pichler, H. 1998. “The Godfathers of ‘Truth’: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics.” *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 185–200.10.1017/S0260210598001855, ; Turner and Mazur [2009](#) Turner, S., and G. Mazur. 2009. “Morgenthau as a Weberian Methodologist.” *European Journal of International Relations* 15 (3): 477–504.10.1177/1354066109338242,), sustains this line. Morgenthau ([1948a](#) Morgenthau, H. 1948a. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopp. , 267–269) argues that, despite the hopes of the liberals, there is no agreement on ethics, but only ethical frameworks that arise from specific contexts defined by nationalist experiences. His criticism of the universalist claims of the most prominent world political players of the twentieth century points to his pessimism over the very possibility of drafting a single international order based on uniform morality. It is also important that many Western writers consider the universalist approach immoral in the sense that it aims to deceive the world using its favored ethical project as a cover to pursue hidden interests. E.H. Carr ([2001](#) Carr, E. H. 2001. *The Twenty Years Crisis*, edited by Michael Cox. London: Palgrave. , 77), for example, criticized “utopian moralizing as a strategy employed by the “haves” against the “have-nots”.” Just like Morgenthau, Carr connects this with the introduction of politics, in which the two poles with competing universalist claims advanced their positions in the Third World, meanwhile expanding their political, economic, and trading interests in those areas.

As a final point, intellectual travails of this strand to devise a more stable world order rest on the idea that societies should develop freely according to their own histories and distinct moral and political paths. Some societies may be liberal democratic, others monarchic, republican, or autocratic. In some ways, the defense of the particular gives rise to the idea of large civilizational coalitions that would unite states with similar cultural, historical, and political patterns, as Schmitt and Huntington envisaged independently from each other. At the same time, this is not to be confused with the idea of cultural relativism, in that relativism draws a mistaken conclusion about the nature of the relationship between differing societies by expecting members of other societies to accept practices that seem vulgar or unacceptable to them (Williams [1972](#) Williams, B. 1972. *Morality. An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.).

Two major differences from relativism can therefore be inferred. First, disagreement with the moral principles of other societies is the right of any society. Second, there is a fundamental layer of the

rules of morality that, however thin and generic it may be, is applicable to the human community as a whole. From this point of view, accepting violent atrocities, gross violations of human bodily integrity, and other fundamental forms of security, could be considered as a vulgar deprivation of other societies' very idea of being human.

These Western debates had a critical influence on the development of the Russian contemporary school of international relations that took a decisive turn toward the particular and the contextual in the vein of the classical realism of E. H. Carr, Henry Kissinger, Hans Morgenthau, and others (Bordachev, Zinovieva, and Likhacheva [2015](#) Bordachev, T., E. Zinovieva, and A. Likhacheva. 2015. *Teoriya mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii v XXI Veke* [Theory of International Relations in the Twenty-First Century]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya. ; Tsygankov [2016](#) Tsygankov, A. 2016. "Crafting the State-Civilisation. Vladimir Putin's Turn to Distinct Values." *Problems of Post-Communism* 68 (2): 1–13.). Yet, prior to dealing with Russia's contemporary ideas, allow me to discuss Russian historic philosophy, which made its own significant contribution to the defense of cultural-political particularity.

Russian historic parallels

The traditional leaning of Russian philosophy was toward particularity, which resulted in the idea of cultural alliances and civilizations as the main units of international political conduct. It was originally envisaged that societies could organize into distinct civilizational cultural coalitions and such civilizational coalitions could be engaged in a constructive intercivilizational dialog and exchange. Apart from Western deliberations on this subject, nineteenth-century Russian theorizations could be viewed as the birth of those ideas. Russia's intellectual life in that age was split into two competing groups: Westernizers (P. Chaadaev, T. N. Granovskii, V. G. Belinskii, A. I. Herzen, N. P. Ogarev, K. D. Kavelin) and Slavophiles (I. Kirievskii, A. Khomyakov, the Aksakov brothers, Yu. Samarin, N. Danilevskii, K. Leont'ev). Westernizers admired and supported the European developmental path. Slavophiles revered a distinctly Russian way of life and developed a thesis on Russia as an independent civilization distinct from Europe in the religious, cultural, and socio-political sense (Walicki [1979](#) Walicki, A. 1979. *A History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. , 93–99).² The philosophy of history of Aleksei Khomyakov, the idea of organic cultures of Apollon Grigoriev, historiosophy of Nikolay Danilevskii, and anthropology of Nikolai Strakhov have been of particular importance. At the same time, a leaning toward cultural particularity at the expense of universalism was a distinct tradition of nineteenth-century Russian philosophy across both spectra.

While the Slavophile stance on the multiplicity of politico-cultural forms is self-evident, Westernizers did not refrain from a criticism of universality. Many such thinkers, including Peter Chaadaev (Maslin [2008](#) Maslin, M. 2008. *Istoriya Russkoi filosofii [A History of Russian Philosophy]*. Moscow: KDU. , 129–130; see his letters to A.I. Turgenev written in the mid-1930s in Chaadaev [1991](#) Chaadaev, P. 1991. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pisma* [Complete Collected Works and Selected Letters]. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauka.) and revolutionary socialists such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii, did entertain, at some points in their lives, the idea of Russia's civilizational distinctness – a circumstance that divorces them from Russia's contemporary radical liberals and proponents of global universalism.³ Peter Chaadaev, while demarcating the division in Russian political thought by arguing that Russia has no future without joining the rest of European civilization, still argued at some periods of his life that Russia's distinctness could advance its development. In his later letter to Turgenev, Chaadaev ([1991](#) Chaadaev, P. 1991. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pisma* [Complete Collected Works and Selected Letters]. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauka. , 98) wrote that Russia has a different civilizational origin from Europe: "We do not need to

chase someone else. We need to determine who we really are. We need to leave the lies behind and reassert ourselves in truth. Then we can move forward, and move faster than others because we arrived here later than them but we have all their knowledge and experience reflected in centuries of labor that preceded us.” Chernyshevskii and other revolutionaries exploited those thoughts of Chaadaev to argue that Russia’s civilizational distinctness could help it to organize a socialist revolution and set Russia on the non-capitalist way of development

(Maslin [2008](#) Maslin, M. 2008. *Istoriya Russkoi filosofii [A History of Russian Philosophy]*. Moscow: KDU. , 130). The Decembrists, ideological precursors of the Westernizers, believed in a similar vein in the German idealistic approach, that while there can be a universal standard of freedom developed by external civilizations, it is down to the national spirit, love of the fatherland, and patriotism to set Russia on the path of enlightenment. As Christoff ([1970](#) Christoff, P. 1970. *The Third Heart. Some Intellectual-ideological Currents and Cross-currents in Russia 1800–1830*. Paris: Mouton. , 118) writes,

beneath the richness and complexity of ideas and ideological currents and crosscurrents in Russia during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, there throbbed a third and most vital heart. It was the focus on the Russian individual and national self-consciousness, and in it and through it the Decembrists sought a solution to Russia’s major problem, that of freedom.

These thinkers searched the Russian spirit in the process of enlightenment, reproducing the Hegelian idea of *Volksggeist* (Walicki [1979](#) Walicki, A. 1979. *A History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. , 93;

Copleston [1986](#) Copleston, F. S. J. 1986. *Philosophy in Russia. From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. , 23–24;

Miscevic [2008](#) Miscevic, N. 2008. “Philosophy and Nationalism.” In *Nations and Nationalism: A Global Historical Overview. 1770–1880. Vol. I*, edited by H. Gantram and D. Kaplan, 85–98. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.). Venevitinov (cited in Christoff [1970](#) Christoff, P. 1970. *The Third Heart. Some Intellectual-ideological Currents and Cross-currents in Russia 1800–1830*. Paris: Mouton. , 99) writes:

among all independent nations, enlightenment developed from, so to say, a patriotic principle. Once their products had achieved even a certain degree of perfection and as a consequence had entered into the composition of the universal achievements of the mind, they did not lose their distinctive character.

Rajevskii, Kyukhel’beker, and Odoevskii all advocated the development of Russian culture and philosophy that would not be a blind copy of French, German, or English counterparts but would “inscribe the Russian spirit in the history of the human mind” (Christoff [1970](#) Christoff, P. 1970. *The Third Heart. Some Intellectual-ideological Currents and Cross-currents in Russia 1800–1830*. Paris: Mouton. , 108).

Yet, in their advocacy of cultural particularity, neither Slavophiles nor Westerners deployed the terms of political geography. They pondered the epistemology of the Russian space focusing solely on the specificity of its religious, cultural, and socio-political forms. They did not pay attention to the spatial dimension of world cultures and its implications for political relationships between states. Russian *pochvenniki*, who are considered more recent and more mature Slavophiles, attempted to grasp these concepts via a civilizational analysis of the world’s geographic areas – ideas that sustain Russia’s subsequent theorizations on the multipolar world. Nikolai Strakhov, Nikolai Danilevskii, and Konstantin Leont’ev were pioneers in this field (Kline [1968](#) Kline, G. L. 1968. *Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ; Kelly [1999](#) Kelly, A. 1999. *Views*

from the Other Shore. Essays on Herzen, Chekhov, and Bakhtin. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.).⁴ It is interesting that Strakhov adopted the civilizational approach to world politics before Danilevskii and independently from him. An editor of the journal *Zarya*, he published Danilevskii's main work *Russia and Europe* in 1869 and had been publicly defending it from liberal critics, in particular Vladimir Solov'ev.

