Multipolarity, Unipolarity, Hegemony - Theories and Concepts

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Today’s lecture is very charged with meaning. The content of this lecture is very dense. I am going to present a new approach to International Relations. I made the first lecture here on classical and post-positive theories of International Relations, and in the second lecture I presented the basic principles of Geopolitics. Now I will evoke and use these concepts of International Relations as well as Geopolitics in order to explain what unipolarity, multipolarity, and hegemony are.

Let us establish some relations. In order to understand what multipolarity and the Theory of the Multipolar World are, we need to understand what unipolarity is. Unipolarity is precisely what we have in concrete politics after the fall of the Soviet Union. That was declared the “unipolar moment.” Multipolarity is the concept or theory that challenges this unipolarity. There is a kind of opposition or confrontation between the unipolar and multipolar world visions. Unipolarity is based on some theoretical principles - geopolitical, ideological, and economic - and the same will be the case for multipolarity. But unipolarity exists, whereas multipolarity does not exist yet - it is in transition, but not yet achieved. We are speaking about something that is in reality, but that is ending, and something that is new, that hasn’t yet come or been totally realized. We are in a transition from unipolarity towards multipolarity. We know what unipolarity is, but we do not know what multipolarity will be. This is an open, very passionate question. It is a little bit of a futurological perspective.

There are many theories of International Relations. One of the most famous theories is that of the bipolar world system proposed by Kenneth Waltz, with the division into capitalist and socialist camp, or West and East, which, according to Waltz, represented a kind of balance. In this system, one pole limits the other, they can cooperate, and their dialogue, confrontation, and opposition creates this system. The Third World was possible because of bipolarity and a kind of space between the two. Thanks to the bipolar system, everybody else could exist “on the margins” of this general world system.

But when the Soviet Union collapsed, there was the new idea of unipolarity promoted by some realists in International Relations, first of all Robert Gilpin. Instead of a bipolar system of plus and minus of two poles interacting in opposition, for example in which the Americans and the West are the plus, and ourselves, the “Eastern”, being the minus, Gilpin proposed a different concept or system for International Relations in which there is one pole, the absolute center of everything, i.e., their is no more minus, only the center on the rise. Robert Gilpin won his theoretical debates with Kenneth Waltz, because Waltz supposed that bipolarity would last forever in some way, because it was a more conservative, stable world system. Gilpin proposed the possibility of a unipolar situation.

Unipolarity gained ground in theoretical debates in International Relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That moment was precisely declared the “unipolar moment” by Charles Krauthammer. The “unipolar moment” meant the creation of the concept of a unipolar system with a pole and a periphery in concrete reality. But Krauthammer was not sure if this would last forever, or if it would end in time. He was not sure if it was a world order or some temporary situation. So he called the “unipolar moment” this very correct term. After the end of the Soviet Union, there was precisely a confirmation of the unipolar system, for example on other levels, such as declared by Francis Fukuyama as the “End of History.” There were no confronting poles or systems, there was only one system: liberal capitalist democracy with the market society, with the West recognized by everyone as the “global leader.” Thus, there was the West and the Rest. The Rest should follow the West - that was the essence of unipolarity. There is only pole, one system, a global system - that is globalization. So unipolarity was the understanding in realist terms of the same concept as globalization, the End of History, or the unipolar moment.

It is interesting that in the very beginning of the 2000’s, this same Krauthammer declared that maybe the unipolar moment has ended. This was after the 9/11 attack by Islamic terrorists on the New York Trade Center, and after Putin’s coming to power. Then it seemed that the unipolar moment was no longer a unipolar world order, that something went “wrong” with unipolarity. “Normally” there should not have been such a thing as the terrorist attack of 9/11, because there was no state that could attack the United States, no civilization, no political system, no nuclear weapons - nothing structural or symmetric with American power and American domination. Russia at that moment was in a very low situation with Yeltsin and was on the verge of collapse after the Soviet Union. But Putin began to reaffirm Russia as a sovereign country. This was a kind of challenge to the unipolar system. For example, in 2007 Putin made his Munich speech which challenged precisely unipolarity and Western hegemony. In 2008, despite American support for Georgia, Russia intervened in Northern Ossetia and Abkhazia. In 2014, we reunified with Crimea, and then we intervened in Syria. In parallel, there has been a huge rise in China’s model, as Zhang Weiwei says. China’s model was a kind of new hegemony appearing on the horizon.

