



The Impact of the Georgian Crisis over the World Order

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The Georgian crisis, with its regional and global reverberations, will remain in history as a symbolic moment for the end of the unipolar world, much like the removal of Romulus Augustus by the Visigoth Odoacer was considered as the date of the collapse of the Roman Empire or as the revolution of Cromwell was considered as an event to mark the end of the feudal order and the beginning of the modern era. When a country (namely Russia) militarily intervenes on the territory of another to unilaterally promote there its own political logic and the international community realizes it does not have the instruments to impose the return to the *status quo ante*, it means that the world is in a crisis of means. When the international community (namely the EU and the US) has no mechanisms to define a common point of view and mobilize a common will to defend a *status quo* and some rules on which it dwells and which tend to preserve it, it means that the world is in a crisis of institutions. When the members of international community (namely, the Euro-Atlantic democracies) are not able to demand to one of them (namely Russia) to respect a single provision of international law which they themselves had not abided by, the world is confronted with a moral crisis. The three crises create the premises for the prevalence of the law of force over the force of the law; they circumscribe the crisis to the international law together with which they mark the crisis of the global order.

The historical significance of the Georgian crisis does not consist in its scenario and unfolding. In this respect, it closely resembles to the smallest detail the American policy in the Western Balkans and, to some extent, in the Persian Gulf after the Cold War; these policies have thus set a precedent, irrespective of what western countries say. The essential part is Russia's showdown towards the US and the fact that the latter can do nothing more than Russia did when it was affected by American unilateralism – mainly

protesting. If the Kosovo solution was only a *sui generis* one, as America and some of its western allies pretend, then the Kremlin proves that *sui generis* solutions can also be applied to other places. Or, an order characterized by and defined as a sum of *sui generis* solutions is, in fact, an anarchy. For the authority of the single superpower it is devastating the fact that, during the same three weeks, the US were defeated – with different means – on the battlefield, indirectly, by Russia in the Caucasus and directly, in the Olympic arena, by China, in Beijing. In the context of these failures, Washington was forced to call back its support for Israel in the strategic action concerning the air-strikes against Iran, an action meant that, at the end of the Bush administration, to deter the nuclear ambitions of the Islamic regime in Tehran.

The collapse of the bipolar world system was not a victory of the capitalist democratic West over the communist totalitarian East but the implosion of the latter under the effect of the objective market laws, correlated with the civilization of the former under the pressure of social demands. At the great scale of history there was more a convergence, which led to an end of the ideological battle short of combatants, rather than the exclusion of the weakest by the strongest or the conversion of the wrongful by the righteous. Therefore, the western bloc, the United States, erroneously also assumed with the triumph the unique title of world peace guardian, a peace organised according to its principles, values and practices. *Pax Americana* could last only as long as its non-American subjects – close to becoming an object of an ending history – had hoped that a the unique superpower has the wish, science and capability to turn the “American dream” not only into a universal project but into a universal reality. Unfortunately, the United States did not know how, couldn’t and did not thrive to integrate neither its very old allies nor its old enemies, neither its new faithful nor its traditional clients in a universe that would combine welfare and dignity, security and freedom, multiculturalism and human solidarity, as they had done on their own territory. Instead they considered themselves in the right of “evangelize” the world imposing the Word of the Holy Scripture of the New American Jerusalem, without the promise land and the offer of saving its dignity. After the end of the Cold War, the American universalism (model) did not exclude American nationalism. After the “Evil Empire” (USSR) has disappeared, the “Good Empire” (USA) had in fact simply become the “American Empire”, mainly preoccupied with collecting its imperial rent rather than with imperial integration. Politico-ideological bipolarism was followed by a politico-ideological unipolarism, when a purely and simply

integrative unipolarism was needed. Needed but not possible. Even without America's errors, Americano-centrism would not have lasted because any unipolarism is essentially unstable. Humankind cannot stand too much on one foot. The American lack of realism and narcissism only accelerated an imminent failure.

But the end of any order announces a new era of disorder. How should one approach this situation which is at least uncomfortable if not threatening?

Some speak of the beginning of a new Cold War. It is not the case. The Cold War was waged between two blocs organised on the basis of opposed ideologies. In what regards the world of today – or at least its main actors – it is grounded on an essentially common ideological background. The Beijing Olympics showed that even China is no longer communist in the Marxist-Leninist meaning of the term. Even if, at the level of real politics, democracies differ – America, the EU, Russia, Japan etc. offer the image of a system with a variable geometry, joining conservative, liberal and controlled, plebiscitary, representative and direct, pluralist and one-party democracies; the ideological debate does not take the form of confrontation and does not concern principles any longer, it is only a matter of shades. In a population objectively reaching globalization, the market rules have triumphed – also though the social market economy – and imposed to the political organization of society a minimum of freedom, transparency and pluralism. Total or massive separation between society and politics has become impossible. This also makes impossible a new Cold War.

However, some people believe that the post-unipolar disorder will concentrate in a heated conflagration opposing the main global and regional actors; especially the US and Russia. This is highly improbable. If the Cold War, but also the world wars preceding it and which originated it, left an important intellectual inheritance, this refers to the certainty of great powers that direct confrontation must be avoided. That certainty is a part of the contemporary political culture. It is not war that is excluded but outright war between the main operators of the world order (or disorder). The small operators can skirmish among themselves because they know the great world guardians, not being able to allow any of the combatants to be completely excluded from the power game and from the global mechanisms of balances, will not accept a total annihilation of any of them. No matter how tough the rhetoric confrontation might be, the United States and Russia will try to maintain a balance among them; it is true, this would be a

dynamic balance but, still, a balance. Stuck between the Euro-Atlantic requirements and the Euro-Asian challenges, the EU will not accept to be tormented by the confrontational obsessions of some of its new eastern member states, inspired by an unfortunate Russophobia which, it's true, tough, has been inspired to them by the blade of the bayonet and impregnated to their souls by the caterpillars of Soviet tanks. Emerging superpowers, such as China, know that their historical momentum lies not in increasing military spending but in increasing economic power which, in its turn, depends on avoiding war.

