

# The Timeless Value of a Pluralistic World

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*The article reproduces a slightly edited author's 'personal manifesto' presented as a paper at a Workshop on the 'Future of World Order' in Tripoli, Libya in May 2003. The present version contains some further thoughts topical in the present time. As originally presented the paper sought to address four major issues: US domination in the newly mono-polar world; the pathologies of international power relations in a world characterised by huge disparities in access to multiple technologies; differing, hierarchically-structured patterns of organising and containing inter- and intra-national conflicts; and the need for moral, political and intellectual leadership in the then Brave New World of US hegemony.*

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## Introduction

In May 2003 the author of the present paper addressed a Workshop on the 'Future of World Order' in Tripoli, Libya. One of the major themes of the conference was the centrality of the United States in the new world order, following the collapse of the Soviet Union some twelve years previously. The paper presented carried the title of 'The Timeless Value of a Pluralistic World' and sought to address four major issues: US domination in the newly mono-polar world; the pathologies of international power relations in a world characterised by huge disparities in access to multiple technologies; differing, hierarchically-structured patterns of organising and containing inter- and intra-national conflicts; and the need for moral, political and intellectual leadership in the then Brave New World of US hegemony. The original discussion of these four points is reproduced below, edited only for improved clarity of presentation, while a number of footnotes have also been added. This section includes a discussion of the potential benefits to be derived from the establishment of one or more forums of 'conceptual power' introducing a 'multi-civilizational approach' to the resolution of crises of the type underway in Ukraine.

The current paper then introduces a new section, i.e. not contained in the 2003 presentation, discussing the emergence of US hegemony in a unipolar world with some commentary on the implications of this new international formation for Ukraine. Finally, the conclusions introduce a plea for a new domestic and international settlement for Ukraine in the hope of promoting a resolution to the current crisis in the country.

It should be noted that the original paper, along with those of other contributors to the workshop, was stored online at [www.futureworldorder.com/title\\_2.htm#gau](http://www.futureworldorder.com/title_2.htm#gau). Unfortunately, this site, along with the materials it contained was lost following the Libyan civil war of 2011.

### **The original 2003 ‘personal manifesto’**

1. A great deal of attention at the ‘Future of World Order’ Workshop was devoted to discussion of the role of the US in the contemporary world. This was entirely logical given the huge economic, military, technological and political capacity of the US and its ability to assert its perceived interests far beyond its territory. It was recognised that the US could easily declare any region of the world to be a sphere of American strategic interests and to deploy its considerable resources in pursuit of those interests, regardless of the wishes of states and peoples where it chooses to exercise its power. Likewise, it was recognised that its uniquely powerful position in the world demanded that the US exercise its power responsibly. The converse is also true: every state on the planet has a powerful vested interest in ensuring that the US (and, indeed, all emerging global or regional hegemon) are encouraged to behave prudently, adopting internationally responsible positions, rather than pursuing its own narrowly-defined national self-interest. Especially important is the attitude of all powerful states towards such areas as security, human rights and the rights and sovereignty of nations, respecting their cultural and socio-political diversity.

Key to this international responsibility is helping the US to distinguish between its exclusive superpower status, its entirely legitimate national interests, and the pursuit of narrow or selfish aspirations. Equally important because of the hazards it introduces, is the tendency to confuse legitimate national interests and those of any powerful domestic constituency or sector of its population.

2. Two serious pathologies exist in the contemporary world: (a) an irresponsible and/or servile attitude among national elites resulting in a loss of human dignity, particularly among the poor and weak, and (b) arrogance among those able to deploy force, as well as non-military resources, whether knowledge, skills, material resources or control over infrastructure.

Modern political science endorses the use of theoretical approaches in providing explanations of major cleavages in the contemporary world. Such cleavages include but are not limited to:

- a) Civilizational, subcivilizational and generally cultural cleavages (including cleavages based on basic spiritual and human values);
- b) Cleavages resulting from historical development and geographical peculiarities;
- c) Cleavages imposed by administrative and political interests;
- d) Conjunctural (opportunistic) and situational cleavages.