This means that there was something moving against unipolarity. Yet unipolarity still prevails in the global analysis. Unipolarity is ending, but the unipolar moment is lasting, it is still here. It is absolutely clear to everybody that something is wrong with unipolarity, that unipolarity is unstable and in decline, but it is still here, and no other political or international system has arisen. We are living in the end of unipolarity.

Unipolarity includes different aspects. For example, we could divide unipolarity into groups of concepts - open or “explicit”, and hidden, “secret”, or “implicit” unipolarity. Open (explicit) unipolarity is Neoconservatism in the United States and the Project for a New American Century promoted by the Neocons. They declare that the liberal word should rule the world, and that liberal countries should prevail and openly dominate everybody else. America should rule the world, and give the example and install the norms for other countries and cultures. Niall Campbell Ferguson, an English scholar of IR, has declared that we need to use the word “empire” to qualify what unipolarity is: it is a modern or post-modern Western empire that should dominate the whole planet. Ferguson says that we should not hesitate to use the word “empire”, which has been demonized and criticized, but we are now living in an empire. The metropolis, the center of this empire, is the Western world, the Rich North, and there are other “provinces” of this “empire” that should be ruled from the center. So let us speak about the Western, post-modern, global, liberal, capitalist, Neo-colonial empire in all of these senses. This is open, explicit unipolarity as it is presented in IR debates.

The Pentagon’s vision of unipolarity is clear if we take a look at the strategic map of the planet. We will see all around, except in China and Russia, American military bases. That is a concrete manifestation of unipolarity. The United States has tried to control the Pacific, Asia, Europe, Africa, the Arab world, and with NATO. The Pentagon vision is still absolutely unipolar. American national interests and American security are considered by the Pentagon to be a universal value. In their vision, it is your duty, for all of you and us, to defend American interests. Everyone who challenges American domination is a “terrorist” and is treated theoretically or practically as very dangerous. Any man, movement, or country who does not agree with this Pentagon vision is an enemy. That is open unipolarity. Regarding Europe, this idea is translated into Atlanticism and represented by NATO. NATO is the European world under the military control of the United States. That is one of the expressions of unipolarity. NATO is a unipolar organization which tries to control the world for the benefit of only one pole. That is explicit, manifested unipolarity.

There is another “hidden”, “secret” or “implicit” unipolarity, that is globalism, multilateralism, and so-called “No Polarity” promoted by the chief of the Council on Foreign Relations. We roughly we call this “globalization.” Globalization means that all systems, societies, peoples and countries in the world will accept the Western way of progress, development, human rights, democracy, and liberalism. And when this happens, there will be no great differences between the United States, Russia, China, or Africa. Everyone will be “equal.” But in what sense? Everybody will become Americans, Western, and everybody must like liberal democracy and human rights. This is a special kind of globalism. It is not a dialogue between countries, cultures, and civilizations. For example, Russia has proposed Russian values, and China has proposed a Chinese identity. But there should not be any collective identity in this concept of globalization. Everybody should be equal precisely because everyone should only be statistical individuals - no cultures, no religions, no ethnic roots. That is the idea of “human rights”, to put together citizen and man. Every man is already a citizen. There are no countries, no nations, only the “global society” and “global civil society.” This is not openly unipolar, because globalists do not say that America will rule the world but that “you, citizens of the world, will rule the world in a global government” in which everyone will “participate.” Everyone will be equal “if you accept our system of liberalism, democracy, progressivism, human rights, individualism, and our culture” - you will no longer be treated in a hierarchical manner. The “world citizen” or “cosmopolitan” is a program that is unipolar on the level of values. That is pure unipolarity in a special, hidden sense.

