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New World Order: 2022 as a Turning Point

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I. Introduction

Throughout the History of Humanity, some moments are considered turning points because they are "more than just an important event that happened a long time ago", as they represent "an idea, event or action that directly, and sometimes indirectly, caused change" in multiple dimensions, namely social, cultural, political, or economic (Pritchard, 2013, p. 1). However, the list of turning points in History is far from consensual, as the importance or the influence of the events depends on the vision of each part of the world. Thus, there are some turning points for the Western model which are not regarded in the same way by other cultures. On the other hand, there are some events whose importance is globally accepted. For example, in June 1989, *The Unesco Courier* mentioned the 1789 French Revolution as an idea that changed the world and the 1914-18 and 1939-45 conflicts are labeled as word wars, despite being European in their beginning because they changed the perception of the world order, as it also happened with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union.

In February 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be regarded as a turning point in History because it was clearly a step in contesting the American hegemony by a country that intends to rule over another order: the Eurasian one. Thus, more than a regional conflict, the invasion means the beginning of a fight between two orders, while the third order – the Chinese Silk Belt Road Order – witnesses the evolution of the war, in a twofold position, making appeals to peace, but refusing to exert its influence on Russia, due to the no-limits partnership that both countries have signed.

According to China, this turning point is regarded as a challenge to the American hegemony and a necessary step towards a post-hegemonic world – Tianxia – a concept that Zhao Tingyang has revisited and that is being well-accepted by the actual Chinese elite. However, this goal is a fallacy because "rather than guide us toward a post-hegemonic world order, Tianxia presents a new hegemony where imperial China's hierarchical governance is updated for the twenty-first century (Callahan, 2008, p. 749). Consequently, the present friendly relationship between China and Russia will change when China's expansionism towards Central Asia enters into the so-called Russian backyard: the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Long ago, Lord Palmerston advised that England had neither eternal allies nor perpetual enemies, and this statement lives on both for England and other countries, namely the great powers.

Flockhart (2016), after analyzing the "three current narratives about the future global order; a multipolar narrative; a multi-partner narrative and a multi-culture narrative", concluded that "although each narrative point to a plausible future, neither presents a complete understanding of what lies ahead", and proposed a new model because "what seems to be emerging is several different 'orders' (or international societies) nested within an overall international system". Moreover, she defends that this new model does not mean the end of the liberal international order, but, at the same time, the liberal order will be forced to adapt itself to the coming multi-order world.

Despite some differences respecting the concept of a multi-order world, namely the role to be played by the States, this chapter accepts Flockhart's proposal but considers that the emergent world order will lead to the end of the American hegemony and a subsequent multiple-order world with four orders: three already well-defined - the liberal, the Eurasian, and the Silk Belt and Road orders -, and another one still in the limbo - the Islamic order. Furthermore, the chapter defends that the process concerning three of these

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orders is already underway and only the Islamic order is still waiting for its leadership power, due to the multi-secular division between Shiites and Sunnis.

The chapter also proves that Russia and China have been putting into practice this process for some decades resorting to the change from soft to sharp power, trying to weaken the Liberal Order, namely interfering in the electoral process in some Western countries, and influencing the foreign public opinion according to their interests.

Finally, in what concerns the relationship between Russia and China, the chapter defends that the PRC and Russia view each other as partners in their efforts to challenge the U.S.-led global order, but also agrees with those scholars who believe that "while the PRC and Russia both seem to reject the current world order, their visions of what ought to replace it may not be consistent" because they "view the PRC as a «revisionist» power working to change certain aspects of the existing order, possibly to supersede it in the long run.[1]" Probably, the Chinese post-hegemonic world or the harmonious world represents just China's will of becoming the sole future hegemonic power.

II. Defining World Order

The concept of order depends on being understood according to an analytic concept or a normative percept. According to Rosenau (2018, pp. 10-11), "the problem of differentiating between empirical and normative orders can be nicely illustrated by the question of whether global arrangements marked by a high degree of disorder are to be considered a form of order. Thus, if "by an «empirical order» is meant the arrangements through which global affairs move through time, then obviously a vast array of diverse arrangements can qualify as forms of order" while if we "associate order with minimal degrees of stability and coherence, that periods of international history marked by war, exploitation, and a host of other noxious practices are viewed as disorderly arrangements - as «chaos» or «entropy,» or anything but forms of order."

Rodrik & Walthere (2021, p. 4) state that "there is no canonical definition of «world order», but common to most conceptions is the idea that relations among some set of global actors be regulated by a set of rules or institutions that define who the key actors are and help them manage their interactions with each other". However, they recognize that "«world order» is not even a consensus term, insofar as scholars use «international order», «international society» or «global order» interchangeably and sometimes inconsistently.

Obviously, some authors are more rigorous in the use of these terms. For example, Hedley Bull defends that world order is wider than international order because the former position includes not only the States but also non-States actors while the latter one considers the sovereign States as the sole actors. According to Tomé (2021, p. 91), who refuses Bull's argument, "the world order can include several and distinct international orders, but an international order is only world or global if and when extended to a planetary scale".