Meanwhile the processes of Globalization ensure increasing power and resources are vested in and deployed around the world by multinational corporations leading to conflicts between (a) traditional (communal) societies in their various contemporary forms (such societies tend to emphasise rituals, traditions, communality and non-rational, sub-rational or

extra-rational modes of thought, and in which primacy is afforded to the preservation of the existing social system); and (b) infrastructural societies, based on the idea of participation in social development. At a practical level these considerations illuminate the potential for conflict between those who have broken through towards the control over modern technologies and their related infrastructures, and those who are hopelessly located in zones of dependence.<sup>1</sup>

3. Conflicts can occur in many spheres, take multiple forms and unfold at a number of levels.

An *antagonism* (a direct confrontation or fight aimed at a destruction of an adversary) is the lowest level of a pattern (type) of coordination of interests between different actors. It is followed by a bit more advanced type of relations — a *competition* that does not physically destroy the opponent but denies access to vital resources leading to lowering of the social status or even virtual disappearance of a social formation. A *partnership*, *cooperation* and *balance* are evolutionary much higher patterns;<sup>2</sup> and even if one of the conflicting parties is inclined towards a confrontational strategy, the spiritually elevated socio-political entities (and/or personalities guiding them) should try to encourage to the utmost to follow this higher mode of conflict resolution. Unfortunately, such enlightened patterns of inter-national relations are far from commonplace,<sup>3</sup> with diplomats and negotiators commonly experiencing multiple problems including:

- a) Psychological (and cultural) limitations;
- b) The requirement to pursue narrow, vested interests in the world;
- c) Objective limitations of the present dominant type of civilization (technological civilization).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that World Systems theorists, for instance, distinguish between centre and peripheral states but acknowledge interdependencies albeit in a framework of major power disparities. The term traditional societies is employed here, in preference to peripheral states to indicate the significance of cultural attachments and not simply the economic and military concerns that characterise much WST analysis. It should also be noted that control over the social order and its development are central concerns of all political and social regimes, not simply in traditional societies or among the non-powerful.

<sup>2</sup> In the post-Soviet world, these concepts have been to a large extent drawn from the works of Alexander Georgievich Kamenskii (Avessalom Podvodnyi), a famous Russian psychologist and philosopher [Podvodnyi, 2011].

<sup>3</sup> *Antagonisms* that become militarised can lead to attempts at the total destruction of an adversary, but can also promote coordination and cooperation among multiple actors. The Gulf War of 1990-1991 provides an example of such a conflict. Likewise, under conditions of interstate antagonism (and regardless of the issues under dispute), economic power can be deployed in ways which do not principally seek the destruction of an opponent but denies short or longer-term access to vital resources, leading to loss of social viability and possibly regime change and the removal of leaders or national elites. The deployment of such military and economic strategies as instruments of foreign policy are unfortunately commonplace. In contemporary American political and foreign relations discourse these are commonly referred to as 'Hard Power'; 'Soft Power', in contrast, refers to the use of cultural resources, persuasion and the emphasis of mutual benefit. The resources deployed in any given situation can, of course, be used in multiple combinations. Moreover, they are frequently difficult to disentangle, not least because the deployment of soft power influence is open to interpretation by the recipient as an end in itself or merely a precursor to a more aggressive strategy. Thus, even the use of such terminology can be seen as reflecting the status and resources of a hegemon. [See: Nye, 2004].

<sup>4</sup> This refers not simply to the current dominance of a 'brutal' capitalist system, but also to the deployment of 'soulless' industrial and post-industrial technologies (including those of 'soft power', applied in the sphere of social manipulation) at the expense of spirituality, humanism and the pursuit of a more holistic worldview promoting harmony, inclusiveness and balance.

Under conditions of unequal power relations, there is an ever-present and serious danger of an appropriation of a role of God or his Angels by human beings (elites) and the States administered by them. This can manifest itself as an arrogant belief in having achieved some ultimate truth, and to have created the best political and socio-economic systems.