Multilateralism is the geopolitical application of globalism. Multilateralism is a form of unipolarity, but it consists of the proposition that the United States should rule the world “with.” This is a kind of sharing of responsibility for ruling the world through proxies of the United States. Multilateralism is precisely giving to others the responsibility to rule the world with the United States as proxies, as a kind of vassals of the US. There are different countries that want to do this because they will have some special preferences within the global world-system.

Strategic unipolarity includes Atlanticism, Sea Power in geopolitical terms, and full spectrum dominance doctrine, which affirms that in order to dominate the world totally, the West should not only use hard power or military power, but also soft power, culture, technology, network services, networks, and social services, that should control other societies from the inside, not only from the outside. That is the idea of full spectrum domination - domination of the air, the cosmos, space, sea, land, and inside human brains. That is a project of controlling human behavior, psychology, being, and human minds, by coding them through different methodologies.

Here is the geopolitical vision of unipolarity with the United States in the center.

This is also the classical geopolitical map of how Sea Power should control Land Power. From the seas and oceans, Sea Power - the United States and the global West - should control Land Power. The idea is to fight for Rimland, which is the zone between Land Power and Sea Power, the coastal zone. This is the classical vision which is still the main basic map of the Pentagon. The Pentagon understands the world more or less with this map. China belongs to the coastal area, to Rimland, so it is considered to be neither a radical enemy, nor a friend, but a zone to control.

Here is implicit unipolarity, a kind of multilateralism, quite different from unipolarity. In multilateralism, there is the main power, the global hegemon, and two main satellites - Europe and China. Europe is inscribed and embedded in the latent structure, and for China the globalists have proposed the G2 project. Hillary Clinton came to Beijing in order to propose this to the Chinese government. That is more or less the idea of how the world will be if unipolarity and multilateralism prevail. In the other spaces, there should be only chaos, not pro-American governments, because they don’t need pro-American governments, which are too difficult to manage, and they have indeed destroyed pro-American governments in Tunisia and Egypt. They don’t care anymore if you are pro-American or anti-American, because you should all only follow the Americans, or you will die in bloody chaos. And they have started this bloody chaos in North Africa, promoting cultural revolutions, supporting all kinds of terrorist groups in order to have reasons to intervene. By creating chaos in this region, unipolarity conserves its power. Russia has the same destiny. If we read carefully the book of Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Grand Chessboard, he has written that Russia should be torn apart and Balkanized, transformed in conflict between different ethnic and religious groups.

There are two parties in the United States and global government - the explicit unipolar and implicit unipolar. There is the “soft” version, and the previous map is the “hard” version. These are the pigeons and the hawks.

Ideological unipolarity entails the universalism of Western values and Human Rights ideology with the concept of human vs. citizen. The concept of human in Human Rights theory is against the nation-state and against the concept of citizen. If you say that the human being has the same rights as the citizen, you destroy citizenship. Migration and the defense of migrants are not purely humanitarian, but ideological. It is the idea to destroy the concept of citizenship, nationality, and the state. That is one of the main goals of the so-called human rights movement. It is purely ideological - as much ideological as Marxism or National Socialism. It is pure propaganda, nothing humanitarian. If you share human rights values, you are globalists on one side, sharing an ideology just like racism in National Socialism or communism and the proletarian position in classical Marxism. Human rights is a liberal ideology. It is not neutral. It is not self-evident. It is purely ideology, just as belongingness to the Aryan race or the capitalist or proletarian classes is. If you are in favor of human rights, you are already totally controlled by ideology.

The deconstruction of the nation-state is the main goal of liberalism in IR. Globalization is the technological and economic process, and globalism is the ideology of the unification of humanity under a world government. They are different, but are not in contradiction. By promoting the same technology and economy, at the same time you are preparing the ground for political integration - from globalization to globalism there is one step. They are two levels of the same process. You could promote the theory that we need global government in order to avoid war and the destruction of the humanity, or you can put it into practice without expecting that everyone will accept it. So globalism and globalization are two different things, but are converging forces.