Blackwill & Wright (2020, p. iv) state that "world order is a fundamental concept of international relations" and can be defined as "a description and a measure of the world's condition at a particular moment or over a specified period of time". Moreover, world order "tends to reflect the degree to which there are widely accepted rules as to how international relations ought to be carried out and the degree to which there is a balance of power to buttress those rules so that those who disagree with them are not tempted to violate them or are likely to fail if in fact they do". However, this definition is far from consensual. Moreover, world order is often used as a synonym with international order, despite the concepts being different depending on the criterion, namely of the actors involved in the process.

Henry Kissinger (2014) recognizes that "our age is insistently, at times almost desperately, in pursuit of a concept of world order", but "no truly global 'world order' has ever existed", and "what passes for order in our time was devised in Western Europe nearly four centuries ago (p. 2). However, "the Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality, not a unique moral insight" and "no single claim to truth or universal rule had prevailed in Europe's contests", as the negotiations were "conducted without the involvement or even the awareness of most other continents or civilizations" (p. 3). Thus, "the idea of world order was applied to the geographic extent known to the statesmen of the time—a pattern repeated in other regions" (p. 4).

Finally, Kissinger draws attention to an important point concerning a future world order stating that "any system of world order, to be sustainable, must be accepted as just—not only by leaders but also by citizens" and "it must reflect two truths: order without freedom, even if sustained by momentary exaltation, eventually creates its own counterpoise; yet freedom cannot be secured or sustained without a framework of order to keep the peace" (p. 8). Nowadays, it must be made clear that only the Western liberal order accepts that freedom and order are interdependent while the other orders, namely Russian and Chinese ones, go on considering that they represent "opposite poles on the spectrum of experience" (p. 8) because neither Russia nor China are democracies.

As seen before, this is an endless question in a changing world where there is governance without government because governance "is a more encompassing phenomenon than government" as it "embraces governmental institutions, but it also

[1] «China-Russia relations». Available at https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12100

subsumes informal, non-governmental mechanisms whereby those persons and organizations within its purview move ahead, satisfy their needs, and fulfill their wants". Thus, "governance is a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority (or, at least, by the most powerful of those it affects), whereas governments can function even in the face of widespread opposition to their policies." (Rosenau, 2018, p. 4)

III. The End of the Old-World Order

Thirlwell (2005, pp. 1-3) states that "perhaps the first time that the term 'new world order' was thrown around in international policy discussions was in the period after the First World War when it was used by US President Woodrow Wilson during the creation of the League of Nations and the associated efforts to build a new international regime of collective security". That was the so-called new world order version 1.0 that would be replaced by two further versions.

Version 2.0 started after World War II, the two military agreements – NATO and Warsaw – established a bipolar world, and "the United States and the Soviet Union reached an informal agreement not to challenge each other's vital interests in Europe" because "the United States refrained from challenging Soviet domination of eastern Europe; in return, the Soviet Union refrained from challenging US leadership over western Europe" (Kocs, 2019, p. 2).

Then, there was a world order because both sides agreed to accept the Charter of the United Nations and to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, even when they did not meet their obligations in several situations and different areas. For example, "the rule of law, as it is understood in the West and certainly within the context of the BWS, has simply failed to materialize over the 18 years since China joined the WTO" (Jannace & Tiffany, 2019, p. 1393). WTO which replaced the GATT as one of the three institutions of the Bretton Woods system together with the IMF and the World Bank.

Version 3.0 started in the early 1990s, when "a few weeks after Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, US President George H.W. Bush told Congress that 'out of these troubled times, our objective - a new world order - can emerge". At about that time, after the fall of the Berlin wall, the United States of America felt free to impose American hegemony, and, during several years, "the major non-allied powers largely acquiesced to the U.S.-led international order" (Blackwill & Wright, 2020, p. 8), until the time when Russia and China started to accuse the USA of imposing all over the world a model based only on Western-generated norms.

This double situation explains Kenneth Waltz's lecture, given on 9 March 1993 at the London School of Economics and Political Science, in which he talked about two world orders: "the world order that George Bush and no doubt others would like to bring into being and would like to think that America is promoting" and "the one that we now live with and are going to have to live within the next decade or two" (Waltz, 1993, p. 187). Indeed, as Applebaum (2002, p. 2) denounces, "George Bush Senior invented the phrase the «New World Order», but he had no policy to go with it".

The present phase represents the evolution of that dichotomy. However, according to this chapter, we cannot label it as the new world order 4.0. On the contrary, we should consider that we are watching the beginning of a new model: a multi-order world.

As "any measure of order necessarily includes elements of both order and disorder and the balance between them" (Blackwill & Wright, 2020, p. iv), in the first moment, China and Russia started to refuse the previous model because they could not agree with documents that had been thought and written by western minds and hands. At the same time, they changed traditional soft power into smart and sharp power, aiming to influence not only foreign public opinion but also the results of electoral acts and governmental decisions in several countries. The old-world order had started its path to an end.

IV. Soft, Smart, and Sharp Power: Defining the Concepts

In 1990, Joseph Nye created the concept of soft power in his book *Bound to Lead: the changing nature of American Power*. Some years later, Nye (2004, p. 11) reflected again on power and reaffirmed that "the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture […], its political values […], and its foreign policies". Moreover, he concluded that the nature of power was changing because "winning hearts and minds has always been important, but it is even more so in a global information age", a time when "modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history" (p. 1). Indeed, the evolution of mass media and the emergence of the networking model, allowing many to many communications, proved that the increasing speed of information means power. This reality is valuable not only for democratic countries because authoritarian regimes are aware that they can take advantage of that possibility.