Psychologically it is quite understandable that peoples and their leaders should come to view the basic features of the societies in which they live and have grown accustomed to as the best possible. A measure of humility, along with higher spiritual and cultural standards are required if recognition of the value of diversity and the legitimacy of different paths of civilizational development are to be achieved. Each society represents the outcome of social and cultural experimentation, even where that society is comprised of a small tribal group, is characterised by the use of a minority language or dialect, or consists of no more than a group attempting to implement some Utopian socio-economic project. When confronting any such social formation, unqualified attachment to and exclusive promotion of one's own beliefs (regardless of whether such beliefs are sincerely held or merely provide a rhetorical or ideological cover for selfish vested interests) is a denial of such legitimacy and has led to extreme, inhumane practices including genocide.

Such a claim is not simply rhetoric: one can recall the Crusaders, the Inquisition, colonisation and mass exterminations of native populations in North and South America, and among the original peoples of Australia, Polynesia and Melanesia by European invaders and settlers. We can recall cases of racial cleansing and globally aggressive wars by the Nazis (National Socialists), along with numerous revolutionary experiments by Marxists who ardently believed in the need to exterminate 'exploiter classes' and their allies. We can recall the merciless atrocities of Stalin, Pol Pot, as well as the tribalist attempts at ethnocide in Rwanda, Burundi, former Yugoslavia and the countless crimes of recent or contemporary repressive autocratic and authoritarian regimes, including those of Saddam Hussein, the Taliban and others.

What combines these stains on humanity is a logic of chauvinism and exclusivity, justifying exquisite attempts to establish a world or regional order in the name of the 'elect' or 'the chosen'. With dreadful regularity, certain nations and social groups appear fated to remain prosperous and the most advanced in all major domains. Sometimes, Western, developed states are ready to apply principles of genuine partnership in their dealings with the rest of the world. Yet even where Western states provide technical assistance to countries with inadequate or underdeveloped infrastructure such assistance is commonly provided within a logic of expansion of the donor's own economic infrastructure, rather than the logic of partnership.

It is entirely legitimate for prosperous states to seek to preserve their high living standards and quality of life and to be wary of sizeable influxes of economic refugees from poorer parts of the world. Such influxes create tensions over cultural identity and the distribution of resources within receiving states, without in any way addressing the underlying problems of poverty-stricken countries and regions. Neither should the poor and weak be viewed as saints<sup>5</sup>: economic desperation does not breed moral integrity, while an overriding logic of survival can create difficulties, not simply in receiving states, but in the wider world also. Underdeveloped nations must take responsibility for their own societies wherever possible and necessary, even when they require advice and assistance from the currently more

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<sup>5</sup> This extends the analysis offered by V. Lenin: "Just because the proletariat has carried out a social revolution it will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses. But it will be inevitably led to realise this truth by possible errors (and selfish interest — attempts to saddle others)" [Lenin, 1974: 353].

prosperous and successful nations. The exertion of one's own will and resources is key, but so too is co-operation. This applies not only to oil-rich states, but also to those formerly underdeveloped states, which have managed to organise their affairs effectively, making full and proper use of whatever assistance is provided to them and thereby advancing their development. Such states (e.g. Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Malaysia) can now be considered as enjoying partnership arrangements with the West.<sup>6</sup>

4. It is necessary to stress the issue of moral (spiritual) leadership, centres of conceptual power in the contemporary world, and the forums for real discussion of key problems of development and security, where participants listen to and hear each other, adopting a logic of partnership and mutual responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

It is all too easy to lapse into cynicism about the prospects for the world. Yet the epoch of great national leaders of the calibre of Mahatma Ghandi and General de Gaulle, wholeheartedly devoted to their nations, has not entirely passed into history. Humanistic values have gained ground; the capacities of an ever more globalised society are enormous, though immense, constructive, collective actions are needed.