Peace is not reduced, nonetheless, to the absence of war. The disorder following unipolarism is not a form of peace. It is a chaotic mixture of geopolitical confrontations at global level, taking place between asymmetric power centres with fluctuating identity, in an unregulated international environment (because the old international law, even if not officially buried, is in clinical death) in which unilateral approaches suddenly collide. Searching for a balance is a natural tendency of any entity. Its development in a natural way in a world with asymmetric structures implies multiple painful attempts and reiterations, the final success integrating the sum of previous tragic failures. The alternative is a negotiated and controlled political process which would involve, at each of its stages, all interested global, regional and local actors.

At the end of the 60s of the last century, when, after the experience of the Six Days War and the "Prague Spring", the two Cold War confronting blocs realized that they cannot perfectly control internal dissidences and that they cannot efficiently support dissidences within the opposing camp, the conclusion was that enemies must meet to negotiate, if not the peace, at least a sort of ceasefire as well as the battle rules; this way each one could pursue the desired aims without essentially endangering the existence and projects of the other. Thus the Helsinki Final Act was signed and there was a period called *détente*. This was a complex mechanism for insuring universal balance of opposing forces while each one's dynamic for pursuing specific interests was not stopped.

The experience of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe should inspire those presently responsibly and realistically seeking to transform the new "primordial soup", represented by the disorder following the failed unipolarism, in a new global order. As somewhere a beginning must be made and taking into account that grandiose initiatives risk to

stumble in preparatory phases, a “pilot-conference” can be imagined, confined to the South Caucasus, or one regarding that extended Europe from Vancouver to Vladivostok (inefficiently gathered today in the OSCE). Irrespective of option, it is mandatory to invite all permanent members of the UN Security Council – in order to also insure China’s participation.

Such an international conference should redefine the basic principles of international law and international relations, as those introduced in the UN Charter, the universal vocation treaties and the Helsinki Final Act do not function anymore. Sovereign equality, non-intervention in domestic matters, non-use of force and proportionality of reaction to threats and aggressions, were undermined by recognizing non-state entities (individuals or human communities) as subjects of international law, practically endowed with sovereignty, by supporting a right to intervention (not only for humanitarian purposes but also for security reasons related to the nature of some political regimes) and by formulating several neo-conservative doctrines such as the “pre-emptive strike” (or “preventive strike”). The self-determination right, usually recognized in the case of peoples, was extended not only to minorities but also to communities with questionable civic-cultural identity. Nuclear security is no longer defended by the closed club of powers entitled to have nuclear weapons, the capacity to possess this type of weapons being extended to countries outside this club and even individuals. Faced with these evolutions the comeback to the precepts of the post-war international law is no longer a realistic solution. Preserving rules and practices imposed by unipolarism, especially when a well-acknowledged, respected, enlightened, democratic and responsible guardian is missing (in fact it is even impossible to exist), is not a feasible option, however.

The conference for security and cooperation in post-unipolar order should also review the role, competence, procedures and instruments of international organizations. Also, it would have to update or complete the procedures to be followed in the relations between the world’s political operators as well as establish a new regional and global security and stability warranties system.

A comeback to bipolarism would mean a return to the balance of terror. A comeback to unipolarism would mean a return to the chaos produced by the arbitrary of an asymmetric world. Coming back to the “concert of nations (powers)” system, which had preserved the political status-quo and the international balance of power between 1815 and 1914, through a

mechanism of Congresses, Conferences and Alliances (the Vienna Congress – 1815, the Paris Conference – 1856, the Berlin Congress – 1878, the Bucharest Conference – 1913, and also the Holy Alliance, the Entente, the Triple Alliance) became impossible due to two main reasons: globalization and democratization (of international relations). History – in the meaning of a controlled politically constructed reality – became truly universal so that some European, Euro-Atlantic or Euro-Asian powers cannot control all of the political, economic and social processes at the level of a humanity populated by and fragmented into a multitude of big, medium and small sovereign states, at the same time independent and interdependent. Political geography is no longer Euro-centric or Atlantic-centred. “Peace conference” can no longer simply redraw borders, according to the inspiration of some major players, associated according to the needs of the balance of power. On the other hand, imperialism itself has become democratic; on this basis it has developed its internal cohesion and external attraction force.

The global order needs to be structured. It requires identification or construction of world poles. We are talking about, however, about radiating poles not about constraining poles. These poles (with regional action and global vision) base their power on the offer – mainly on the solidarity they can guarantee, and not on coercion – on resources they can seize. Also, they must be characterized by a double balance: inter-polar balance, concerning resources they mobilize and control, and the intra-polar balance between regional obligations each one assumes and the rights thus obtained. The past experiences should be synthesized into the model of a multipolar globalism, characterized by the symmetry of the poles acting through a mechanism of global solidarity and subsidiarity.

In this context and starting from the present Caucasus crisis, the EU also has to solve the dilemma if it wants Russia to become a pole integrated into the subsystem of the Northern Hemisphere or one being part of the subsystem currently envisioned by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?!

The most important and most urgent of the dilemmas to be solved is, though, the following: do we want that our path towards such a necessary new order to be guided by our facts or by our political will, by the emotional reaction to the challenges of history or by our action guided by reason? The answer to this question will decide if the future of this generation will be again one of conflicts, blood, tears and sufferance or one of intelligent construction, orderly creation and shared benefit.