Liberalism in International Relations is the theoretical basis for this ideological unipolarity, as it is itself an ideology. The idea of world government is not an obsession of conspiracy theorists. It is part of the classical manuals of International Relations. If you carefully read all and any manuals on IR, you will discover that Liberalism in International Relations affirms that there should be a world government, a supranational system that will replace states in the future and progress in order to secure world peace. This is not a conspiracy theory - it is purely a theoretical term from IR as an established discipline.

Hegemony has different meanings. First of all, there is the strategic dimension. This Greek word means “leadership” - a hegemon is a leading force or leading power. Hegemony could be understood and read as unipolarity as in Gilpin’s system. If we use the term hegemony in its singular form, with one hegemon or one empire, then we are speaking about unipolarity. In the singular, hegemony represents the concept of a dominating pole - that is the Western pole. Relative hegemony is an interesting concept of Mearschmeier, an American specialist in International Relations, who tries to impart a kind of relative approach to hegemony. According to Mearschmeier, there is no clear or abstract law as to whether we should have one or many hegemonies. It is an open question: let us consider hegemony as an existing phenomenon without predicting that there will be only one, two, three, or four.

In the case of the globalist vision, hegemony acquires a purely ideological dimension. It is not leadership in the military and strategic domination, but it is ideological and cultural, a domination of values and cultural patterns. Therefore, you are under hegemony, because you follow rules that are not established by you. These rules are so-called “universal” because the West was capable of imposing these on everyone else.

The Neoconservative version is the same as unipolarity - the strategic, open, explicit hegemony of the American Empire. Or there is Trump’s vision for the New Liberal Order which is a little less defined, and not so much scientific. But Trump says “Let’s Make America Great Again.” What he means - nobody knows. He is against the globalist version, which he criticizes. His is not so much Neo-conservative because he was criticized during his election campaign by Neocons very severely. This is a rather “rare” hegemony, which might not be hegemony at all. Trump uses some concepts with no clear meaning. This is important, because it could serve as a kind of transition from hegemonic order to post-hegemonic order.

The main question of hegemony is whether there is one hegemony or hegemonies. The same question is whether there is one civilization or civilizations in the plural. This letter “s” at the end of the word changes everything - whether you are an enemy or friend, black or white, old or young. If there is only Civilization, there can be but one ideology, but if there are civilizations, there are completely different, even opposite ideologies and world visions. Whether we recognize the multitude of civilizations and hegemonies, or if you consider only one hegemony or empire, one letter divides two world visions.

In the Western mind, there is an implicit hierarchy dealing with different kinds of societies - either in the historical way, or in International Relations. There is a hierarchy in International Relations in a cultural sense as well. All types of societies are clearly divided (by the West) into three categories: Civilization, which is the West, Barbarity, which is the East, and Savagery, which is the South. Civilization is “good” and “perfect order”; Barbarity is not so good and only semi- or quasi-ordered; while Savagery is not order at all. Before the end of the Second World War, before racist National Socialism, the West used the metaphors of skin [color] in order to explain this hierarchy. Civilization was “white”, Barbarity was “yellow”, and Savagery was “black.” That was a normative racist attitude. But after the end of the Third Reich, it was impossible to use this racist approach anymore, and everybody became “internationalists.” This racist mark was abolished and “forgotten.” But the sense of the hierarchy is the same, only in other terms. For example, there is the technologically developed West with Human Rights, liberalism, individualism, and social security. This is a kind of law that cannot be challenged. There is the most developed society that is Western civilized society, there is the second world of the BRICS countries trying to keep up with the West to have the same standards but still in “delay.” And there is the third world that cannot enter Civilization. Even without biological racism, we have the same concept of racism in this distinction, because there is only one Civilization, only one example, only one norm - the West. Corruption, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism are reserved for the Rest under the West or the “second-hand West”, such as Russia and China. In Wallerstein’s doctrine, there is the core, the Rich North, the semi-periphery, and the periphery. We deal with this hierarchy everywhere - today without “Racism”, but racism is embedded in this attitude.