A number of international, prestigious and influential forums have come to act as centres of conceptual power. It was my hope that the Tripoli workshop might be seen, however tentatively, as providing the basis for a new forum which could assist in uniting and constructively channelling the efforts of many academics, social philosophers, politicians and spiritual leaders of various states and nations, exemplifying and representing the plurality of our contemporary world.<sup>8</sup>

Such a body is capable of promoting intellectual and spiritual networks, through workshops and conferences which seek to explore and explain differences of culture, beliefs and meanings. Such a body needs to be genuinely representative and pluralistic, open and non-discriminatory and requires political and financial endorsement from multiple international sources. Its fundamental aim should be to combine moral and spiritual leadership with real conceptual power, addressing issues of worldwide contemporary importance, whether of development or security, where participants listen to and hear each other in a spirit of partnership and mutual responsibility.

### **Some organisational (institutional) issues**

Some international Forums (notably but not only Davos) have ambitions to perform the role of institutions of 'conceptual power', possessing a special place in the general system of real 'separation of powers' and their 'checks and balances'. For implementing that role they need (a) the relevant viable ideas behind them, (b) political will and financial resources of the sponsors, (c) efficient organisational structures and (d) a wide range of key participants capable of creating new ideas and open to new sources of inspiration.

In 2003, the Libyan state (at that time isolated and subject to severe international sanctions) had an ambitious plan to implement a three-stage academic project "aiming at

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<sup>6</sup> For sure, a number of other states and territories (not only formerly under-developed states) enjoy partnership with the hegemon and other centres of the 'Global West'.

<sup>7</sup> In his further research, the author of this paper referred to the ancient Indian practice of 'Brahman communication' as a promising mode of organising discussions and an important element in the process of intellectual knowledge and skills transfer [Yakushik, 2017: 29].

<sup>8</sup> Clearly, and for now obvious reasons, this did not happen. Nevertheless, the world is in urgent need of such forums today, perhaps even more than fifteen years ago.

contributing to the ongoing debate on the future of world order” (and titled ‘Future of World Order’): (a) a Workshop (Tripoli, Libya — 17-18 May 2003); (b) International Symposium; (c) an International Forum (to “be held periodically on yearly basis on the five continents”). The explanation of the topicality of tasks was quite clear: “Since the end of the Cold War, there has been no clear idea as to the nature of the current world order or how such order is going to evolve in the long term. There has been an intensive debate on the future of world order at all levels around the globe. It focuses on the political, socio-economic, cultural and military aspects as well as on those questions related to international relations as manifested in the dichotomy of multipolar — unipolar nature of the emerging world order. However, as the transformation of the world order has yet to take place in one direction or another, a great number of actors around the world can still influence the shape and substance of the world order’s future”.<sup>9</sup> Though, for a number of reasons leading to the lack of almost all the above-mentioned elements necessary for the successful functioning of a Forum, the ambitious Libyan academic attempt did not achieve the hoped for results.

Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that the People’s Republic of China has created its own version of a comprehensive, multi-civilizational open space for discussing topical issues of current world development and developing new conceptual approaches to their solution — the Boao Forum for Asia [Boao, 2018]. It clearly functions as a supplement (if not yet a full-fledged competitor) to the existing liberal-democratic, ‘Western’ globalist forum (Davos).

Behind the successful functioning of this Forum there are not the only immense comprehensive resources of the PRC, but also the attractive, practically-oriented concept of ‘Community with Shared Future for Mankind’ and such complements to it as ‘the Belt and Road’ initiative and the ‘New Silk Road’ infrastructural mega-project. The official discourse within these concepts comprises the following major ideas:

- a) “Building a community with a shared future for mankind”, i.e. “to connect the prospects and destinies of every nation and country closely together, share weal and woe, and turn planet Earth into a harmonious family”;
- b) Building “a safe world free of fear”, where “a country cannot gain its security at the cost of others” and where “all countries should pursue a new security concept featuring common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable development”;
- c) Creating “fair, just and shared security to jointly eliminate the root cause of war” and to “strive to eliminate poverty and promote common prosperity”;
- d) Pushing forward “open, inclusive, beneficial, balanced, and win-win economic globalization, to deliver benefits to all countries”;
- e) “An open and inclusive world” where “cultural barriers” are being broken and “all kinds of civilizations exist and grow in harmony”;
- f) “Building of a clean and beautiful world with picturesque scenery”, an objective which presupposes comprehensive “efforts to ensure coexistence between man and nature, cherish the environment as we cherish our own lives, respect and protect nature, and safeguard the irreplaceable planet Earth” [Xi, 2017].