Strakhov and Danilevskii examined civilizational geography through the idea of cultural-historic forms. Danilevskii believed that civilizations, like humans, undergo various stages of evolution as evident in inception, development, maturation, and decay. He distinguished 10 existing cultural-historic forms or civilizations: Egyptian, Chinese, Assyrian-Babylonian, Indian, Iranian, Jewish, Greek, Roman, neo-Semitic or Arabian, and Germanic-Roman or European. The eleventh type was Russian-Slavic, which Danilevsky believed was in the process of inception during the nineteenth century (Kline [1985](#) Kline, G. L. 1985. "Russian Religious Thought." In *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, edited by N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry and Steven T. Katz, 179–230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [10.1017/CBO9780511520235](#) , 194; Christoff [1991](#) Christoff, P. K. 1991. *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Russian Slavophilism*. Yu. F. Samarina. Oxford: Westview Press. , 406–418). This theory is similar to Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, although it allows for some additional conclusions with consequence for multipolar world order development and contemporary ideas of multiculturalism.

First, Danilevskii demands to examine the distinctness and originality of existing world cultures. It is important that the comparison of cultures is conducted on the basis of a culture's structures and developmental laws, and not on "external" achievements. This idea is close to a contemporary "politics of recognition" advanced in the twentieth century by the multicultural theories of Charles Taylor and to the spectrum of ideas of the Cambridge School discussed earlier. Second, Danilevskii insists that people's traditions and customs buttress the uniqueness of all cultures and must be cherished. Third, he warned against the danger of mimicking and imitating other cultures. This again reminds us of the Taylorian ([1994](#) Taylor, C. 1994. "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism*, edited by Amy Gutman, 25–75. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. , 31) politics of recognition, in which

a *volk* should be true to itself, that is to its own culture. Germans should not try to be derivative and (inevitably) second-rate Frenchmen... The Slavic peoples had to find their own path. And European colonialism ought to be rolled back to give the peoples of what we now call the Third World their chance to be themselves unimpeded.

Finally, Danilevskii refuted a claim that one culture (in particular the European one) has an absolute universal value (Belov [2010](#) Belov, A. V. 2010. "Foreword." In *Bor'ba s Zapadom* [Struggle with the West], edited by N. Strakhov, 5–36. Moscow: Institut Russkoi Tsivilizatsii. , pp. 12–3) – a thesis endorsed by many contemporary critics of Euro-centrism (Hobson, Eisenstadt, Gray, Williams, Parekh) and the realist international relations thinkers discussed earlier. In this light, many Russian intellectuals (Mezhuev [2012](#) Mezhuev, B. V. 2012. Comments at the forum on "Danilevskii: zabytyi genii Russkoi filosofii." [Danilevskii: Forgotten Genius of Russian Philosophy.] moderated by V. T. Tretyakov. *Chto Delat?*, No. 339, December 9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYAE9jlmopk> ; Tretyakov [2012](#) Tretyakov, V. T. 2012. Comments at the forum on "Danilevskii: zabytyi genii Russkoi filosofii [Danilevskii: Forgotten Genius of Russian Philosophy]." moderated by V. T. Tretyakov. *Chto Delat?*, No. 339, December 9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYAE9jlmopk> ; Bordachev, Zinovieva, and Likhacheva [2015](#) Bordachev, T., E. Zinovieva, and A. Likhacheva. 2015. *Teoriya mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii v XXI Veke* [Theory of International Relations in the Twenty-First Century]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya.) claim that Danilevskii's ideas could be invoked

in defense of the equality of the world's political cultures, their peaceful co-existence, mutual questioning, and recognition.

It is important that some Western historians of ideas (Walicki [1979](#) Walicki, A. 1979. *A History of Russian Thought. From the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. , 114; Kline [1985](#) Kline, G. L. 1985. "Russian Religious Thought." In *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, edited by N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry and Steven T. Katz, 179–230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.10.1017/CBO9780511520235 ; Copleston [1986](#)Copleston, F. S. J. 1986. *Philosophy in Russia. From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. ; Christoff [1991](#)Christoff, P. K. 1991. *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Russian Slavophilism. Yu. F. Samarin*. Oxford: Westview Press. , 406–418; Kelly [1999](#) Kelly, A.1999. *Views from the Other Shore. Essays on Herzen, Chekhov, and Bakhtin*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. , 154–155; Duncan [2000](#) Duncan, P. 2000. *Russian Messianism*. New York: Routledge.10.4324/9780203442357 , 30–47; Riasanovsky [2005](#) Riasanovsky, N. 2005. *Russian Identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195156508.001.0001) accuse Danilevskii, Strakhov, and Leont'ev of nationalism and pan-Slavism. We may, however, argue that Danilevskii did not believe that the eschatological task of the Slavs was in finding the right solution for all of humankind. In turn, many Western positivist philosophers and policy-makers of the nineteenth century shared this ambition within the framework of European colonialism (Kymlicka [1995](#) Kymlicka, W. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 52–53). Danilevskii believed that the Slavs must organize their own civilization in such a manner that it would be capable of developing alongside other historic-cultural forms. While Russians were indeed to be the leaders of their civilization (a thesis that rightly allowed his critics to accuse him of nationalism), this idea still laid the foundation for a multipolar vision of the world, in which various countries of a similar cultural and historic path could merge into larger civilizations and develop these civilizations into the main subjects of history.

Danilevskii's ideas were the first to touch upon geographic issues and the legitimacy of the use of power outside civilizational borders. Departing from Danilevskii's theorizations, Strakhov considered the Polish revolt of 1863 as entirely legitimate. Poland, in Strakhov's view, belonged to the West European civilization and it was unjust to hold it within the bounds of the Russian civilization (Belov [2010](#) Belov, A. V. 2010. "Foreword." In *Bor'ba s Zapadom* [Struggle with the West], edited by N. Strakhov, 5–36. Moscow: Institut Russkoi Tsivilizatsii.). Hence, he did not believe in the moral virtue of crushing the uprising. This raises a more significant question of the proportionality of state power and its moral significance – an issue discussed by Morgenthau, Weber, and Schmitt that remains topical in many modern conflicts where success in military warfare is rarely matched by political, moral, and discursive achievements.

This thought gave rise to early Eurasianism, which advocates cultural particularity from a territorial and geographical point of view. As a distinct line of thought, Eurasianism also had a general philosophical application, for it exerted intellectual influence on structuralism through the work of Roman Jakobson (1896–1982). The founding fathers of Eurasianism were linguist and philosopher Prince N. M. Trubetskoi (1890–1938) and economist and geographer Peter Savitskii (1895–1965).⁵⁵ Eminent historian G. V. Vernadskii (1877–1973), jurist and philosopher N. Alekseev (1879–1964), historian and theologian V. N. Il'in (1891–1974), and theologian G. Florovskii (1893–1979) have all left a mark in the Eurasian philosophy. Prince Trubetskoi granted cultural diversity an almost divine nature. He deployed the tale of the Tower of Babel to argue that the Bible preferred a variety of languages to just one. Trubetskoi viewed cultural and linguistic homogeneity as a sin that led to spiritual emptiness and the arrogant project of erecting the Tower. The ensuing "confounding of

languages,” which was essentially an imposition of cultural diversity, was not a curse but a benign solution given to humanity in order to prevent it from the sin of cultural homogeneity (Ryazanovsky [1993](#) Ryazanovsky, N. V. 1993. “Prince N.S. Trubetskoi’s *Europe and Mankind*.” In *Collected Writings*, edited by N. V. Ryazanovsky, 207–220. Los Angeles: Charles Schlacks. ; Miscevic [2008](#) Miscevic, N. 2008. “Philosophy and Nationalism.” In *Nations and Nationalism: A Global Historical Overview. 1770–1880. Vol. I*, edited by H. Gantram and D. Kaplan, 85–98. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO. , 94).

Eurasianism concurs with the claims of the Cambridge School that knowledge, beauty, and ideas are contingent on the socio-historic and cultural context. Based on this, Eurasianism concludes that the world must be viewed as a multiplicity of civilizations, each existing within its own time, deploying its own taxonomy of goods and traditions, and relying on its own incommensurable value systems. Those civilizations survive diachronically being scattered throughout space and undergoing differing stages of inception, flourishing, and decline.⁶⁶ This parallels the idea of diachronic existence developed by Claude Levi-Strauss in his anthropological studies. From this follows Eurasianism’s criticism of the modernist idea of progress, in which each stage of human development is superior to its predecessor. Its proponents claim that such an understanding represents a socially constructed myth, which serves the purpose of judging a culture’s achievements by an external measure. This myth states that the social being is a function of time and that each stage of human development internalizes the best from its predecessor and creates new and superior forms of being.

Contemporary Russian debates on a multipolar world

Let us now examine the conclusions drawn from the lessons of Western and Russian thought by contemporary Russian intellectuals who advocate a multipolar world order. The emphasis on cultural distinctiveness and civilizational dialog among world communities leads to further development of the notion of *civilization* as the subject of international politics. This is perhaps the cardinal difference between multipolar world order theory and its rational, critical, and postmodern counterparts. Western theories of international relations propose the state (realism and liberalism) or international discourse (postmodernism and critical theory) or social class (Marxism) as the main subject of international relations. Multipolar world ideologists (such as Bordachev, Dugin, Fursov, Delyagin, Leont’ev, Kurginyan, and Kholmogorov) shift away from this understanding and consider civilizations as a new subject of international politics.