If we consider this concept carefully, we can deconstruct all the discourses in International Relations on the West. John Hobson’s book on the Eurocentric conception of International Relations explains that perfectly.

The very idea of hegemonies and civilizations is based on the fact that there are many civilizations, not only the Western one. Other civilizations are neither barbarous nor savage, but merely of different types. If we are dealing not with barbarity or ‘under-civilization”, the West loses its universal, normative meaning. It is one among different possible civilizations. This hierarchy is destroyed, deconstructed, because there is no common universal measure of more or less developed. If you consider living in the forest with animals and without technological devices your choice or destiny, you have all the rights to do so and we will not teach you how to behave - that is a very humanistic attitude.

All of this system, the Western colonial system of hegemony and unipolarity, explodes immediately because it loses ground in International Relations - there is the total decolonization of the world - if we accept the fact of civilizations. There could not be any hierarchy between civilizations - all civilizations are equal, not in the sense of similar, but in that their differences cannot be put into an hierarchical taxonomy. We need to accept them as existing not only in different spaces, but different times, ontologies, and anthropologies. We cannot judge one civilization by criteria taken from another.

For example, in your case, the Chinese could think that some rights in Christianity, liberal society, or in African tribes are disgusting or unacceptable. You will treat them from the Chinese point of view. The same for them: they could find something completely unacceptable in your civilization or ours. But nobody can say “you are wrong, we are right.” There are no unique, universal criteria. We need to accept this diversity in a positive way. Let it be like it is. That means a total, absolute epistemological revolution against Western universalism. And that demands de-colonization.

Antonio Gramsci used the term hegemony in an ideological sense. How could a Marxist, supposed to be a materialist and explain everything in terms of economic relations, arrive at an ideological understanding of hegemony and capitalism as hegemony? Gramsci proposed a very interesting vision which is very important for the Chinese. Economics is at the base, while politics is on the top as, according to Marx, economics is essential for politics, which are only the expression of economics. But when Gramsci analyzed the Soviet experience and Leninism, he arrived at the conclusion that in the Russian Empire there was no proletarian class. Our country, Russia, in the beginning of the 20th century, was not industrialized and there was no proletarian class. So a revolution from a Marxist point of view was impossible. Marx and Engels affirmed exactly the same thing for Russia and the East - before their full capitalization, including through their colonial experience, towards which Marx was very positive and even in favor of colonization because it brought capitalism into pre-capitalist societies and prepared the future proletarian revolution. But what was Leninism? How was a proletarian revolution possible without a proletarian class?

Gramsci explained by his theory that sometimes the will of a political group can go ahead of economic processes. In some situations, political will can replace the economic basis and transform the economy in order to satisfy all the conditions of Marxism - to create artificially a proletarian class out of peasants. The other way was Mao’s theory, who recognized - against Marx - the peasantry as a revolutionary class, which was much more honest and sincere in Mao’s case, less so in the case of Lenin, but Gramsci grasped this well. Gramsci developed this idea to affirm that sometimes culture is more important than politics. You can be active in culture without being linked to a political, proletarian communist party and without any relation to politics or economics, you can create a kind of historical pact. Intellectuals can make a pact with capital and serve capital without being part of the bourgeois class. You can serve capital in your mind. Or, even being rich, prosperous, and a part of this bourgeois system, you can choose the working class and fight against capitalism. Thus, culture has the same autonomy from politics as politics has from economics. That is maybe the case of China: you are using capitalism, but in order to promote your society and your ideals.

Hegemony in Gramsci means that the West and global capitalism try to use not only economics and markets, and not only the political expression of such, democracy and parliamentarism, but also culture. Precisely those intellectuals who make the historical pact with capital are the worst. Hegemony is first and foremost a cultural phenomenon. This means that it is not a political ideology, but a kind of metaphysical decision. You can be in favor of capital as a system, as a metaphysical principle of the total liberation of the individual from any kind of collective identity, or you can choose fidelity to the working class, country, society, identity. It is up to you. Nothing can oblige a human being to serve political or economic interests. The intellectual, who represents all of society, since everybody according to Gramsci is a little bit of an intellectual, represents the integrity of human society as professional thinkers. But an intellectual cannot think outside of the main metaphysical choice between capital and the working class.