A further attempt to develop such a forum has been taken by a group of senior Russian civil servants, influential entrepreneurs and intellectuals who have launched the ‘Rhodes

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<sup>9</sup> This information was contained at the now defunct webpage: Future of World Order Workshop. Saturday 17 May — Sunday 18 May 2003. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.futureworldorder.com/> [Last accessed 10 January, 2011].

Forum’ and its ‘The Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute’ (‘DOC Research Institute’) [The Dialogue, 2018]. A similar initiative has been attempted by Israeli intellectuals and businessmen.

There are Forums that actively promote ‘the Sustainable Development Goals’, which were worked out by the UN [see: About the Sustainable]. Among such international civic institutions, there is an outstanding and successful entity — the Caux Forum (Caux — Initiatives of Change Switzerland) [see: Initiatives, 2018].

## **US hegemony, global power relations and the on-going Ukrainian crisis**

The remainder of the present paper seeks to resurrect discussion of the four lines of argument presented in Tripoli fifteen years ago, in the belief that their significance today is equal to or greater than when originally presented. It is my contention that this continuing significance holds for both Ukraine and the wider world. Moreover, the original presentation, due principally to the requirement for brevity, failed to locate its arguments in the context of contemporary international relations and world politics. The current paper, therefore seeks to extend the earlier analysis by broadening the context in which the position of contemporary Ukraine may be understood.

Beyond doubt, the major historical event framing international relations in 2003 was the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union two years later, marked the close of a period of bipolar political, military and economic hegemony, which had prevailed since the end of World War II. First Europe and then the globe had been divided not simply into spheres of influence but global empires with their respective centres in Washington and Moscow. The attempt by former Soviet elites to convert the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) into a successor body to the USSR (which had existed since 1922) in military, political, economic and other matters failed to achieve its objectives. The Baltic States chose from the outset not to participate, while Ukraine (following the example of Georgia in 2009) withdrew from the CIS in May 2018, though still (as in 1991 when joining the CIS) via the employment of typically post-Soviet ‘smart’ policies and the deployment of dubious (incomplete) legal procedures concerning its membership or non-membership of the inter-state formation. Western academic and political analysis during this early period spoke generically of a post-Soviet period and of post-Soviet States. The disruption to the global order brought about by the Soviet collapse was sufficiently profound that it defied description and articulation in any terms other than conditions, which no longer existed. Simply put, even language proved incapable of providing the most basic means of describing or characterising what had occurred.

Viewing the collapse of the Soviet Union as the outcome of a hegemonic struggle which had endured for nearly half a century suggests that the at-that-time traditional verities of international relations, with its processes of adjustment, played out primarily through proxies was no longer helpful analytically or descriptively. In newly-independent Ukraine (and elsewhere) the economy collapsed and hyper-inflation resulted. Multiple industries were bankrupted, food supplies were, at best, erratic and unpredictable and the official census recorded precipitous falls in population. The fundamental institutional structures, both of the formal, legal variety (police, military, judiciary, government, etc.) and the socio-cultural variety in many instances went into major decline or simply ceased to function. Life expectations and understanding

collapsed. Regional tensions and regional identities emerged in Crimea, the Donbas, Galicia and elsewhere.

The response of the West was generally triumphalist and 'Eurocentric', emphasizing the dominant interests and perspectives of a 'Euro-Atlantic' alliance: Western financial and technical assistance was, almost without exception, tied to economic reform along neo-liberal lines; while reform of the Ukrainian State almost always emphasized the fundamental superiority of Western-style liberal democracy. Ukraine, along with other newly-independent states was enjoined, under considerable duress, to adopt concepts and practices completely alien to its traditions, expectations, understandings and experience.