At this point it is important to distinguish between theoretical and practical dimensions of multipolarity. The chasm stems from the impact that the idea of civilization as a subject of international politics has on the idea of state sovereignty. At the theoretical level, the multipolar world approach tends toward a diminished state sovereignty within the framework of cultural–civilizational alliances. Sovereignty, as it presently stands, is a category that must be transcended in the future in favor of sovereignty of the alliance – a dynamic that can be witnessed in the European Union. By the same token, the multipolar world arrangement could expect some form of diminished sovereignty from member states of other civilizational alliances but endorse full sovereignty of the alliance as a cultural and political union and a member of the world political process. However, at the practical level, recasting the idea of state sovereignty seems premature. From this point of view, practical multipolarity considers state sovereignty as a favorable transitional status and an expedient instrument for preserving cultural distinctness and self-standing in the rapidly globalizing world. Let us examine more closely the reasoning of both sides of the multipolar world theory spectrum.

Sovereignty and civilization: theoretical dimensions

At the theoretical level, taking civilizations as the main actors of international relations would necessitate the precise definition of a civilization in terms of its size, borders, and structures of internal governance. To define a civilization in the most flexible terms, Dugin ([2012](#) Dugin, A. 2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*. London: Arktos.) proposes to deploy the Platonic notion of *politeia* – which represents a political unit of unidentified size (a city, a country, or a union of countries). A civilization can then be viewed as an imprecise form that unites a number of countries on the basis of their culture, history, philosophy, traditions, and religious consciousness. From this it follows that civilization, as a cultural political union, would require the process of regional integration and redefinition of sovereignty as a result.

From a philosophical point of view, moving away from the idea of state sovereignty to the notion of *civilizational sovereignty* partly rests on propositions of the English School of international relations. This is because the English School questions the nature of state sovereignty in the contemporary world and implies that the division of states into varying categories is based on their ability to influence the international relations discourse. At the international level, the English School views sovereignty as the ability to pursue an independent course of action within the given social environment of a state's interaction (Manning [1975](#) Manning, C. A. W. 1975. *The Nature of International Society*. London: Macmillan.10.1007/978-1-349-02704-0 ; James [1986](#) James, A. M. 1986. *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society*. London: Allen & Unwin.). English School advocates claim that order among sovereign states is sustained via international institutions that involve established social practices of interaction and a variety of nonstate and nonterritorial actors (Manning [1975](#) Manning, C. A. W. 1975. *The Nature of International Society*. London: Macmillan.10.1007/978-1-349-02704-0 , 177, 201; James [1986](#) James, A. M. 1986. *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society*. London: Allen & Unwin. ; Bull [2000](#) Bull, H. 2000. "Justice in International Relations." In *Hedley Bull on International Society*, edited by Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell, 206–245. London: Macmillan. , 242). This process is closely intertwined with the thickening of international rules in the economic sphere and the de facto division of countries into rich industrialized states that determine the parameters of interactive practice and poorer peripheral areas that have to follow the established rules (Suganami [2010](#) Suganami, H. 2010. "The English School in a Nutshell." *Ritsumeikan Review of International Studies* 9 (1): 15–28.).

Multipolar world ideology adopts this description of the contemporary world, yet it deploys it in defense of regional civilizational integration and in the advocacy of the *civilizational sovereignty* idea. It concurs with the suspicions of Carr, Morgenthau, and other scholars such as Desch, Owen, Oren, and Williams who posit that, since the world order is buttressed by the extant system of socio-political interaction among states, this order must benefit the powerful within the system. Here, Russian intellectuals follow the ideas of Western thinkers in that the social narrative, as Foucault claims, is intimately linked to power. Hence, those countries that are able to influence the interactive discourse within the society of supposedly sovereign states would have a privileged position in drafting the rules of conduct for the others. This essentially violates the principles of the Westphalian system, in which all sovereign states are considered equal. This arrangement also compels weaker states to function within the system, the rules of which they did not actively draft. Multipolar world theorizations deploy these ideas advocating civilizational integration of states based on the states' cultural and political similarities. Such integration, this theory claims, would help weaker states obtain a more prolific voice in the process of drafting a world order discourse. It could also explain the weakening of state sovereignty and its replacement with civilizational (or alliance) sovereignty.

In this light, the “pluralism of civilizations” becomes a cardinal value of the theoretical strand of the multipolar world model. Each civilization, it is argued, must have the right to its own value system and its particular way of development. International anarchy can therefore be considered as the anarchy of civilizations as opposed to the anarchy of states, which, according to the English School of international relations, is becoming increasingly obsolete. Once we accept the civilizational interpretation of international reality, the Euro-Atlantic civilization loses its claim to universality and obtains a regional character. Other civilizations may adopt what they see fit from the Euro-Atlantic experience and cast aside what they deem harmful to their existence. This thought echoes many of the arguments of the Slavophiles and *pochvenniki*. In particular, it continues Danilevskii’s theorizations concerning the selective transfer of knowledge in the course of intercivilizational evolution. These theorizations claim that civilizations could selectively borrow elements from other civilizations that they deem useful and discard those they consider inapplicable. Such ideas would ensure that civilizations remain in a dialog, but this will be a critical and mutually interrogating dialog. The relationship between civilizations would therefore rest on the conception of normative pluralism and multiplicity of cultural and political forms (Sakwa [2015](#) Sakwa, R. 2015. “The Death of Europe? Continental Fates after Ukraine.” *International Affairs* 91 (3): 553–579. [10.1111/inta.2015.91.issue-3](#), , 557–558).

Sovereignty and civilization: practical dimensions

From a practical point of view, redrafting of the idea of sovereignty would invariably entail a significant recasting of the extant world order. Arguably, such a restructuring could develop along two different trajectories. The first trajectory concurs with the deliberations on states becoming bound by the practice and narrative of their mutual interaction, which diminishes the international sovereignty of states. The second encompasses the very theoretical aspects of the multipolar world thinking that we have just examined above. Here, post-sovereign states unite to form strong cultural alliances that create a cross-civilizational narrative of interaction. Both cases are problematic.

In the first case, many Russian intellectuals, much in the vein of their Western colleagues, lament the fact that this path would compel states to comply with global, and thereby America-centered, standards of political behavior both on the domestic and international scenes. Moving toward such a system, they argue, would invariably lead to a homogenization of political norms and forms across the globe – a process they could not agree with when armed with the Western and Russian historical theorizations examined above. The second scenario is also difficult, for the processes of regional cultural integration remain nascent, perhaps with the exception of the European Union. While similar processes are taking place in Latin America, the former Soviet space, the Islamic world, and in Africa, they cannot be compared in depth and speed with their European counterpart.

Given that the second scenario is difficult to implement in practice, proponents of practical multipolarity opt for a more conservative approach. At the practical level, multipolarity aims to sustain the extant world order based on the Westphalian and Yalta-Potsdam systems, with some minor yet consequential modifications. It adopts a rather conservative outlook, seeing this arrangement as a favorable transitional condition en route to the fully fledged practice of civilizational (or theoretical) multi-polarity consisting of the strong regional alliances advocated at the theoretical-ideological level.

The extant order is based on five main principles: (1) the Westphalian notion of state sovereignty; (2) the formal assumption that the United Nations is the most important international institution; (3) the composition of the United Nations Security Council consists of the victors of World War II; (4) the existence of a strategic nuclear parity between the United States and Russia; and (5) the presence of

the Bretton-Woods financial system.⁷ The fall of the USSR and the dismantling of the “socialist bloc” added an additional layer to this system, creating the supposition that Russia’s international standing has been significantly weakened relative to the 1970s. At the same time, this additional post-1991 layer can be considered cursory, inasmuch as the essence of the five-tier construct remained unchanged. Russia’s geopolitical retreat in 1991 has not been institutionalized. No comprehensive document was signed that states that Russia was the losing party in the cold war and therefore must, due to this situation, assume certain obligations that could restrict its sovereignty or freedom of action in the international arena. Russia retained its seat on the UN Security Council, preserved its nuclear potential, and inherited the remaining arsenals from the other former Soviet republics. Despite its visible economic downturn during the 1990s, Russia remained the only country that possesses the scientific-technological and research potential to compete with the United States in the military sphere and in the exploration of space (Leont’ev [2015](#) Leont’ev, M. 2015. “V nachale.” [In the Beginning.] *RadioVesti.ru*, August

10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku6FNlybN78>). With the exception of the fifth principle and minor modification of others, practical multipolarity desires for this order to be stable and gradually evolving toward a more inclusive multipolar arrangement.

First, Russian intellectuals uphold the classical idea of state sovereignty as a tactical means of preserving the cultural and political distinctiveness of various states in the world and combating the uniformity of the global culture narrated in the West, without the full participation of the “rest” of the world. Sovereignties must be sustained as an expedient instrument that could allow the idea of normative pluralism to capture the dominant discourse. Simultaneously, countries should unite into cultural, political, and civilizational unions to advance the idea of civilizational diversity. These two processes – sustaining sovereignty and forming cultural unions – could advance in parallel, mutually reinforcing each other. Such an approach is evident in the ideology of the Eurasian Union that proposes integration of the post-Soviet space based on the idea of a plurality of cultural and political forms within the Union, thus accepting the idea of domestic sovereignty in Schmittian terms. This offers integration on the basis of a common history and common understanding of political processes taking place in the contemporary world.

Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov argues that state sovereignty and the ability to sustain the multiplicity of cultural and political forms remains the cornerstone of international security and lasting peace. In a speech to the Russian State Duma in October 2015, Lavrov insisted on creating a more just, polycentric, and stable world order (Lavrov [2015](#) Lavrov, S. 2015. “Vystuplenie Lavrova v Gosdume [Lavrov Address to the State Duma].” *RT*, October 14. <https://russian.rt.com/article/123511>). He claimed that imposing a particular political and developmental model on various countries would lead to increased chaos, anarchy, and would be met with resistance from many states. Lavrov pointed out that Russia does not expect other states to sacrifice their prosperity for the sake of particular ideas or political doctrines and that no country must be compelled to adopt any particular developmental model considered optimal by other states. These claims may seem odd, particularly to Western observers, in light of events in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, in which Russia influenced political events. Yet, as Richard Sakwa ([2016](#) Sakwa, R. 2016. “Barkhatnye perchatki zapadnoi gegemonii [The Velvet Gloves of Western Hegemony].” *Valdai Club*, October 12. <http://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/barkhatnye-perchatki-zapadnoy-gegemonii/>) notes, most official statements by Russia on such occasions demonstrate little regarding normative and ethical notions, but reveal Russia’s disdain and ideological resistance to “Western mentorship” in all spheres of socio-economic and political life. Maria Zakharova, the spokesperson of Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, often adhered to this line of reasoning when faced with criticism of Russia’s international behavior.⁸ Zakharova argues that,

in the case of Ukraine, Western powers have been consistently influencing domestic politics since the first Orange Revolution of 2004, which is indeed well documented by a large number of Western scholars from a variety of perspectives (see Åslund and MacFaul [2006](#) Åslund, A., and M. MacFaul. 2006. *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. ; Lane [2008](#) Lane, D. 2008. "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10 (4): 525–549.10.1111/j.1467-856x.2008.00343.x,). Zakharova also lamented the situation in which high-ranking Western leaders frequented the 2014 *Maidan* rallies and publicly supported the demise of President Victor Yanukovich's government. Furthermore, Western powers did not object to the ousting of Yanukovich the day after the German and Polish foreign ministers, as well as a high-ranking French Foreign Ministry official, mediated and witnessed the signing with the Yanukovich administration of a roadmap toward settling the political crisis. Russian officials argued that, against the backdrop of open Western support for political forces beneficial to Western interests, Russia would support its own interests and enable the Russian population of Ukraine to pursue its civilizational choice. Hence, we are witnessing a clash of geopolitical interests between Russia and the West that is linked to the struggle over civilizational spheres of influence.

Following from this, the role of the UN also seems central for Russia in the framework of the multipolar world order. Putin in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2015 claimed that Russia understands that "the world is changing and that the United Nations must be consistent with this natural transformation" (Putin [2015](#) Putin, V. 2015. "Vladimir Putin prinyal uchastie v plenarnom zasedanii yubileinoi, 70-i sessi General'noi Assamblei OON v N'yu-Iorke." [Vladimir Putin Took Part in the Plenary Meeting of the 70th Anniversary Session of the UN General Assembly in New York.] September 28. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>). At the same time, Russia considers all

attempts to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the UN as extremely dangerous. This can lead to a collapse of the entire architecture of international relations. Then indeed we would be left with no other rules than the rule of force. We would get to a world dominated by selfishness rather than collective work. A world increasingly characterized by dictate rather than equality, genuine democracy, and freedom. A world where truly independent states would be replaced by an ever growing number of de facto protectorates and externally controlled territories.

Being adamant about sustaining the idea of sovereignty, the particularity of political-cultural development, and the central role of the UN as a guarantor of the international legal framework, Russia is aiming to change the fifth principle concerning the Bretton-Woods financial system. This could be done through trading using regional currencies and the introduction of regional financial institutions as alternatives to the World Bank, IMF, and US credit rating agencies. Such a change would challenge the dominance of the US dollar as the world's reserve currency and as a result question the political power of the United States in the world arena. It could also ensure a redistribution of control over financial resources across the globe, thereby giving more tangible sovereignty to other states and centers of influence.

This idea also could run counter to the wishes and intentions of transnational corporations that would prefer to have uniform and coherent rules of operation and potentially a currency with which they can function, as well as a center of influence that can regulate global rules of the trading game. From this point of view, Russia's plan seems unsustainable, just as the idea of the Holy Alliance between Russia, Austria, and the Kingdom of Prussia that concluded on 26 September 1815 with the intention of restraining secularism and republicanism in Europe in the wake of the French Revolution

and devastating wars, which went against the grain of growing capitalism and enterprise prominent in the nineteenth century.

The significance of the multipolar world ideology

The multipolar world concepts and propositions remain significant in that they have arisen in response to a number of processes taking place in the contemporary world. Three main factors invoked the development of multipolar world theory. First, the unipolar order began to experience significant difficulties in the course of its entrenchment. Recent turmoil in the Middle East, the refugee crisis, and political challenges in other parts of the globe have demonstrated that a single force cannot manage world affairs successfully and that the participation of other players is necessary to ensure lasting peace and stability.

Second, the unipolar world order has not been framed institutionally, which results in further predicaments in terms of legitimacy. Indeed, during the past quarter of a century the United States created a series of precedents – such as “humanitarian intervention,” “regime change,” and “disarmament” – that could consolidate its global leadership and frame the major dimensions of the unipolar world.

The doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), a political commitment endorsed by all UN members states at the 2005 World Summit, has been problematized by many Russian international relations scholars. These scholars argue that the emergence of R2P is a response to the unclear nature of “humanitarian interventions” and welcomed the doctrine as a step toward clarification of the circumstances under which interventions could occur and toward the enforcement of the role of the United Nations Security Council in the process.⁹ Professor V. Kotlyar of the Diplomatic Academy of Russia’s Foreign Ministry was particularly vocal on this point during a roundtable discussion March 2012 (Kruglyi stol [2012](#) Kruglyi stol. 2012. “Kruglyi stol. Otvetstvennost’ za zashchiti [Roundtable. Responsibility to Protect].” April 12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEudC0Ifpt8>). Yet, as Maria Zakharova insists, all such steps represented a series of practices in differing political conflicts that have yet to be converted into positive and comprehensive international law, consolidating unipolarity.¹⁰ Zakharova’s comments were made during the television broadcast *Spetsial’nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>).

The third challenge stems from regional alliances that are emerging in various parts of the globe. The formation of BRICS, as well as the integration processes within Latin America, the post-Soviet space, and Asia and Africa, all could challenge the global domination of the West. This being said, multipolarity has not become a permanent feature of international relations either. The world is now locked in a stalemate of sorts, a rather unstable balance between multipolarity and unipolarity.

For Russia, advancing the ideas of multipolarity has become expedient for its desire to remain a significant voice in the international arena. Dugin ([2012](#) Dugin, A. 2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*. London: Arktos.) argues that contemporary Russia alone is incapable of defending its national interests. Apart from notions of multipolarity, Russia does not have a coherent ideology that could be exported as, for example, Marxism and Communism had been during the Soviet period. Neither does it have adequate military means to sustain such an ideological export. Hence, the return of a bipolar world, in which Russia is able to act as a counterweight to the West, is no longer a possibility. That defenders of the unipolar world have a coherent ideology, military complex, and economic means, to advance their political project exacerbates Russia’s position.

Indeed, human rights, globalism, consumerism, cosmopolitanism, and capitalism sustained by the neoliberal project are easily exportable and appealing to many of its supporters across the world.

In this light, forming alliances with those who are critical of the unipolar world order is a powerful instrument that remains for Russia in its claims to assert global influence. Hence, Russia's elite considers this civilizational ideology a distinct intellectual product, which it can offer to the world (Tsygankov [2016](#) Tsygankov, A. 2016. "Crafting the State-Civilisation. Vladimir Putin's Turn to Distinct Values." *Problems of Post-Communism* 68 (2): 1–13.). Proponents of this ideology claim that the multipolar world architecture can only have a dialogical character, as opposed to the unipolar world that is mostly based on the normative monolog of liberal democratic states. The task of the multipolar world ideology, they argue, is to reconstruct the extant discourse on international affairs in a way that could incorporate the ideas of particularity, cultural-historic context, multiplicity of political forms, and unimpeded independent development.

These ideas have become a leitmotif of Russian intellectuals and foreign policy ideologues of the late Putin period. Russia's insistence on multipolarity is often framed as a proposal to create a new "world order" that could be fairer to all and devoid of various forms of "crusading universalisms" (Williams [2001](#) Williams, M. 2001. "The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities." *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553. [10.1177/1354066101007004006](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066101007004006),). In the wake of the Iraq war, this debate took on an increasingly metaphysical character. Russian intellectuals often deploy Western philosophical deliberations to claim particularity of knowledge and context, the link between knowledge and power, and the critique of proportionality of results and intentions. Critical of the very possibility of universalism, a number of Russian intellectuals began to argue that, if the framework of unipolarity is to be seen through, the United States and its allies must show the world a new metaphysical project that would ultimately serve a universal public good. This project, in their view, should be mindful of the Weberian (and Morgenthau's) dilemma between the ethics of ultimate ends and the ethics of responsibility discussed earlier.

Maria Zakharova claimed in September 2015 that:

we criticize Western ideology not because we disagree with it. Moreover, we would have accepted it, if we saw any tangible results of Western actions in the Middle East during the past ten years. What we see now is that no modern prosperous state has emerged in the region so far. The most recent refugees crisis in Europe demonstrated the ultimate failure and immoral nature of such political practices in the area.¹¹ *Spetsial'nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>); see note 10 above.