However, after a period when autocratic countries intended to project soft power "in the sense of obtaining desired outcomes", they concluded that the results were far from desirable. Thus, the strategy of soft power was not enough, and a new approach was required but avoiding the consequences of using hard power. In other words, they understood that there was not a direct correlation between the big investment of financial resources – according to Xin Liu (2018), in a period, China's investment in soft power exceeded "the

combined government spending of the U.S., UK, France, Germany and Japan" - and the achieved goals. Thus, at the first time, they used smart power, a concept just coined in 2004 by Nossel, meaning "the capacity of an actor, entity or a nation to effectively combine the elements of hard and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing or mutually complementary so as to achieve the desired aim effectively," as it happened, for example, when "the US was capping Iran's nuclear ambitions by enforcing crippling sanctions while retaining the hard power option." (Singh, 2018, p. 7)

Later, they changed soft and smart power to sharp power, despite refusing to accept this type of modification, and insisting that they had no hidden agenda. Indeed, when Singh (2018, p. 10) mentions that "China's use of political power in New Zealand (NZ) is another interesting example" of smart power because "at least three of the country's Members of Parliament (MPs) of Chinese descent have been active in politics, possibly furthering Chinese interests" or when he identifies the three tools of Chinese strategy: "(1) win over the political elite by offers of investments; (2) win over pliable and pro-China elites by inducements and offers and; (3) create dependence and seek favorable political responses", this strategy should be considered sharp power.

Sharp power is a concept coined in 2017, despite some authors disagree about its origins. Shen (2020) affirms that its founder was Juan Pablo Cardenal[2] and Shao (2019, p. 130) defends that it was created in the *International Forum for Democratic Studies*, while Hanouna, Neu, Pardo, Tsur & Zahavi (2019, p. 99) say that its creators were Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig in a *National Endowment for Democracy* (NED) report.

The concept is contested by some authors, namely Xin Liu (2018)[3], who criticizes Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig's proposal on the issue, based on the assumption that hard edge of China's soft power has become "so sharp that it is deemed to have changed the nature of soft power" because it "pierces, penetrates, or perforates the political and information environments in the targeted countries through the use of outward-facing censorship, manipulation and distraction."

Moreover, Xin Liu also criticizes Nye's article «How sharp power threatens soft power, defending that to Nye, the difference between soft power and sharp power "lies in the «how» and «why»[and] when the term is simply directed against the «who», then it is nothing more than a new term that describes an old threat", and defending that "no new term is needed" because "sharp power is neither soft nor hard power – it is the product of an unskilled mixing of the two, or put simply, unsmart power." Shao (2019, p.129) also considers the ambiguity of the designation referring that it presents "fatal deficiencies in four aspects: (1) its unclear boundary with soft power and hard power; (2) its unnecessity due to overlap characteristics with the existing concept of "smart power"; (3) its ideology-led essence disguised in academic terminology; and (4) its ineffective countermeasure to deal with the real threat."

This is an endless discussion because we can identify the evolution of some authors concerning the use of the concepts. For example, Nye (2011a, p. 9) defended that the present great challenges "are going to require a different conception of power. Power with, rather than power over. And they are going to require us to have policies of smart power, in which we learn to combine our hard and soft power resources to get the outcomes that we want. In the same year, Nye (2011b, p. 211) wrote that "combining soft power with an already highly developed economic and military power has enabled China to implement a smart power strategy in its relations with the outside world". Later, in 2018, Nye will recognize that "although sharp power and soft power work in very different ways, the distinction between them can be hard to discern"[4], meaning that some actions start as soft power, but, in a second moment, they become sharp power.

To sum up, from a Western point of view, it is undeniable that China and Russia are trying not only to influence but also to interfere in the political decisions of the countries whose decisions can adversely affect Chinese and Russian interests, as the following examples demonstrate, proving that both countries, but especially "Russia has been especially adept at exploiting rifts within democratic nations" (Walker & Ludwig, 2017, p. 13)

V. Sharp Power as Chinese and Russian Strategy to Deconstruct the Previous World Order

This point tries to exemplify the ways of changing soft or smart power into sharp power without raising questions about the real intention behind the actions. Thus, for example, China has sponsored the establishment of Confucius Institutes almost in all the countries that Beijing considers vital for Chinese interests. However, despite many Confucius Institute activities seeming innocuous, "emphasizing Chinese language instruction and cultural events such as film exhibitions, other elements of their activities are out of place in a university context" because "Chinese

[2] Available at https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/the-world-is-awakening-to-chinas-sharp-power/.

[3] Xi Liu (2018). What sharp power? It is nothing but «unsmart» power. Available at What Sharp Power? It's Nothing But "Unsmart" Power | USC Center on Public Diplomacy (uscpublicdiplomacy.org).