The academic treatment of these developments in the West was equally celebratory, with the published works of Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington being particularly instructive. In an essay published in 1989 (shortly before the fall of the Berlin wall) and later expanded into a book Fukuyama [Fukuyama, 1989; Fukuyama, 1992] argued that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the 'End of History': "The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism... What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such... That is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" [Fukuyama, 1989: 1].

For Fukuyama, liberal democracy had been not simply vindicated in its claims to moral and political authority; it had routed its only viable alternative. Moreover, while Fukuyama's work was widely criticised by senior academic figures in the West, it was both widely read and extremely influential, contributing to an ideological legitimation for the strengthening and deepening US hegemony.

Huntington's work, like Fukuyama's was published first as an essay and subsequently in book form [Huntington, 1991a; Huntington, 1991b]. Thus, both sets of work in their original forms were contemporaneous with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In his work, Huntington argued that democracy, narrowly conceived, had advanced globally in three waves, each of which had been subject to substantial reverse. In developing his argument, Huntington relied heavily on a concept of democracy as exclusively concerned with electoral process, as advanced by the economist Joseph Schumpeter [Schumpeter, 1950]. According to Huntington, a political system may be viewed as democratic, "to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" [Huntington, 1991b: 6].

Thus, democracy is conceived in narrow procedural terms, vesting extensive, largely unfettered power of decision making in the hands of political elites. Alternative conceptions of democracy, whether developmental, participative or based on governmental performance was not discussed. It should also be remembered that Schumpeter's work, despite its centrality to Huntington's analysis, was published over half a century earlier (that is before two of Huntington's 'waves' had occurred and before more extensive and inclusive concepts of democracy had gained currency) and was concerned primarily to address the developmental potentialities of socialism and capitalism as economic systems during and in the years immediately following WWII; a competition in which Joseph Schumpeter saw socialism as the likely victor.

It must be acknowledged that Huntington's concern was only tangentially related to the collapse of the Soviet Union, though his notion of snowballing was drawn into service to

explain developments elsewhere in states previously subject to Soviet hegemony. Thus, “democratization was clearly evident in 1990 in Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Mongolia, Nepal, and Albania”, while the “withdrawal of Soviet power made possible democratization in Eastern Europe”. More telling for present purposes was the manner in which S. Huntington deployed his concept of democracy in an attempt to reorient US foreign policy. According to S. Huntington, “During the 1970s and 1980s the United States was a major promoter of democratization. Whether the United States continues to play this role depends on its will, its capability, and its attractiveness as a model to other countries. Before the mid-1970s, the promotion of democracy had not always been a high priority of American foreign policy. It could again subside in importance. The end of the Cold War and of the ideological competition with the Soviet Union could remove one rationale for propping up anti-communist dictators’ [Huntington, 1991a: 15].

As a description of US foreign policy during the years preceding the fall of the Soviet Union this was little short of fantasy. In 1979 American political scientist Jeane Kirkpatrick published an article entitled ‘Dictatorships and Double Standards’ [Kirkpatrick, 1979] in which she drew a sharp distinction between ‘traditional autocracies’ and Marxist regimes. The aim of US foreign policy, she argued, should be the stabilization of the former and the systematic undermining of the latter. Kirkpatrick’s argument was one of thoroughgoing support for autocrats around the world, provided they were not viewed as ideological opponents of the US. Principally due to the arguments, she presented in this paper, Kirkpatrick was appointed as foreign affairs advisor to Ronald Reagan during the 1980 Presidential campaign and subsequently as US ambassador to the UN. During her term of office, Kirkpatrick advocated vigorously for US support for military regimes in El Salvador, Argentina and elsewhere and for the general advancement of American interests around the world.

While the language of democratisation was a running theme of her 1979 article, Kirkpatrick’s personal attitude to democratisation was one of unadulterated national self-interest, she also identified a basic conflict within American society. For Kirkpatrick, “No idea holds greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime and anywhere, under any circumstances... Decades, if not centuries, are normally required for people to acquire the necessary disciplines and habits” [Kirkpatrick, 1979]. Thus, she argued, a fundamental disjunction existed between public and official purposes. Foreign policy, she maintained, should be defined by brutal pragmatism, while the rhetoric of democracy and American benevolence should be allowed to define the domestic narrative.