So, hegemony is first and foremost a metaphysical principle. You could be on the side of hegemony while living in a socialist society, or being poor, or being a member of a Communist Party. To choose hegemony is an inner orientation. Hegemony penetrates society not only with political and economic structures, but in the mind and heart. It is a metaphysical virus. Hegemony is a metaphysical liberalism, under which you work only in its favor.

Now we finally arrive at multipolarity.

In order to clarify what multipolarity is, we need to establish some oppositions. Multipolarity is against unipolarity. Multipolarity is against globalism. Multipolarity is against multilateralism. Multipolarity is against hegemony in the singular. Multipolarity is against hegemony on three levels - first of all strategic, i.e., against the American military domination of the world with American military bases everywhere in the world except for American soil. America for Americans - maybe that’s what Trump meant. “Yankee go Home.” Multipolarity is against ideological hegemony as globalization, liberalism, human rights. Multipolarity is against hegemony in Gramsci’s concept as a metaphysical, historical pact made by organic intellectuals. The last definition is that multipolarity is pluriversal - this is a concept introduced by Carl Schmitt. In universalism, there is one unique concept of norms and values. “Pluriversal” means the free movement in different directions without one measure for all kinds of societies.

Multipolarity in geopolitics deals with Carl Schmitt’s concepts of Big Spaces or Grossraum, and it is here that we come to the concept of “pole” in multipolarity. How do we define a pole? A pole is a “big space” and civilization. A pole is not only strategic or political; it is linked to a civilization as a culture or special type of society with special values. At the same time, it is not only a culture, but also a strategic space. Thus, in the concept of pole, we have both meanings: power and idea. The ideological and cultural levels and military force are inscribed into the pole in space, in political geography, and in cultural geography at the same time.

Here we can see a very approximate map of different big spaces that should or could be poles of the multipolar world order. Some of them are already poles - such as the United States of America. The European big space could exist and has many possibilities to become an independent pole; China is certainly the main precedent for an independent pole; and Putin’s Russia is trying to be a pole by acting independently from others. That is clear enough in Russian sovereignty regained in Putin’s time. And there is, for example, the Indian big space: economically and demographically India has the possibility to become such a pole. Latin America thinks in the same terms. The Islamic world tries, at least on the theoretical level, to become a pole as well. Africa is less developed and the Pacific big space are less developed. This does not mean “developed” in the sense of culture of civilization - they have their own great civilizations, but as a pole, on the level of power, they might only become poles in the future in the multipolar system. That is the map of the multipolar world order. I have already shown the maps of the globalists, the Pentagon, and CFR. This is the Russian map of multipolarity.

But what is important on the practical level is what we have now, or what we will have tomorrow, and that is a kind of aspiration towards multipolarity. We can see three poles accepted more or less in the multilateralist, globalist version - the American zone, European zone, and Chinese zone. But as we have seen, the multilateralist approach is hidden unipolarity and thinks that there should be chaos everywhere outside of these three.

The majority of Western experts and analysts are totally biased, because the science of International Relations itself is totally biased, Eurocentric. Before being accepted into academic society, you should conclude your pact with capital. They try to use the Gramscian concept as well - they do not let persons who do not share their Western-centric vision. One Canadian-Jewish, Michael Millerman, wrote a philosophical thesis on my ideas, and he was threatened with being thrown out of the academic field and Western universities because he treated my ideas in a neutral way and not blatantly. His was a more or less balanced or neutral philosophical analysis, but he was threatened by the academic society with being thrown out, because if you are on the Western side, you should only criticize and demonize the opponent - that is the normal rule.