[4] Available at https://www.pacificcouncil.org/newsroom/how-sharp-power-threatens-soft-power.

government control over staffing and curriculum ensures that both will subtly promote CCP positions on issues like territorial disputes or religious minorities in China" (Walker & Ludwig, 2017, p. 16). According to Beijing, culture and higher education are fertile ground for sharp power and it explains their high budgets. Fish (2018) mentions "the hundreds of millions of dollars Chinese individuals and the Chinese Communist Party spend in U.S. universities, or the influx of students from mainland China—roughly 350.000 in the United States, up more than fivefold from a decade ago" and denounces the presence of sharp power, stating that "some Chinese students, American faculty members, and human rights activists believe Chinese students and faculty sometimes spy on other Chinese students—and, to a lesser extent, American professors."[5]

Confucius Institute and the Chinese student body abroad are not the sole tools used by Chinese sharp power, as many scholars have already proved. For example, Cole (2018, pp. 11-12) identifies a net or a constellation of organizations worldwide serving China's operations abroad, namely: "International Liaison Department of the CCP, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Central Propaganda Department, Hanban (Confucius Institute), party-state media, the China Association for Friendly International Contact (CAIFC), which has ties to the PLA Political Work Department (formerly the General Political Department – Liaison Department), the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (CCPPNR), the Ministry of State Security-linked China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CIISS), the China Foundation for International Strategic Studies (CFISS), the China-US Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), the Centre for Peace and Development Studies (CPDS), the External Propaganda Bureau (EPB), and the China Energy Fund Committee (CEFC)."

For a long period, the mission of these organizations seemed to be part of the strategy of Chinese soft or smart power, and it was not deeply scrutinized because most countries, "have been slow in acknowledging the problem [of sharp power], in part due to a lack of expertise as well as the economic attractiveness of China" (Cole, 2018, p. 13). However, more recently, their activities in some countries, namely Australia and New Zealand, started to be analyzed more carefully and the real goal of their mission was clearly understood.

The evolution of digital technologies represents an opportunity for Chinese sharp power in several areas involving both public and private organizations. For example, Osnos (2020) tells that "in early 2009, Coke was negotiating a $2.4 billion deal to buy China Huiyuan Juice Group—the largest-ever foreign takeover of a Chinese company. But, on March 15th, the F.B.I. alerted Coke executives that hackers had broken into their system and were rummaging through e-mails about the negotiation, recording keystrokes, and controlling their computers remotely". As the hackers "worked from a twelve-story building on the outskirts of Shanghai: Unit 61398 of the People's Liberation Army"[6] there is no doubt that Xi Jinping's Government was aware of the strategy.

The mentioned actions are part of the Chinese strategy of conducting "successful influence operations — overt and covert attempts to sway public opinion and decision-making in the heart of Western democracies", including "abuse of international arrest warrants to muzzle dissent; constraining discussion and activity on university campuses; curbing freedom of assembly for anti-CCP protesters; cyberattacks and data heists; debt-diplomacy traps; disinformation campaigns; divide-and-rule diplomatic gambits; forcing Western companies to adopt contentious Chinese terminology; infiltrating political systems; intimidating Chinese people living abroad; pressuring cultural institutions to shun anti-CCP artists and performers; preventing unfavorable depictions of China in popular culture; and punishing or swamping critical media coverage." (Lucas, 2020, pp. 2-3).

Given the above, the Western order must pay systematic attention to China's foreign policy because it represents a sharp threat to the liberal model.

In what respects Russia's sharp power, the tools are different because, according to (Walker & Ludwig, 2017, p. 16), the Kremlin "has far fewer financial and human resources at its disposal, as well as more complicated historical relationships with many countries." Concerning the second point of the previous citation, Shekhovstov (2019, pp. 4-5) published a study in which Russian interference in foreign electoral acts was evident. Moreover, he explained that "each case of Russian interference is special and quite the opposite of routinised practice" because "each case is a juncture of unique conditions that themselves derive from various factors reflecting realities in Western nations and Russia." Thus, he identifies five factors: "1. Putin's regime is not satisfied with the prevailing political attitudes towards Russia in Western Country X. 2. There are political forces in Country X that are significant enough and are ready to cooperate with Russian pro-Kremlin actors- 3. Meddling in the elections in favor of particular political forces does not clash with other, non-political interests of Putin's regime in Country X.

[5] Fish, I. (2018). «The other political correctness. Why are America's elite universities censoring themselves on China?» Available at https://newrepublic.com/article/150476/american-elite-universities-selfcensorship-china.

[6] Osnos, E. (2020). The future of America's contest with China. Available at https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/01/13/the-future-of-americas-contest-with-china.

4. Russia has relevant human and structural resources to interfere in the electoral process in Country X. 5. Political culture in Country X is conducive to Russian influence."

These five factors explain the flexibility of Putin's sharp power because each case is different and the Russian ecosystem of sharp power acts accordingly with that reality. In fact, Putin's former activity as a KGB member provided him a concrete and vital knowledge about the role that Russian intelligence should play in the world arena. Thus, he has established an ecosystem to put into practice the Kremlin's *Four Ds Strategy:* Dismiss, Dismay, Distort, and Distract, as can be seen in the *GEC Special Report: Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem*, elaborated by the *State Department's Global Engagement Center*, and available since the 5th of August 2020[7]. The report "outlines the five pillars of Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem and how these pillars work together to create a media multiplier effect." Moreover, it highlights the site profiles of seven elements of the ecosystem, such as The Strategic Culture Foundation; Global Research; New Eastern Outlook; News Front; SouthFront; Katehon, and Geopolitica.ru.