On the face of it quite distinct from Huntington’s advocacy of democratisation, Kirkpatrick’s advocacy of brutal pragmatism allied to US ideological advancement in fact matches Huntington’s views closely. As a US foreign policy consultant, Huntington advised both the military government of Brazil and of apartheid South Africa on economic and political stabilisation. As one prominent academic theorist of democratisation noted in a review of Huntington’s wave thesis of democratisation, “Contrary to most of those working on political development, Huntington was indifferent to what kind of regime was in power provided it was capable of producing and reproducing the status quo, whether in terms of authority relations, property rights, distribution of wealth, national boundaries and especially, alliance commitments and bilateral relations with the United States. Consistent with this position, he did not hesitate in his writing and extensive consulting, to proffer advice to authoritarian rulers about how they could best sustain “their” respective versions of political order” [Schmitter, 1993: 348].

Both Fukuyama and Huntington have proven major influences on US foreign policy. Although less prominent today, in the past both names appeared frequently on the US State Department website and other public communications tools of successive US governments. Yet the work of neither has escaped criticism: history has not ended and no Hegelian ‘moment’ can be discerned, in Ukraine or elsewhere; neither has democratisation in anything other than a hollow, formalised sense come to characterise Ukrainian politics. US foreign policy continues to be governed by perceived, pragmatic, self-interest. In point of fact US military personnel have been involved in military engagements of varying intensity (sometimes repeatedly) in eighteen states since 1990 [Grossman, 2018]. In his election campaign, President Donald Trump promised repeatedly to ‘put America first’. In 2018, President Trump clarified his position: “I’m the President of the United States; I’m not the President of the globe” [Llewelyn, 2018]. His formal and legal responsibilities were, he maintained, clear. His platform was and remains the protection and advancement of American interests, and in his address to the UN he urged the General Assembly to reject globalisation and embrace patriotism that is to overtly embrace self-interest as a guiding philosophy [Ward, 2018].

In Ukraine there have been several ‘waves’ of relative stabilization and dynamism organised within a logic of oligarchic leadership and its ‘multi-vector’ international and local/regional policies; further ‘waves’ of massive social unrests and revolutions have been experienced, leading to major disruption in the relative balance in the country’s fragile socio-economic fabric, and an active involvement of numerous international actors in Ukraine’s internal politics.

American self-interest is not and need not be inimical to Ukrainian interests, and its influence will undoubtedly continue to be felt. In 2016, Henry Kissinger argued for a pragmatic US policy designed to protect Ukrainian territorial integrity. Ukraine’s geography, H. Kissinger argued, locates it in the position of buffer between the Western military alliance and Russia. Any successful attempts to draw Ukraine into official military alliance with either camp would create a hard border between Russia and the West, regardless of whether this hard border was drawn to the west or the east of Ukraine. In either event, such a hard border would be politically unacceptable to one side and could only serve to increase the likelihood of military confrontation. Even if a Ukrainian transition to some such military alliance could be implemented without major incident, political reprisals would undoubtedly follow, while tensions and the possibility of military confrontation would increase. Kissinger’s entirely pragmatic response to this was for Ukraine to formally designate itself as non-aligned: “Ukraine should be conceived of as a bridge between NATO and Russia rather than an outpost of either side. Russia can contribute to this by forgoing its aspiration to make Ukraine a satellite; the United States and Europe must relinquish their quest to turn Ukraine into an extension of the Western security system. The result would be a Ukraine whose role in the international system resembles that of Austria or Finland, free to conduct its own economic and political relationships, including with both Europe and Russia, but not party to any military or security alliance. ... I favor an independent Ukraine that is militarily non-aligned. If you remove the two Donbas regions from eastern Ukraine, you guarantee that Ukraine is permanently hostile to Russia, since it becomes dominated by its Western part, which only joined Russia in the 1940s. The solution, then, is to find a way to give these units a degree of autonomy that gives them a voice in military entanglements, but otherwise keeps them under the governance of Ukraine” [Goldberg, 2016].