Kurginyan ([2015](#) Kurginyan, S. 2015. "Kurginyan: SShA—novyi Karfagen, ustraivayushchii khaos po vsemu miru [The USA—a New Carthage Making Chaos across the Entire World]." *regnum.ru*, September 30. <http://regnum.ru/news/polit/1982223.html>) laments that the United States, through its foreign policy actions, is dismantling the paradigm of modernity in those areas that need modernity most. He questions, much in the Machiavellian fashion, the balance between results and intentions of such policy-making. Kurginyan argues that the process of de-sovereignization of formerly secular sovereign states of the Middle East during the Western-backed Arab Spring aimed to trigger the de-sovereignization dynamic worldwide and could ultimately create a new "global disorder."¹² *Spetsial'nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>); see note 10 above. See also Kurginyan ([2015](#) Kurginyan, S. 2015. "Kurginyan: SShA—novyi Karfagen, ustraivayushchii khaos po vsemu miru [The USA—a New Carthage Making Chaos across the Entire World]." *regnum.ru*, September

30. <http://regnum.ru/news/polit/1982223.html>). He insists that, if the unipolar world model were to have a chance of success, its proponents should demonstrate the tangible socio-political benefits of such an arrangement.

Russian intellectuals also shift away from the “just war” ideology, claiming that, while liberal democracy might be an effective form of governance, it should not delegitimize alternative forms of political being.¹³ The medieval doctrine of Just War is often invoked in casual and even academic conversations. Yet, its potential dangers are casually ignored. The doctrine splits warring parties along “just” and “unjust” lines, thus allowing the “just” side to dehumanize and annihilate the adversary (Brown [2007](#) Brown, C. 2007. “The Twilight of International Morality? Hans J. Morgenthau and Carl Schmitt on the End of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*.” In *Realism Reconsidered. The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, edited by M. Williams, 42–61. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 45–50). Hence, stronger states idealize their moral positions and strive to impose them on the “morally inferior” enemy covering, at the same time, the advance of their power interests (Scheuerman [2007](#) Scheuerman, W. 2007. “Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond.” In *Realism Reconsidered. The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, edited by M. Williams, 62–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 66). Carl Schmitt, in particular, worried that the just war paradigm demolished state sovereignties in those parties that did not comply with the overarching, “correct” universalist project. Those parties are treated as “unjust” enemies and become subject to annihilation in the course of creating international law of a universal nature. Their ideas often echo the laments of Western philosophers that we have examined above. Evgenii Tarlo, Professor at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations, insists that Russia is not opposed to the idea that the vast majority of nations across the globe embrace democracy as a form of government. Yet, he claims that “Russia is against imposition of “democracy” via military methods or change of political regimes by sponsoring “color” revolutions, organizing Western-backed political movements, and manipulating those countries into the Western geopolitical orbit through uprooting economic and politico-cultural systems of those areas.”¹⁴ Tarlo’s comments were made during the television broadcast *Struktura Momenta*, 29 September 2015 (http://www.1tv.ru/sprojects_edition/si5968/fi40599). Sergei Karaganov, Professor of International Relations in the Moscow Higher School of Economics, supports this point by insisting that the direct imposition of democracy in the past two decades discredited the very idea of democracy. He claims that the situation is similar to the Soviet case, when the idea of Communism was discredited by the Soviet Union’s actions in the international arena. “Democracy is a wonderful idea and a political system,” Karaganov claims, “but it was made a caricature by Western attempts to spread it forcefully across the globe, using it as a dogmatic rhetorical token in political argument, and imposing where it was not appropriate or necessary.”¹⁵ Karaganov’s comments were made during the television broadcast *Pravo Znat*, 3 October 2015 (<http://www.tvc.ru/channel/brand/id/1756/show/episodes>).

Multipolar and unipolar world architectures: problems and caveats

Given that the multipolar world architecture seeks to compensate for the shortcomings of unipolarity, it seems prudent to devote the final part of this paper to common caveats contained in both – multipolar and unipolar – world orders. This could lead us to the sober realization that the establishment of the most just world order is still a distant goal. I have selected four main points.

First, neither the multipolar nor unipolar world order theories provide adequate answers to the problem of conflict. While the multipolar architecture strives to assure lasting peace within civilizations, it does not rule out conflicts between civilizations. More importantly, such conflicts have just as much chance of evolving into the “just war” mode as do contemporary wars that stem from the extant order of international conduct. Hence, we can meaningfully construct a co-

operative security system (as defined by Wendt) only within civilizations and thus confront a potentially conflictual security system when we refer to inter-civilizational dialog. Cross-civilizational interaction does not guarantee peaceful coexistence even though proponents of multipolarity claim that dialog and co-operation must be a feature of the inter-civilizational dynamics of recognition (Shevchenko et al. [2012](#) Shevchenko, M., A. Dugin, A. Venediktov, N. Svanidze, and S. Govorukhin. 2012. "Natsionalnyi vopros [The Nationality Question]." *V Kontekste*, January 26. http://www.1tv.ru/sprojects_edition/si5851/fi13481).

In the unipolar world architecture, this problem also remains unresolved. Although the unipolar world structure rests on the Kantian idea of "democratic peace," a significant number of critics charge that "democratic peace" is equated with "privileging liberal states over non-liberal ones and justifying imperialistic tendencies of liberal democracies" (Shilliam [2009](#) Shilliam, R. 2009. *German Thought and International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.10.1057/9780230234154 , p. 60; see also Doyle [1983](#) Doyle, M. W. 1983. "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 2." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (2): 323–353. ; MacMillan [1995](#) MacMillan, J. 1995. "A Kantian Protest Against the Peculiar Discourse of Inter-Liberal State Peace." *Millennium* 24 (3): 549–562.10.1177/03058298950240030301, ; Jahn [2005](#) Jahn, B. 2005. "Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs." *International Organisation* 59 (1): 177–207., ; Desch [2007](#) Desch, M. 2007/2008. "America's Liberal Illiberalism." *International Security* 32 (3): 7–43.,). Desch ([2007](#) Desch, M. 2007/2008. "America's Liberal Illiberalism." *International Security* 32 (3): 7–43., , 13), for example, claims that Kantian political philosophy justifies military intervention and political regime change abroad by allowing "republican states the right to end the international state of war by forcing other states to embrace republicanism." Though such charges were subject to serious criticism (Cavallar [2001](#) Cavallar, G. 2001. "Kantian Perspectives on Democratic Peace: Alternatives to Doyle." *Review of International Studies* 27 (2): 229–248., ; Wilson and Monten [2011](#) Wilson, J. L., J. Monten. 2011. "Does Kant Justify Liberal Intervention?" *The Review of Politics* 73 (4): 633–647.10.1017/S0034670511003676), rhetoric surrounding some interventions, with Iraq being a prime example, pointed at some truths within those theorizations.

It does not come as a surprise that adherents of both world orders avoided the enactment of Brazil's 2011 Responsibility while Protecting (*RwP*) initiative (Tourinho, Stuenkel, and Brockmeier [2016](#) Tourinho, M., O. Stuenkel, and S. Brockmeier. 2016. "'Responsibility while Protecting': Reforming R2P Implementation." *Global Society* 30 (1): 134–150.10.1080/13600826.2015.1094452[Taylor & Francis Online],). Both Russian and Western policy-makers left the doctrine to academic debate, eschewing intense public discussions. The *RwP* doctrine calls for improvements to the use of force in acts of protection (codified in the 2005 UN *R2P* doctrine discussed above) to guard against causing more damage to country where intervention occurs. It also calls for the establishment of a set of *very* specific criteria for the authorization of military intervention, thereby preventing use of the *R2P* doctrine to pursue ulterior motives. Finally, the initiative sought to expand the role of the UN Security Council once the use of force has been delegated to other parties. The aim of the initiative was to infuse the *R2P* doctrine with a new ethical dimension and to redefine the *way* in which actors conduct the intervention.

This *RwP* doctrine relies on Weber's ideological chasm between the ethics of ultimate ends and the ethics of responsibility. The former relates to an uncompromising just action. From this point of view, the moral quality of an act correlates with acting with good intention. The second perspective, however, treats acts on the basis of their consequences (Sitton [2003](#) Sitton, J. 2003. *Habermas and Contemporary Society*. London: Palgrave.10.1057/9781403981493 , 12; Weber [2004](#) Weber, M. 2004. *The Vocation Lectures: "Science as a Vocation"; "Politics as a*

Vocation". Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company. , 119–122). The main idea here is that political actions should be determined by rational considerations dictated by the state's survival pertaining to power politics and not by ethical or "ideal" considerations (Mommsen [1984](#) Mommsen, W. 1984. *Max Weber and German Politics 1890–1920*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ; Hennis [1988](#) Hennis, W. 1988. *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*. London: Allen & Unwin. , 79–84; Smith [1990](#) Smith, M. J. 1990. *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press. , 15–16; Barkawi [1998](#) Barkawi, T. 1998. "Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies." *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 159–184.10.1017/S0260210598001594, , 163). Hence, the ethics of responsibility contrasts with the universalist ethics of "absolute conviction in which only actions ethical from the point of view of one's ultimate values are undertaken" (Barkawi [1998](#) Barkawi, T. 1998. "Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies." *Review of International Studies* 24 (2): 159–184.10.1017/S0260210598001594, , 163). This position also invokes the Machiavellian logic that assumes the virtuousness of a policy is defined by its outcome: if it is not effective, it cannot be virtuous (Kaplan [2002](#) Kaplan, R. 2002. *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*. New York: Vintage Books. , 53). Therefore, within this logic, the morality of results is more important than the morality of intentions.¹⁶ Criticism of "absolute conviction" and "just war" doctrines also comes from Morgenthau ([1948b](#) Morgenthau, H. 1948b. "The Twilight of International Morality." *Ethics* 58 (2): 79–99.10.1086/290596,). An intellectual student of Weber, he ponders the link between moral intentions and outcomes, arguing that human beings are limited in their ability to predict the results of their moral actions. Because of this "natural ability of human intellect" (Morgenthau [1945](#) Morgenthau, H.1945. "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil." *Ethics* 56 (1): 1–18.10.1086/290471, , 11), good intentions will inevitably go awry. For Morgenthau ([1945](#) Morgenthau, H. 1945. "The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil." *Ethics* 56 (1): 1–18.10.1086/290471, , 18; see also Lang [2007](#) Lang Jr, A. F. 2007. "Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle." In *Realism Reconsidered*, edited by M. Williams, 18–41. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 28–29), morally informed political action is possible if one acts within the bounds of the Aristotelian virtue of prudence, exercising restraint, political wisdom, moral courage, tempered judgment, and consideration of others' interests.