The previous examples are just a drop in the ocean of China and Russia's sharp power, but they seem to be enough for proving that both countries are challenging not only the American hegemony but also the Western liberal order, explaining that "Moscow and Beijing also support one another in the face of U.S. and allied complaints about Russian and Chinese coercive expansion and other steps challenging the regional order and global norms backed by the United States" (Sutter, 2017, p. v).

To sum up, the world of multiple orders is already ongoing and sharp power is a diplomatic tool used by each order.

VI. Putin's Eurasian Order

Eurasianism is a phenomenon whose roots come from the 18th century, but its origin as a theory was just in the 20th century, more precisely in the decade of 1920. However, Putin's enthusiasm for eurasianism is more recent. Thus, it is important to quote Entin & Entina (2016, pp. 590-591), who defend that "Eurasianism has passed three stages in its development: the ideological formation of Eurasianism (Petr Chaadaev, Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Danilevsky, Konstantin Leontiev and others); classical Eurasianism (1920–1930s); and Neo-eurasism". Moreover, they "convincingly say that the fourth stage has just begun", pointing to Putin´s interpretation of the concept.

Dostoievsky and Danilevskiy are the two most important names of the first stage, a period when Eurasianism was already seen as a reaction against Europe. For instance, the titles of some chapters of Danilevsky's book are indisputable proof, such as: «What does Europe have against Russia?», «Europe's ignorance regarding Russia», «Europe does not recognize us as one of its own», «Russia does not belong to Europe», and «Europeanism: the sickness of Russian life. This reaction against Europe can also be found in Dostoievsky's *The Diary of a Writer* in which he made plenty of statements against Western Europe, namely, "in Europe we are mere canaille" (p. 579); "in Europe everybody looked us mockingly" (p. 580); "Europeans did not want to recognize us as their own despite anything, despite any sacrifices – under any circumstances" (p. 581) because they looked upon Russians as aliens and newcomers who expressed "enthusiastic faith" on following the Western model while "they themselves – alas – began to lose, little by little, this faith in themselves" (p. 579).

The previous quotes are enough to prove Dostoievsky and Danilevsky's rejection of the European way of living and acting, defending that "Russia is not Europe, and that European norms, values and principles do not suit Russia, which will go its own way" (Arbatova, 2019, p. 7). This feature is also identified in the present stage of neo-Eurasianism whose main authors are Alexander Dugin, Vladislav Surkov, Ivan Ilyin, Panarin, Nikolai Berdyaev, Lev Gumilev, and Vladimir Solovyov.

Some of these authors exercise a strong influence on Putin, despite some controversies on the issue. For example, Fujii (2022, pp. 3-4) affirms that "after the Second World War, Ilyin wrote a work that has been an important influence on Putin and which the Russian President ordered his country's governors to read in 2014", and that "a few months after the inauguration of his third term, novel concepts seemed to be increasingly incorporated into Putin's intellectual repertoire". However, concerning Ilyin's influence on Putin, Laruelle (2017, p. 2) refuses it arguing that "Putin has quoted Ilyin on only five occasions (in 2005, 2006, 2012, 2013 and 2014); three of these were addressed to the federal assemblies and two to military audiences", and "this number of quotes is far fewer than those from many other thinkers among the regime's pantheon". Moreover, she adds that "the [Orthodox] Church was the driving force behind the repatriation of Ilyin's remains and his reburial at the Donskoy Monastery in 2005", and so, "rehabilitating Ilyin is part of this faction's broader agenda of reintegrating the White émigré past into the national master narrative." Moreover, the lack of consensus is also the rule concerning the influence of the philosopher Dugin on Putin's decisions.

Thus, regarding Dugin's fourth political theory and his influence on Putin, LeQuire (2018, p. 38) defends that "without a clear portrait of Dugin's thought,

[7] Available at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pillars-of-Russia%E2%80%99s-Disinformation-and-Propaganda-Ecosystem_08-04-20.pdf.

it is hard to understand Putin's long-term strategy in Ukraine; but we should resist the urge to view Dugin as the secret key to that strategy. While Putin's philosophy is undoubtedly informed by Eurasianism, his promotion of the ideology's most extreme variants may provide cover for a more pragmatic agenda."

The previous statement points clearly to Dugin´s influence on Putin. However, the editor of Dugin´s book *Last War of the World-Island, The Geopolitics of Contemporary Russia,* John B. Morgan, wrote a note affirming that "although the geopolitical situation of Russia has changed considerably since then, especially as regards the Ukrainian crisis and the subsequent outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine, Alexander Dugin has made it clear that he stands by his original assessment and criticism of Putin's approach, and that only by Russia's assertion of itself as a land-based regional power in opposition to the sea-based Atlanticism of the United States and NATO can Russia survive in any genuine sense." Furthermore, by the end of 2022, Dugin analyzed Putin's Ukraine invasion on *Telegram* and, as the result was far from successful, he was very critical and called "for President Vladimir Putin to be toppled." The social media platform later deleted his tirade against Putin, but it is not excessive to recognize the beginning of a deep divergence between the politician and the philosopher who believes that "there is only one way out – to reject the classical political theories, both winners and losers, strain the imagination, seize the reality of the new global world, correctly decipher the challenges of Postmodernity, and to and create something new – something beyond the political battles of the 19th and 20th centuries." (Dugin, 2012, p. 6). According to Dugin's fourth theory, "the new Eurasian empire will be constructed on the fundamental principle of the common enemy: the rejection of Atlanticism, strategic control of the USA, and the refusal to allow liberal values to dominate us" (Dugin, 1997, p. 216).