In mainstream political analysis, there is no recognition of this fourth pole of Eurasia is absent in all future descriptions of reality. There are different versions on the fate of Europe, how China will be, whether it will become the main enemy of the United States, and there are many details that differ and different viewpoints that are accepted - but when they approach Eurasia and Russia, there is a univocal decision of all scholars that there will be “no Russia” and ‘no fourth pole.” Because if there is this fourth pole today, then every situation in the world order changes - it is not bipolar world order at all, because Russia is big even after losing half of its territory and population after the collapse of the Soviet Union. With us as a pole, the meaning of China, the meaning of Europe, and the possibility for all other countries and civilizations to affirm themselves as independent poles, is gained. That is a crucial point. Russia, once more in history, is in the right place at the right time. That is the key problem for multipolarity.

If we accept that there will be no more Russia, only a Balkanized, chaotic territory as was more or less the case in Yeltsin’s time, then we have unipolarity, hegemony, globalization, and China and Europe are proxies of the West in the multilateral world vision. With the fourth pole, we have a complete different situation. Thanks to the existence of this fourth pole that could not be universal, that could not be dominating through hegemony over China or Europe - we just cannot, we have no universal ideology or ideology at all in Russia. Our weakness could be used in our favor, because now we are in a position when we can save Russia by saving others - Europe and China - from Western domination. Without this, we cannot be sure of our future. That is a purely pragmatic vision.

With this fourth pole, we have real multipolarity with the opportunity for the independence of Latin America, possible independence for the Islamic world, possible independence for the African world, India - everybody acquires the chance to transform into a pole and defend their own civilization. This time, Russia proposes neither colonialism, as in Tsarist times, not some ideology. We just want to defend ourselves as a civilization different from both Eastern and Western. In the concept of multipolarity, Russia is not a country or Western country, but an independent civilization that is partly Western, partly Eastern, but neither Eastern nor Western, but a particular Russian civilization.

The acceptance of this fourth pole changes the whole picture. Now we have multipolarity. Starting with these four poles, we can go further and propose a special role to India, the Islamic world, and Latin America, as is more or less represented in BRICS.

Here we can see the difference between the multipolar and multilateral maps. They are completely different approaches. I call this “more-than-three-polar” world or 4+ world a precise dividing line between two world orders that can be established in the future. Now we are in a transition. We are at the bifurcation point, we can go either way. Nothing is granted. We are living in the end of unipolarity, but we have not yet created a multipolar world order. This process is open. We could be successful or unsuccessful. We are here precisely between.

This state of things is more or less consciously understood by some academic groups in the world. We can call that the “multipolar world theory.” My own book in Russia, The Theory of the Multipolar World, which has been translated into French, is in the process of being published in English, has been translated into Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages, presents this theory, and tries to put all of these elements that I have explained together. Eurasianism is also being developed by our group as a political philosophy that insists that Russia is not a country, but a civilization, and is part of multipolarity. The Fourth Political Theory is another theory developed by us in Russia along with French and Italian intellectual groups, that invites to overcome the classical Western political ideologies - Liberalism, Communism, and Fascism. The Fourth Political Theory invites to go beyond Liberalism, and to be anti-Liberal, but not to be Communist, Fascist, or Nationalist. It is outside of them, because the Fourth Political Theory does not recognize the universalism of the modern West. For us, it is an invitation to provincialize the West, to show that it is one province of the world, not the center. There are many centers and provinces in multipolarity. The Fourth Political Theory is the political expression of multipolarity.

In China, Professor Zhao Tingyang with his concept of Tianxia Tixi, develops the concept of a special Chinese model not only as pure domination by force of strength, badao, but as wangdao, or the concept of moral and ethical hegemony. That concept of wangdao describes not only China as a state, but also other countries that influence China not necessarily in a direct, hegemonic way as in badao. This is a very multipolar approach among Chinese scholars. Yan Xuetong is a realist in International Relations, but his defense of Chinese identity can be regarded as part of multipolarity. At the same time, he challenges the concept of pole and prefers to speak about “units.” Your famous Zhang Weiwei’s offers a very important defense of the particularity of the Chinese way of development. It is a defense of Chinese identity. There is also Qin Yaqing, who applies to IR a conceptualization of different interactions, casual and ordered, that form a kind of “game”, based on different factors, that can be summarized in the traditional Chinese divination system.