It now becomes clear why neither the West, which stands as the main proponent of the unipolar world, nor Russia or China that advance the multi-polar world structure, promoted the *RwP* doctrine. All sides quietly reserved the right to advance their geostrategic interests (civilizational or unipolar) at the time of conflict and intervention, thus reverting back to positions of classical realism. It is indicative that both Russia and the West accused each other of egoistic behavior in almost all cases that invoked *R2P*. Russia pointed to the West's ulterior motives during the campaigns in Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Serbia. The West lamented Russia's expansionist initiatives in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, eastern Ukraine, and Crimea. In Syria, where both Russia and the US have tangible stakes, the country's respective officials deploy the higher language of "protection" and "fighting terrorism." At the same time, they often eschew the problem of balancing outcomes and intentions as the *RwP* logic would prescribe.

Second, both models of world development do not solve the problem of rising managerialism, a lack of transparency, and the growing power of large corporations. The unipolar world structure invariably leads to a disproportionate increase in the power and political significance of global transnational corporations, which could adversely impact not only the population of the periphery but also the inhabitants of the center. Given that the system advances the politico-economic consensus of global elites lodged in the heart of a single civilization, power could be slowly taken

away from states, thus depriving governments of the ability to reach political and economic decisions that could benefit those states. The system would also be deviating from direct power of national governments for indirect governance of international bureaucrats and big business leaders, which is invariably less transparent and more elitist.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, for example, grants new rights to global corporations in the sphere of intellectual property, patents, and production of pharmaceuticals. It also introduces restrictions on state regulation and allows corporations to sue governments (BBC [2016](#) BBC. 2016. "Ceta Talks: EU and Canada Hold Out Hope for Trade Deal." *BBC*, October 24. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37758475). The nondemocratic nature of negotiations surrounding the Trans-Atlantic Trading and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is another case in point. The democratic deficit resulting from these developments could lead to popular resentment, in particular in the Western world, whose population is accustomed to high levels of political accountability. Vladimir Putin, in his 2016 Valdai speech, pointed to the breakdown of the previous politics of consensus that until recently had marked the political systems of most Western states. He argued that populations of many of those states often had withdrawn their consent from supra-national economic elites, global oligarchs, and international bureaucrats, who had not been elected but had gained power to influence the dominant discourse (Vzglyad [2016](#) Vzglyad. 2016. "Putin predrek marginalizatsiyu nadnatsional'noi elity." [Putin Predicts Marginalization of the Supra-national Elite.] *Vzglyad*, October 27. ; see also Financial Times [2015](#) Financial Times. 2015. "America's Middle Class Meltdown: Core Shrinks to Half of US Homes." *Financial Times*, December 9.). In other words, he claimed that Western politics is experiencing a political-historical conjuncture (to deploy Gramsci's terminology) at which radically different choices for the political future begin to struggle for hegemonic discourse.

Yet, the multipolar world order is not immune to such problems either. Civilizational unions and centers of influence would invariably have similar clusters of supra-national bureaucracy, with strong political-economic ambitions and a lack of democratic legitimacy. Corporations could similarly influence such bureaucracy and seek its political assistance in the international arena for the advancement of their interests. A number of multipolarity proponents in Russia, while advocating large civilizational regions, often observe that those regions will have their financial instruments and economic elites with private stakes in those territories. Andrei Fursov ([2012](#) Fursov, A. 2012. "Konets neoliberal'noi epokhi: Chto dalshe? [The End of the Neoliberal Epoch: What Is to Come?]." *km.ru*, April 4. <http://www.km.ru/tv/andrei-fursov-konets-neoliberaln>), an outspoken critic of unipolarity, also remains pessimistic about the multipolar construction. He is convinced that in the near future the world will be composed of empire-like formations highly influenced by supra-national bureaucracy, economic elites, and legal enforcement services. Mikhail Delyagin, Russia's eminent left-wing economist, concurs with this idea and laments the natural growth of supra-national economic elites (Zavtra [2016](#) Zavtra. 2016. "Globalizatsiya i predatel'stvo elit. Oni zhivut pod soboyu ne chuya strany [Globalization and Treason of the Elite. They Live for Themselves, Not the Country]." *Zavtra*, January 14.).

Third, both structures are unclear on the issue of civilizational borders. While multipolarity theorizations come across as contradictory, the unipolar world structure strives to transcend borders altogether, thereby fomenting an entirely different host of problems. I shall deal with the multipolar architecture first. On the one hand, proponents of multipolarity argue that cultural-political unions could become subjects of international politics and define the future of the globe. This adheres to the essentialist approach to culture that claims that as part of a culture people feel strongly attached to its features and to sharing a particular way of life (Keesing [1994](#) Keesing, R. 1994. "Theories of

Culture Revisited.” In *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*, edited by R. Borofsky, 301–310. New York: McGraw-Hill, , 303). On the other, multi-polarity thinkers endorse the liberal argument that cultures are not clearly demarcated and that membership in one culture does not exclude membership in another.

More importantly, multipolarity thinkers often agree with liberals that cultures are not homogenous internally and that a person’s cultural identity could be plural rather than singular.¹⁷ For a liberal argument, see Tully (1995 Tully, J. 1995. *Strange Multiplicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.10.1017/CBO9781139170888 , 10) and Mason (2007 Mason, A. 2007. “Multiculturalism and the Critique of Essentialism.” In *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, edited by Anthony Laden and David Owen, 221–243. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. , 223–225); for a multipolarity argument, see Sleboda and Dugin (2012 Sleboda, M., and A. Dugin. 2012. “Lecture to visiting LSE students at Moscow State University.” April 20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Ns1ufuVkQ>), Shevchenko et al. (2012 Shevchenko, M., A. Dugin, A. Venediktov, N. Svanidze, and S. Govorukhin. 2012. “Natsionalnyi vopros [The Nationality Question].” *V Kontekste*, January 26. http://www.1tv.ru/projects_edition/si5851/fi13481), and Dugin (2012 Dugin, A. 2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*. London: Arktos.). They follow that parts of one civilization could be lodged within another, and that borders of such civilizations are fluid due to migration, communication, and development (Fursov 2012 Fursov, A. 2012. “Konets neoliberal’noi epokhi: Chto dalshe? [The End of the Neoliberal Epoch: What Is to Come?].” *km.ru*, April 4. <http://www.km.ru/tv/andrei-fursov-konets-neoliberaln> ; Sleboda and Dugin 2012 Dugin, A.2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*. London: Arktos.). This theoretical inconsistency raises some questions. If cultures were to be viewed from the essentialist point of view as subjects of international politics, it would be difficult to account for their blurry borders and the proclaimed leaning toward eliminating clear cultural demarcations.

The unipolar case presents a different set of issues. Civilizational border issues may surface in the sphere of resistance to the universalization of day-to-day life and education. The center would invariably attempt to control the dominant discourse of the periphery, offering its own interpretation of political, cultural, and historic events through unified media and educational codes. This, however, would change cultural, political, and anthropological parameters of societies and evoke protest, resistance, and dissent. Hence, the spread of communication, along with unified educational and cultural standards, may well lead to the emergence of popular dissent movements, attempting to redefine and customize universal matters to local grounds. The Brexit campaign literature exemplified popular resistance to the imposition of unified standards on everything from education to the smallest household items.

Fourth, neither the multipolar nor unipolar world constructions could adequately deal with the problem of aggressive propagation of civilizational interests (which in the case of unipolarity takes the shape of advancing the center’s interests into the periphery), adverse image construction of enemies, and hybrid war scenarios. To meet the ends of fairness, multipolarity theorists argue that all members of civilizations, when disagreeing with the common civilizational “we,” must be granted the right of exit from their civilizations and the opportunity to join other civilizations (Fursov 2012 Fursov, A. 2012. “Konets neoliberal’noi epokhi: Chto dalshe? [The End of the Neoliberal Epoch: What Is to Come?].” *km.ru*, April 4. <http://www.km.ru/tv/andrei-fursov-konets-neoliberaln> ; Sleboda and Dugin 2012 Sleboda, M., and A. Dugin. 2012. “Lecture to visiting LSE students at Moscow State University.” April 20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Ns1ufuVkQ>).¹⁸ This aligns them with moderate liberal theorists who endorse a “political” conception of liberalism

rooted in the value of tolerance rather than a comprehensive conception of liberalism rooted in the value of autonomy (Hirschman [1970](#) Hirschman, A. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Declines in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ; Galston [1995](#) Galston, W. 1995. "Two Concepts of Liberalism." *Ethics* 105 (3): 516–534.10.1086/293725, ; Kymlicka [1997](#) Kymlicka, W. 1997. *Multiculturalism. States, Nations, and Cultures*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Spinoza Lectures. ; Okin [2002](#) Okin, S. 2002. "Mistresses of Their Own Destiny? Group Rights, Gender, and Realistic Rights of Exit." *Ethics* 112 (2): 205–230.10.1086/324645,). This position, while defending the rights of individuals, is problematic in practice. From the essentialist point of view, Kymlicka ([1997](#) Kymlicka, W. 1997. *Multiculturalism. States, Nations, and Cultures*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Spinoza Lectures.) argues that cultures have strong influences on people's subconscious and collective way of life. Threats of exit, if plausibly seen through, can ignite serious internal dissent and jeopardize the culture's survival (Hirschman [1970](#)Hirschman, A. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Declines in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ; Okin [2002](#) Okin, S. 2002. "Mistresses of Their Own Destiny? Group Rights, Gender, and Realistic Rights of Exit." *Ethics* 112 (2): 205–230.10.1086/324645, , 214). If a culture is to survive, the destabilizing impact of internal dissent should not become too threatening. Yet, the means, or using Kymlicka's ([1997](#) Kymlicka, W. 1997. *Multiculturalism. States, Nations, and Cultures*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Spinoza Lectures. , p. 31) term "internal restrictions," with which civilizations (or cultures) could prevent the dissenters from leaving, may vary from persuasion and popularization of the culture's way of life to forcefully restricting the real opportunities for exit (Kymlicka [1995](#) Kymlicka, W. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 152–58; Kymlicka [1997](#)Kymlicka, W. 1997. *Multiculturalism. States, Nations, and Cultures*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Spinoza Lectures. , 32) or waging hybrid wars with the dissenters.