More cases of influence on Putin's politics could be pointed out, but one should not forget that Putin, despite not being a thinker, can make the reinterpretation of an author's thoughts, according to his intentions. For example, Fujii (2022, p. 4) affirms that "in addition to previous influences, the ideas of the Russian historian and ethnologist Lev Gumilev began to be articulated within a broader geopolitical and civilisational discourse", and that "in particular, the Russian President has explicitly mentioned the concept of passionarnost ('passionarity') in his speeches, showing convergence between his and the thinker's visions."

Laruelle (2008) affirmed that some Russian figures, namely Putin, have "begun to stress a geopolitics that puts Russia at the center of a number of axes: European-Asian, Christian-Muslim-Buddhist, Mediterranean-Indian, Slavic-Turkic, and so on". Some years later, the ideology of empire, as well as Putin's Eurasian order, is already moving and the so-called special military operation in Ukraine is just the second step, after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, meaning that Putin is drawing its Western line. Concerning Putin's partnership with Xi Jinping, Rumer (2917, p. 25) states that it "is here to stay for the foreseeable future, or at least so long as the current domestic political arrangement exists in Russia" because "it is a product of Russia's domestic circumstances, its position on the world stage, and global trends, as well as of a deliberate series of strategic choices by Russian policymakers."

This chapter accepts that vision only partially. Indeed, the partnership will last till the moment when China and Russia's interests clash in Central Asia.

VII. The Chinese Order: Tianxia as the Strategy

Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China and the end of the century of humiliation on the first day of October 1949, and, since then, the new country started a long march towards a prominent place in the international arena.

However, there have been several changes concerning China's modern diplomacy since the time when Zhou Enlai was charged to establish it, based on the assumption that "in order to distance the new regime from this humiliating legacy, the diplomacy of the People's Republic would need to win the respect of other nations while never allowing its own diplomats to show weakness." (Martin, 2021, p. 6) According to the previous source, "Zhou's solution was to model Chinese diplomacy on the military force that had propelled the Communists to power: the People's Liberation Army." Thus, Zhou Enlai told the new recruits "to think and act like the People's Army in civilian clothing". Indeed, this type of wolf-warrior diplomacy would not be followed by Deng Xiaoping.

Singh (2018, p. 9) defends that "after Mao, Deng Xiaoping realized the need to modernize and enunciated the famous 'four modernizations' as the goals of the political leadership." Thus, Deng's foreign policy "was dictated by the 24-characters dictum: observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership.". This type of diplomacy was softer than the wolf-warrior model, but according to the Chinese's rule of being patient.

However, after becoming a member of the World Trade Organization, in 2001, the increasing China's economic growth led the Chinese elite to change Deng's diplomacy, and "fast-forward to 2012, the ascendance to power of Xi Jinping and his 'China Dream' of 'national rejuvenation' fundamentally altered the PRC's ways of conducting business with the world".

Then, "Deng's 24-character strategy is all but forgotten" while "China's rise, Xi's consolidation of power, and an assertive and muscular foreign policy supported by a modern, 'informatized' military have propelled it to challenge." The wolf-warrior diplomacy was back under the name of sharp power strategy.

Nowadays, the Chinese elites are completely devoted to Tianxia, a concept recreated by Zhao Tingyang that has recently "been redeployed by China's intellectuals of the state and public intellectuals among the Chinese diaspora in ways that blur the conceptual boundaries between empire and globalism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism" (Callahan, 2007, p. 5), based on the idea that the problem is not the existence of failed states, but of a failed world and pointing to a post-hegemonic world, the so-called 'harmonious world'.

According to Zhao "the world has serious political problems that need to be solved first conceptually, and then institutionally." Thus, Zhao defends that "China's ethical system of domestic and international order was destroyed by the violent tendencies of selfish (Western) nation-states that operated in the Westphalian world system that continues to order the world", and he provides "the Tianxia system as the solution to the world's problems, arguing that we need to think through the world to understand it, and thus effectively and legitimately govern it." (Callahan, 2007, p. 10). It must be said that according to Callahan (2008, p. 758), in 2005, Chinese President Hu Jintao presented the four pillars for a harmonious world in the United Nations Organizations.

The real meaning of Tianxia is far from consensual, mainly among Western scholars. For example, Callahan (2008, pp. 758-759) denounces it as a threat to the world because "rather than guide us toward a post-hegemonic world order, Tianxia presents a new hegemony where imperial China's hierarchical governance is updated for the twenty-first century." Obviously, this is an interpretation refused by the Chinese governmental elite.