In Europe, there is the New Right school. The European New Right is anti-liberal and anti-capitalist, and also includes Traditionalists. It is not the classical, American, or British “new Right” that is liberal. Alain de Benoist is the main philosopher of this school. They have developed a multipolar vision in which Europe should be an independent pole - completely independent from the United States of America, and very friendly towards Russia. They are promoting this in a theoretical way with the concept of Pluriversum, as they are followers of Carl Schmitt. They are a very influential and interesting group of thinkers.

In Latin America, there are different multipolar schools, for example the theory of “foundational non-subordination” promoted by Marcelo Gullo Omodeo in Argentina. There is the “Meridianalism” of Andre Martin in Brazil, concerned with the Global South, which is very close to the Eurasianist vision. There is also Norberto Ceresole, who was a Left Peronist and very influential on Hugo Chavez, his main ideologue, and a partisan for the unification of the Latin American space.

What is interesting here is that there are theories of multipolarity dealing precisely with where the possible poles are. We can see this in Russia, trying to develop multipolarity and affirm herself as a pole, in China trying to be more and more independent from Western hegemony, in Europe, which is trying to challenge Atlanticism, unipolarity, and American domination, and in Latin America. What is strange is that we lack an Islamic concept of a multipolar world. We have only a caricature in the Salafi version of the Caliphate that should be global, and that is impossible as well as theoretically unexplored. But an affirmation of Islamic identity and accepting of the realities of the world is lacking - I do not know why. My works have been translated into Turkish, Persian, and Arabic. There is a huge interest, but I do not know any serious theoretical constructions defending an independence of Islamic civilization. Everyone in Islam is in favor of that, but I am speaking not of the mood in the Islamic world, but of theoretical constructions. The same is the case in India. India pretends to be a very powerful hegemon in South Asia, but there are no texts - it is a very profound, metaphysically developed civilization, but it does not show any signs of a theoretical multipolarity.

So, the theory of the multipolar world, the multipolar approach, challenges Eurocentrism, Modernity, Universalism, and Hegemony. It is based on the presumption of a multitude of civilizations and refuses a hierarchy of them. The multipolar approach is based on anthropological pluralism and a positive evaluation of diversity and new reading of the concept of Other. The Other is not the same or “more or less the same”, it is completely unknown to the West, for whom the Other is “worse” in the traditional racist colonial attitude, or in the liberal attitude the Other is the same. The West lacks a third definition of the Other. Globalists say the Other is exactly the same as ourselves, while racists, colonialists, and nationalists say that they are better [than the Other]. Nowhere here is there the Other, because both are completely obsessed with themselves in a hyper-egoistic attitude. They put the Other only as the worst or the same, but where is the Other? The meaning of the Other is lost.

The theory of the multipolar is an anti-Eurocentric project for the re-provoncialization of Europe, a return to the pre-Columbian vision. If we regard the pre-Columbian vision, we immediately discover that there was a perfect world order from a civilizational point of view, with no colonialism or Western domination. There were traditional empires - the Iranian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Chinese Empire, Arab Empire. Everybody was in the perfect place from a civilizational point of view, but Western Modernity imposed colonialism and hegemony on the planet. The separation between America and Europe that is part of the multipolar world is itself a kind of return to the pre-Columbian time. Now, in the present day, in Syria, the ancient empires have reemerged - we see Iran on the rise, Turkey on the rise, and we can see Russia and China. This is a sign of the return to the pre-Columbian world.

The theory of the multipolar world is anti-modern because modernity is Western. We could say that we propose an alternative modernity or alter-modernity, but we do not agree that modernity is destiny. Modernity was a choice of part of Western society and civilization that led to catastrophe. Maybe it was the path of the historical destiny of the West, but it was not our destiny. Modernity is a Western concept. The theory of the multipolar world rejects the principles of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is optional. Here I suggest reading the French author René Guénon, a French-born Catholic, a philosopher who converted to Islam in Cairo and spent the rest of his life there, entering a Sufi order. He is the greatest author, the founder of the Traditionalist school with a radical critique of modernity and Western universalism. I also recommend Julius Evola.