Indeed, if we were to adopt this concern of internal dissent as serious, it would be logical to consider that in a state of anarchy and a conflictual intercivilizational security system, civilizations would probably develop financial and geostrategic interests and feel strongly about guarding their perceived civilizational borders, along with the right of exit from the civilization's spheres of cultural and political influence. The means and methods of "internal restrictions" may be varied, starting from hybrid wars, igniting internal political turmoil, exerting financial pressures, persuasion, propaganda, and the like. The conflict over Ukraine perfectly illustrates this point. Set on the border between the West European and Russian civilizations, Ukraine became torn by these warring parties. This cross-civilizational border conflict demonstrates the potential for war and breakdown of the security system as viewed from a civilizational approach to world politics.

Unipolar constructions emerge from the idea that liberalism would ultimately achieve a post-state global civil society based on trade and co-operation. Democracies would not fight each other, opting for commercial dialog. Yet, to achieve this condition, all states must become democracies first. The globe therefore becomes split into a progressive liberal democratic "core" and an undemocratic periphery lagging behind. This construction stresses the question of how liberal states recognize each other. Owen ([1994](#) Owen, J.1994. "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." *International Security* 19 (2): 87–125.10.2307/2539197,), Risse-Kapen ([1995](#) Risse-Kapen, T. 1995. "Democratic Peace – Warlike Democracies? A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument." *European Journal of International Relations* 1 (4): 491–517.10.1177/1354066195001004005), Oren ([1994](#) Oren, I. 1994. "The Subjectivity of the 'Democratic Peace'." *International Security* 20 (2): 147–184.,), and Williams ([2001](#) Williams, M. 2001. "The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social

Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553.10.1177/1354066101007004006, , 529) raise the question of “what, precisely, do these decision-makers look at in deciding that they are part of the shared democratic “us”, and who gets to decide?” In this context, Williams (2001 Williams, M. 2001. “The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553.10.1177/1354066101007004006, , 526) concludes that the process of recognizing a state as liberal is socially constructed and is invariably linked to “political practices entailing and enabling the exercise of considerable power.”¹⁹ To expand this idea, Williams (2001 Williams, M. 2001. “The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553.10.1177/1354066101007004006, , 542) applies the Kantian logic of recognition (Honig 1993 Honig, B. 1993. *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.) to the interstate realm. He notes a subtle but powerful influence on those who stand “outside” the liberal community of states. The liberal community proclaims itself open (theoretically) to all newcomers and such a universal right of access “allows for the exercise of considerable disciplinary power over those who stand outside... By making membership in the community a matter of universal right, the withholding of entry into the community can be cast as the result of either the willful unworthiness of these others, or as evidence of their as yet insufficient progress toward meeting the standards of discipline to which they ought to aspire” (Williams 2001 Williams, M. 2001. “The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553.10.1177/1354066101007004006, , 542).

Russian scholars and public opinion-makers often concur with those criticisms. Russia’s eminent film director and philosopher Konchalovskii (2016 Konchalovskii, A. 2016. “Interview with Dmitrii Bykov.” Konchalovskii prosto rastoptal Bykova [Konchalovskii Simply Chrushes Bykov.] *balalaika24.ru*, October 20. <http://balalaika24.ru/society/konchalovskiy-prosto-rastoptal-bykova>) insists that contemporary Western media have turned into the “Ministry of Truth,” which has the power to nominate villains and saviors, proclaim the “right” side of history, and arbitrarily judge historic events. He argues that those “truths,” however, invariably exonerate the economic and political order constructed by, and in the interests of, the “Anglo-Saxon West.” Vladimir Solov’ev, Russia’s leading political TV presenter, concurs by arguing that the democratic West habitually neglects injustices occurring in states whose political line conforms with Western economic interests (Poedinok 2016 Poedinok. 2016. “Comments by J. Koreiba J. and S. Mikheev in the forum “Mikheev vs. Yakub Koreiba.” moderated by V. Solov’ev, V. *Poedinok*, October 27. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWQjvGC-9Gw>). Sergei Kurginyan argues that, in the construction of a negative image of political enemies, smear campaigns orchestrated by the media at the height of international tensions (such as during the Iraq war or the Libyan intervention) assume combined forms of medieval inquisition and post-modern political show.²⁰ See the television broadcast *Spetsial’nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>).

Russia’s officials point to the same problem, lamenting the West’s contemporary drive to nominate Russia as the main source of the world’s political problems. Most such attributions are tied to Russia’s intentions to subvert the evolution of a unipolar world and consolidate its influence in Europe and the Middle East. Vladimir Markin, a former representative of the Russian Ministry of Justice, claims in an article in the Russian conservative daily *Izvestiya* that the West has launched an aggressive information campaign against Russia (Markin 2016 Markin, V. 2016. “Po Zavetam show [On the Zavet Show].” *Izvestiya*, February 17.). Maria Zakharova goes a step further by arguing that

the “Russian threat” has turned into a business. Substantial funds have been channeled into expert groups, military seminars, training courses, and media campaigns. The US State Department allocated some \$950 million for these purposes in 2016, while granting Ukraine (the country that had actually experienced the Russian threat) just \$40 million (RadioVesti [2016](#) RadioVesti. 2016. “Zapad teryaet kontrol nad Turtsiei [The West Is Losing Control Over Turkey (Interview with Maria Zakharova)].” *RadioVesti.Ru Printsip Deistviya*, February 18. http://radiovesti.ru/episode/show/episode_id/38099). Putin repeated these ideas in his 2016 Valdai speech.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the main dimensions of the ideological roots of the emerging multipolar world. It has demonstrated that the idea of multipolarity stems from Western philosophical deliberations in defense of the particularity of knowledge, interpretation, and culture. Nineteenth-century Russian philosophy also has played a decisive role in the evolution of multipolar world ideas. The discussion above has shown that Russian thought leaned toward ideas of particularity since its inception in both liberal and traditionalist strands. This subsequently led to the civilizational approach to world politics and the gradual formation of its geographical dimension.

The discussion also demonstrated that the main contribution of Russian intellectuals to the debate on international relations remains their proposal to shift away from the Western rationalist and postmodernist understandings of the subject of international politics and propose civilizations as the main subject of international conduct. Hence, large cultural and political spaces would form the core of international dialog, promote regional integration, and fend for the particularity of world cultures and political forms. Moreover, I have argued that this civilizational ideology has both practical and theoretical dimensions, defending traditional ideas of state sovereignty as a contemporary guarantee of lasting peace and stability.

In addition to metaphysical explanations, Russia’s advocacy of multipolarity also has practical considerations. The multipolar world arrangement has become one of the most important aspects of Russia’s soft power in the global arena and one important instrument for retaining its international influence since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russia deploys the ideas of civilizational particularity in defense of its territorial and political integrity and in attempts to curb the advance of global democratization and the attendant economic interests of third parties. Russia calls for the establishment of strong regional alliances that could assist a supposedly fairer redistribution of power and resources across the globe – a process in which Russia could play a decisive role. The theory of the multipolar world arrangement could be developed into a stronger and more coherent political ideology, given its substantial metaphysical and political basis. Whether this arrangement could contribute to longer lasting peace and stability remains an open question, as the comparative discussion of both political orders above demonstrates. Yet the study of its main tenets and evolution represent a matter of paramount importance for both academics and practical policy-makers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Some thinkers might insist that the rift between the multipolar and monopolar world architectures boils down to economic factors. Kenneth Waltz argues that the idea of polarity stems

from applying neoclassical economics to the realm of international relations. At the same time, there is a plethora of authors who could, without denying the importance of economic factors, claim the utmost significance of ideological variables. It could be argued that the debate over the primacy of either economic or ideological factors in the discussion on polarity in international relations is reminiscent of the discussion between rationalists and empiricists. This article will accentuate the ideological and philosophical line of reasoning and eschew the extensive examination of economic factors.

2. The philosophy of history of Aleksei Khomyakov, the idea of organic cultures of Apollon Grigoriev, historiography of Nikolay Danilevskii, and anthropology of Nikolai Strakhov have been of particular importance.