Nowadays, there is no doubt that China is already an important player in international relations. In fact, as Lucas (2020, p. 2) states, China has "developed formidable offensive capabilities, including a blue-water navy, nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles, which change the balance of power: in the Asia-Pacific region now, and globally soon", i.e. China is not like the ancient paper tigers. Its political and economic claws are real and powerful, despite Xi Jinping's constant smile.

VIII. The Islamic Order: A Process Still in the Limbo

Faith plays an important role in many countries, namely in those where there is no separation between religion and politics, and it should be taken into account concerning the evolution of the world order.

Indeed, some Islamic groups are becoming an increasing threat to American order because they accuse the USA of intending to impose its way of living all over the world, and not respecting other cultures. Barber (1992) defends, that there is a fight involving "Jihad vs. McWorld". The former delivers "a different set of virtues: a vibrant local identity, a sense of community, solidarity among kinsmen, neighbors, and countrymen, narrowly conceived", but also guarantees "parochialism and is grounded in exclusion" being solidarity "secured through war against outsiders", and often meaning "obedience to a hierarchy in governance, fanaticism in beliefs, and the obliteration of individual selves in the name of the group". The latter is "tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce", and whose dynamic is based on four imperatives: "a market imperative, a resource imperative, an information-technology imperative, and an ecological imperative." [8]

This is the reason explaining that the 2001 attacks against the heart of the American model were celebrated in many Islamic countries. Their citizens miss the time when "they and their allies were the party of God; their enemies were the enemies of God […] and the lives of their subjects were ordered by the infallible laws of God." Moreover, "their decrees were issued in the name of God alone, for sovereignty was God's, to be exercised by man solely on His behalf", and "prosperity, for man and state, was by the grace of God." (Kramer, 1980, p. 3)

However, despite a common faith, the Islam world is far from being homogenous in a political sense. For example, Abdillah (2008, p. 56) states that "the idea of constitutionalism is usually identified with secular thought, but in most Muslim countries it has been adjusted to or even based on Islamic principles", explaining that "most constitutions in the Muslim countries stipulate the position of Islam in the state, but they promote popular sovereignty (siyadat al-sha`b) rather than the sovereignty of God".

This reality leads to a typology with several branches, as "the countries can be classified into six groups: (1) Those that stipulate that Islam is the state religion, the head of state should be Muslim, and the Shariah is national law, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, and Libya. (2) Those that stipulate that Islam is the state religion, the head of state should be Muslim, and the Shariah is the major source of legislation, such as Syria. (3) Those that stipulate that Islam is the state religion, and the Shariah is the major source of legislation, such as Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. (4) Those that stipulate that Islam is the state religion, and the head of state should

[8] «Jihad vs. McWorld». Available at https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1992/03/jihad-vs-mcworld/303882/.

be Muslim, such as Tunisia, Algeria, and others. (5) Those that stipulate that Islam is the state religion, such as Jordan, Malaysia, and others. (6) Those that do not mention Islam in their constitution, as in the case of Turkey and Indonesia. "(p. 56)

This typology points out that the most important countries belonging to the first group are best placed to rule an eventual Islamic order, namely Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two countries commanding the Sunni and Shiite forces. However, it is noteworthy that Turkey, under Erdogan, is developing a kind of transnational populism, bringing to mind Sayyid Qutb's thought, i.e. "a Muslim has no nationality except his religious beliefs" (Hill, 2011, p. xiii). As Kramer (1980, p. 3) reminds us, "in an age now past but not forgotten, nearly all Muslims lived in the shelter of an Islamic order", and this memory should be taken into account concerning the Islamic dream of regaining the ancient glory.

The analysis of the writings of several prominent Muslim jurists produced some centuries ago showed that "the majority of Muslim jurists divided the world into two abodes: Dar al-Islam (abode of Islam) and Dar al-Harb (abode of war)". Thus, there was a line separating two world views: Dar al-Islam "the place where Islam dominates, Islamic law applies, and peace and justice prevails" and its opposite, Dar al-Harb, "where Islam does not dominate, and Muslims are not protected." (Bakir, 2023, p. 26)

Nowadays, despite the existence of religious-motivated terrorism, it is a fallacy to identify Islam and jihad with violence. Indeed, the majority of followers of Islam are peaceful and there are two types of *jihad*: *jihad al-akbar* and *jihad al-ashgar*. The former rejects violence and represents a fight, but in a spiritual way, against sin and evil, and only the latter one is violent and defends that "war is the rule, not the exception". Thus, "war, not peace, is the basis of foreign relations in Islam." (Bakir, 2023, p. 26).

Religious-motivated terrorism accepts *jihad al-ashgar* as a rule and represents a threat to all other world orders, but especially to the US-led order, a common point with the two other mentioned orders. Moreover, one should note that "conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years." (Huntington, 1993, p. 11).

IX. The Russian Invasion of Ukraine: An Affront to the Western Model

When the Russian army started the so-called special operation in Ukraine, challenging the American hegemony, the old-world order came to an end. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was a turning point involving not only the relationship among States but also among the world orders because that step represented a clear signal of affirmation of the Eurasian order counting on the compliance of the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping. Two events must be taken into account to understand Putin's decision.