The present Ukrainian crisis is a multi-faceted phenomenon introducing geo-political,

inter- and infra-civilizational, national, regional and class dimensions. Inevitably, there are also multiple interpretations of the nature of this crisis and of the ways and means of its resolution [Yakushik, 2016]. Conflicts between differing ‘worldviews’ and the relevant recipes they provide for the reestablishment of peace in Ukraine and to reintegrate its regions are inevitable. Nevertheless, a way to peace and some form of national reconciliation must inevitably be found. Patience, political will and wisdom are needed on the part of the major sides of the actors in the conflict and in the process of decision-making in peace-building and nation-building.

## Conclusions

Soviet hegemony was a relatively short-lived project; the US variety may yet prove itself of a more durable variety but its long-run success cannot be guaranteed despite any claims to ‘exceptionalism’ or ‘manifest destiny’. It is now increasingly accepted that China presents a viable and growing challenge to the continuation of US global domination. Russia too has sought to reassert itself in multiple ways.

Recent pronouncements by President Donald Trump indicate a quite fundamental shift in American foreign policy, particularly in its reorientation to ‘America first’. The longer run implications of the shifts now underway in US domestic and foreign policy positions are yet to be seen both in Ukraine and in elsewhere. All that can be said with certainty is that American foreign policy has and will continue to change as will those of China, Russia and all aspiring global powers. Likewise, American perceptions of its national self-interests can be interpreted in different ways, as the arguments of Kissinger and Kirkpatrick indicate. The former has argued cogently for Ukrainian autonomy and US support the latter for the support and maintenance of autocracy wherever this supports American interests.

Yet behind all such shifts in policy positions and perceptions of national self-interest lie fundamental questions of how power relations between (and within) states are to be structured and the assumptions on which such relations ought to be conducted. The unipolar system of international relations is under increasing stress and the tendential pressures touched on here appear likely to become increasingly important. Moreover, while the repercussion of these shifts may be difficult to accept in the institutions of the Global West, denial of their existence and the failure to adjust to the shifting realities they represent will, in all likelihood lead to growing antagonisms and an increasing potential for expanded military conflict. Our argument in favour of an overtly pluralist position is, pragmatically, a recognition of this reality, though it has also been argued that it represents a morally superior position.

Such tangential shifts also play out at the national level. Ukraine has now experienced instability and crisis conditions internally for many years and is relatively weak internationally, despite its strategically significant position geographically. If it is to retain a voice in influencing the interplay of external forces to which it is subject the discursive narratives of ‘opponents’, ‘competitors’, ‘fellow travellers’, ‘colleagues’ and ‘collaborators’ and ‘others’ must be accepted as having failed. A new domestic/national reconciliation is needed, involving the regions along with its major cultural and political strata. Equally, important, reformed and sometimes new institutions are required; the material and social welfare of its citizens needs to be addressed and democratic rights need to be made subject to enforceable guarantees. Programmatically such changes represent a radical departure from the status quo but, equally importantly, require a shift in the fundamental assumptions and worldview of senior decision makers. Changes of this

magnitude are difficult to achieve and require bravery, patience and restraint; they will not be achieved quickly. The short run aim is to find a model of mutually acceptable, initially temporary, compromise, while working patiently towards a set of longer run comprehensive international compromises and agreements. The alternative to such a programme of domestic pluralism and mutual respect is increasing marginalisation internationally and growing internal decay.

The achievement of a new national settlement inevitably places major responsibilities on the 'mighty', 'the powerful' and 'the knowledgeable'. Experience, information and (where it can be found) wisdom will be at a premium, as will acceptance of a new 'discourse of truth', along with an acceptance of the secondary status of self-interest and the rejection of any particular or singular worldview. If a suitable mechanism or forum can be found — whether along the lines sketched out at Tripoli, or currently under development in China, Switzerland, Russia or elsewhere, so much the better. The process of achieving a new national settlement and of stabilising its position internationally requires that Ukraine actively considers multiple perspectives and listens to the experiences of those lacking personal or selfish agendas and who can bring different forms of wisdom and experience to bear.

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