3. Peter Chaadaev, while demarcating the division in Russian political thought by arguing that Russia has no future without joining the rest of European civilization, still argued at some periods of his life that Russia's distinctness could advance its development. In his later letter to Turgenev, Chaadaev ([1991](#) Chaadaev, P. 1991. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pisma* [Complete Collected Works and Selected Letters]. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauka. , 98) wrote that Russia has a different civilizational origin from Europe: "We do not need to chase someone else. We need to determine who we really are. We need to leave the lies behind and reassert ourselves in truth. Then we can move forward, and move faster than others because we arrived here later than them but we have all their knowledge and experience reflected in centuries of labor that preceded us." Chernyshevskii and other revolutionaries exploited those thoughts of Chaadaev to argue that Russia's civilizational distinctness could help it to organize a socialist revolution and set Russia on the non-capitalist way of development (Maslin [2008](#) Maslin, M. 2008. *Istoriya Russkoi filosofii* [A History of Russian Philosophy]. Moscow: KDU. , 130).

4. It is interesting that Strakhov adopted the civilizational approach to world politics before Danilevskii and independently from him. An editor of the journal *Zarya*, he published Danilevskii's main work *Russia and Europe* in 1869 and had been publicly defending it from liberal critics, in particular Vladimir Solov'ev.

5. Eminent historian G. V. Vernadskii (1877–1973), jurist and philosopher N. Alekseev (1879–1964), historian and theologian V. N. Il'in (1891–1974), and theologian G. Florovskii (1893–1979) have all left a mark in the Eurasian philosophy.

6. This parallels the idea of diachronic existence developed by Claude Levi-Strauss in his anthropological studies.

7. The fall of the USSR and the dismantling of the "socialist bloc" added an additional layer to this system, creating the supposition that Russia's international standing has been significantly weakened relative to the 1970s. At the same time, this additional post-1991 layer can be considered cursory, inasmuch as the essence of the five-tier construct remained unchanged. Russia's geopolitical retreat in 1991 has not been institutionalized. No comprehensive document was signed that states that Russia was the losing party in the cold war and therefore must, due to this situation, assume certain obligations that could restrict its sovereignty or freedom of action in the international arena. Russia retained its seat on the UN Security Council, preserved its nuclear potential, and inherited the remaining arsenals from the other former Soviet republics. Despite its visible economic downturn during the 1990s, Russia remained the only country that possesses the scientific-technological and research potential to compete with the United States in the military

sphere and in the exploration of space (Leont'ev [2015](#) Leont'ev, M. 2015. "V nachale." [In the Beginning.] *RadioVesti.ru*, August 10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku6FNlybN78>).

8. Zakharova argues that, in the case of Ukraine, Western powers have been consistently influencing domestic politics since the first Orange Revolution of 2004, which is indeed well documented by a large number of Western scholars from a variety of perspectives (see Åslund and MacFaul [2006](#) Åslund, A., and M. MacFaul. 2006. *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. ; Lane [2008](#) Lane, D. 2008. "The Orange Revolution: 'People's Revolution' or Revolutionary Coup?" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10 (4): 525–549.10.1111/j.1467-856x.2008.00343.x,). Zakharova also lamented the situation in which high-ranking Western leaders frequented the 2014 *Maidan* rallies and publicly supported the demise of President Victor Yanukovich's government. Furthermore, Western powers did not object to the ousting of Yanukovich the day after the German and Polish foreign ministers, as well as a high-ranking French Foreign Ministry official, mediated and witnessed the signing with the Yanukovich administration of a roadmap toward settling the political crisis. Russian officials argued that, against the backdrop of open Western support for political forces beneficial to Western interests, Russia would support its own interests and enable the Russian population of Ukraine to pursue its civilizational choice. Hence, we are witnessing a clash of geopolitical interests between Russia and the West that is linked to the struggle over civilizational spheres of influence.

9. Professor V. Kotlyar of the Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Foreign Ministry was particularly vocal on this point during a roundtable discussion March 2012 (Kruglyi stol [2012](#) Kruglyi stol. 2012.

"Kruglyi stol. Otvetstvennost' za zashchiti [Roundtable. Responsibility to Protect]." April

12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEudC0lft8>).

10. Zakharova's comments were made during the television broadcast *Spetsial'nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>).

11. *Spetsial'nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>); see note 10 above.

12. *Spetsial'nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>); see note 10 above. See also Kurginyan

([2015](#) Kurginyan, S. 2015. "Kurginyan: SSHA—novyi Karfagen, ustravayushchii kaos po vsemu miru [The USA—a New Carthage Making Chaos across the Entire World]." *regnum.ru*, September

30. <http://regnum.ru/news/polit/1982223.html>).

13. The medieval doctrine of Just War is often invoked in casual and even academic conversations. Yet, its potential dangers are casually ignored. The doctrine splits warring parties along "just" and "unjust" lines, thus allowing the "just" side to dehumanize and annihilate the adversary

(Brown [2007](#) Brown, C. 2007. "The Twilight of International Morality? Hans J. Morgenthau and Carl Schmitt on the End of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*." In *Realism Reconsidered. The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, edited by M. Williams, 42–61. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 45–50). Hence, stronger states idealize their moral positions and strive to impose them on

the "morally inferior" enemy covering, at the same time, the advance of their power interests

(Scheuerman [2007](#) Scheuerman, W. 2007. "Carl Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond." In *Realism Reconsidered. The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*, edited by M. Williams, 62–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 66). Carl Schmitt, in particular,

worried that the just war paradigm demolished state sovereignties in those parties that did not comply with the overarching, “correct” universalist project. Those parties are treated as “unjust” enemies and become subject to annihilation in the course of creating international law of a universal nature.

14. Tarlo’s comments were made during the television broadcast *Struktura Momenta*, 29 September 2015 (http://www.1tv.ru/sprojects_edition/si5968/fi40599).

15. Karaganov’s comments were made during the television broadcast *Pravo Znat*, 3 October 2015 (<http://www.tvc.ru/channel/brand/id/1756/show/episodes>).

16. Criticism of “absolute conviction” and “just war” doctrines also comes from Morgenthau (1948b Morgenthau, H. 1948b. “The Twilight of International Morality.” *Ethics* 58 (2): 79–99.10.1086/290596,). An intellectual student of Weber, he ponders the link between moral intentions and outcomes, arguing that human beings are limited in their ability to predict the results of their moral actions. Because of this “natural ability of human intellect” (Morgenthau 1945 Morgenthau, H. 1945. “The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil.” *Ethics* 56 (1): 1–18.10.1086/290471, , 11), good intentions will inevitably go awry. For Morgenthau (1945 Morgenthau, H. 1945. “The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil.” *Ethics* 56 (1): 1–18.10.1086/290471, , 18; see also Lang 2007 Lang Jr, A. F. 2007. “Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle.” In *Realism Reconsidered*, edited by M. Williams, 18–41. Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 28–29), morally informed political action is possible if one acts within the bounds of the Aristotelian virtue of prudence, exercising restraint, political wisdom, moral courage, tempered judgment, and consideration of others’ interests.

17. For a liberal argument, see Tully (1995 Tully, J. 1995. *Strange Multiplicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.10.1017/CBO9781139170888 , 10) and Mason (2007 Mason, A. 2007.

“Multiculturalism and the Critique of Essentialism.” In *Multiculturalism and Political Theory*, edited by Anthony Laden and David Owen, 221–243. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. , 223–225); for a multipolarity argument, see Sleboda and Dugin (2012 Sleboda, M., and A. Dugin. 2012. “Lecture to visiting LSE students at Moscow State University.” April

20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Ns1ufuVkQ>), Shevchenko et al.

(2012 Shevchenko, M., A. Dugin, A. Venediktov, N. Svanidze, and S. Govorukhin. 2012. “Natsionalnyi vopros [The Nationality Question].” *V Kontekste*, January

26. http://www.1tv.ru/sprojects_edition/si5851/fi13481), and Dugin (2012 Dugin, A. 2012. *The Fourth Political Theory*. London: Arktos.).

18. This aligns them with moderate liberal theorists who endorse a “political” conception of liberalism rooted in the value of tolerance rather than a comprehensive conception of liberalism rooted in the value of autonomy (Hirschman 1970 Hirschman, A. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Declines in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ; Galston 1995 Galston, W. 1995. “Two Concepts of Liberalism.” *Ethics* 105 (3): 516–534.10.1086/293725, ; Kymlicka 1997 Kymlicka, W. 1997. *Multiculturalism. States, Nations, and Cultures*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, Spinoza Lectures. ; Okin 2002 Okin, S. 2002. “Mistresses of Their Own Destiny? Group Rights, Gender, and Realistic Rights of Exit.” *Ethics* 112 (2): 205–230.10.1086/324645,).

19. To expand this idea, Williams (2001 Williams, M. 2001. “The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553.10.1177/1354066101007004006, , 542) applies the Kantian

logic of recognition (Honig [1993](#) Honig, B. 1993. *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.) to the interstate realm. He notes a subtle but powerful influence on those who stand “outside” the liberal community of states. The liberal community proclaims itself open (theoretically) to all newcomers and such a universal right of access “allows for the exercise of considerable disciplinary power over those who stand outside... By making membership in the community a matter of universal right, the withholding of entry into the community can be cast as the result of either the willful unworthiness of these others, or as evidence of their as yet insufficient progress toward meeting the standards of discipline to which they ought to aspire” (Williams [2001](#) Williams, M. 2001. “The Discipline of the Democratic Peace: Kant, Liberalism, and the Social Construction of Security Communities.” *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (4): 525–553. [10.1177/1354066101007004006](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066101007004006), , 542).

20. See the television broadcast *Spetsial’nyi Korrespondent* with Evgenii Popov, on 29 September 2015 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6I5cZD4Eyw>).

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