Firstly, on 12 July 2021, Putin delivered his speech «On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians»[9], defending that "Russians and Ukrainians were one people – a single whole" and that "the wall that has emerged in recent years between Russia and Ukraine, between the parts of what is essentially the same historical and spiritual space" was, in his vision, a "great common misfortune and tragedy" caused not only by "own mistakes made at different periods of time" but also by "deliberate efforts by those forces that have always sought to undermine our unity". Putin was referring to Zelensky's Government and "the Ukrainian authorities who waisted and frittered away the achievements of many generations", while deciding "to justify their country's independence through the denial of its past". Moreover, Ukraine's politics was becoming a threat to Russia because "step by step, Ukraine was dragged into a dangerous geopolitical game aimed at turning Ukraine into a barrier between Europe and Russia, a springboard against Russia". Moreover, Putin defended that Russia was facing "the creation of a climate of fear in Ukrainian society, aggressive rhetoric, indulging neo-Nazis and militarizing the country", contrary to his idea that "true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia".

Seven months later, the invasion of Ukraine proved, once again, that the final sentence of Putin's speech: "And what Ukraine will be – it is up to its citizens to decide" was just rhetoric.

Secondly, on 4 February 2023, just before the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Xi Jinping and Putin signed a multifaceted relationship – a partnership not an alliance - with extensive military, diplomatic, and economic connections whose goal is beyond the well-known close personal ties between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin.

As Ulrich Jochheim (2023)[10] affirms, "Chinese President Xi Jinping had a long meeting with Russian President Putin", and, in the joint statement issued after the meeting – which referred to the bilateral relationship as a «no limits friendship» – the Chinese leader for the first time voiced his country's outright opposition to NATO enlargement and support for Russia's «proposals to create long-term legally binding security guarantees» in Europe". Being unclear that the two leaders have talked about Putin's intention of invading Ukraine, Xi Jinping's words point to a tacit acceptance of the Russian decision, as the most powerful Chinese leader after Mao Zedong publicly criticized NATO enlargement toward East and agreed with Russian necessity of

[9] Available at http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181.

[10] Jochheim, U. (2023). China-Russia relations: A quantum leap? Available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729349/EPRS_BRI(2022)729349_EN.pdf.

protecting itself against the foreign threat coming from West. Moreover, according to Bobo Lo (2023, p. 5), "the image both leaders sought to project was of an unprecedented convergence of interests and values, in a relationship whose potential seemed boundless."

However, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service, "some observers believe Russia's invasion has strained relations, with China unaware of Russia's plans and unwilling to be drawn into the conflict", despite China having avoided "public condemnation of Russia's actions."[11] However, Jochheim (2023, p. 3-5) defends that despite Beijing being "surprised by the scale and viciousness of the war and by Russia's military setbacks […] the Sino-Russian partnership remains resilient" because "both sides recognize that it is too important to fail, especially given there are no viable alternatives to continuing cooperation". However, the balance of power within the relationship is "changing rapidly" due to "Russia's geopolitical and economic dependence on China". In fact, "although predictions of a clientelist relationship are premature, this widening inequality represents a major long-term source of weakness (p.3), as there is a big difference between being the senior and the junior partner in a coalition or an agreement.

In fact, the liberal order has imposed wide-ranging sanctions against Russia, but China has not supported them, proving that "Beijing has not abandoned Moscow", calling on its neutrality, but showing mixed signals because Beijing is aware that "this is a pivotal moment, even if its consequences take some time to play out" and proving that "more than ever, the Sino-Russian partnership is driven by strategic calculus rather than ideological convergence"(p. 6).

Rumer (2017, p. 14) defends that the Kremlin "is aware of its junior partner status vis-à-vis Beijing", but explains that "Russian foreign policy is controlled exclusively by a narrow circle of the country's elite, whose chief preoccupation is with preserving domestic stability and the security of the ruling regime." Thus, Putin prefers to deal with China because Beijing's autocratic regime does not insist on domestic political change in Russia.

Thus, in present, the fight against American hegemony is the most suitable strategy both for China and Russia.

X. Conclusion

After the Second World War, due to the high number of fatalities and destruction, many countries decided to create the United Nations Organization based on the common will of not repeating the horror. However, after a few years, the world was separated into two antagonist blocks and political visions. That separation disappeared when the Soviet Block imploded, but its substitute model, the American hegemonic order, did not last long because China began to awaken from its long sleep and Russia started to present itself as a kind of successor of the Soviet Union. Since then, both Moscow and Beijing refuse to follow the Western model, because they identify the West as the colonizer of the modern age, exporting its civilizational model all over the world, and imposing it without any respect for other civilizations.

Thus, when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the so-called special military operation represented a turning point in the world order, refusing the previous model, accepting the inevitability of an interim stage, but already with a multiple orders world in mind. Thus, Russia and China pose growing challenges to the U.S.-supported order in their priority spheres of concern—for Russia, Europe, and the Middle East, and for China, its continental and maritime peripheries." (Sutter, 2017, p. V).

The game of thrones is ongoing, not according to Huntington's provision of a clash of civilizations, but as a model in which hegemony cannot be global, but only regional. Thus, some declarations can be labeled as universal, but the interpretation of their principles depends on the leadership of each order.

[11] Available at https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12100.

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