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Turbulence, Conflict, and Three Scenarios of Global Future

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ABSTRACT

The article expands the concept of turbulence through a combination of wars and revolutionary waves. The multipolarity of the modern world does not exclude hegemony with leadership, as well as the formation of coalitions, which in case of aggravation of conflicts can return the era of bipolarity. The centers of gravity are usually called the United States and China. The current period is interpreted as “prolonged turbulence”. Whether it will end with the breakdown of previous orders and the post-crisis establishment of new ones depends on the results of the complex interaction of trends, ideas, influential social and political movements and international interaction. Along with the types of historical dynamics “Lift” (contours of growth, prosperity) and “Well” (contours of degradation and disintegration), inertial, negative-confrontational and positive-reformist scenarios are identified. The conditions influencing the probabilities of their realization are defined. The three scenarios of the global future include: the inertial scenario, the negative-confrontational scenario with a collapse into a new world war, and the positive-reformist scenario as a transition to a lawful world order. The general global trend towards renewed militarization, which has its own explanation, is ambivalent in its consequences. It may lead to a new series of bloody wars, but in the case of certain solidarity efforts it will be a contribution to a lasting peace.

Keywords: Social and Historical Dynamics; Intellectual Production; Geopolitics; Epoch of Turbulence; Kant’s Political Philosophy; Militarization; Scenarios of Global Future; Long Cycles of World Politics

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1. Introduction: Where Is the Rupture of World Order Leading?

From the heights of discussing the meaning of history, universal values and humanistic principles^[1,2], we descend to the valleys and gorges of the current state of world politics, because without interpretation and qualification of what is happening, we cannot move forward.

However, the essence, the inner nature, the direction of the actual processes and events are hidden in a fog. The meaning of each element is basically unknown. The variety of views, versions, interpretations, the abundance of statistics, and “big data” do not clarify the picture so much as they cloud it. Everything that is happening is only a fragment of processes that will last for years and even decades. These major phenomena will take shape and can be adequately conceptualized only when they are complete.

Recently, serious analysts have examined the deep crisis in the international order. They typically connect this crisis to China’s rise, Russia’s revisionism, populism in the West, and the loss of legitimacy of global institutions. The following scenarios for the future of the globe are most often considered^[3-7]:

- “Catastrophic collision” (attempt to preserve global order by force);
- “New Cold Division” (technological/economic blocs, confrontation);
- “Chaotic deglobalization” (protectionism, conflicts);
- “Authoritarian-statist order” (China, Russia), or “Replacement” (establishment of a new order based on different, illiberal principles);
- “Liberal-Western order” (weakened), or “Restructuring”, “Renewal of liberalism”;
- “Multilateral Governance of Global Goods”.

What we can do now is to present the main hypotheses and scenarios with the help of previously used and proven productive means of structuring history and social dynamics. We use the following concepts: rhythms of turbulence and stability^[8], long geopolitical cycles^[9], and phases of development of societies^[10].

After the tectonic shifts of 1989–1991, illusions spread about the establishment of a new world order with the only

“right” superpower and the “end of history” as an inevitable global “transit” to liberal democracy. These illusions were to be shattered by a series of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States, the depressing consequences of the second Iraq war, and the apparent resumption of the cycles of Russia’s socio-political history^[11].

Recent waves of revolutions and flaring multiple wars, as well as crises in various spheres, suggest two or more decades of real turbulence^[12]. An incomplete list includes the following events and processes:

- Wars in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen;
- A series of terrorist attacks in the United States and Western Europe;
- The 2008–2009 global economic crisis.
- Arab Spring, “color revolutions” (Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Belarus, Myanmar, Moldova, Iran);
- Occupy Movement (USA, Spain, Canada, Israel, Portugal, Greece, Australia, UK, Russia);
- Bolotnaya protests in Russia 2011–2012, uprisings against hybrid regimes (Thailand, Ukraine, Bosnia, Venezuela, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt);
- Annexation of Crimea and military clashes in Donbass;
- Britain’s exit from the EU;
- Europe’s migration crisis;
- Pogroms in 2020 and dangerous political polarization in the “sole superpower”—the United States;
- Trade wars, Covid pandemic shock in 2020–2021.

Add to this a major and protracted war in Ukraine with Western support for Kiev, a new war in the Middle East with unclear prospects, and the growing threat of Taiwan’s absorption by mainland China.

Our time can be compared to previous periods of turbulence in Europe and the world:

- The Reformation and religious wars of the 16th–17th centuries,
- The period from the American Revolution to the Napoleonic Wars in the 18th–19th centuries,
- The waves of revolutions associated with the two terrible world wars of the 20th century.

2. Current State—Tensegrity Instability

The current levels of violence, destruction and catastrophe are more modest, although this in no way diminishes the tragic fate of the victims. The continuation of this global state is most consistent with the following conceptual scenarios for the future ^[13-17]:

- “New Cold Division” (technological/economic blocs, confrontation), or Fragmentation, Sovereign-pluralistic (supporters of strict Westphalia, Global South), Disintegration (return to fierce geopolitical competition), “Managed division of spheres of influence” (pragmatic recognition of the realities of multipolarity and establishment of “traffic rules” to avoid war) The future is seen as a prolonged “contestation” between these logics, generating turbulence.
- “Chaotic deglobalization” (protectionism, conflicts), or “Chaotic competition” (current turbulence), “Co-existence” (unstable equilibrium), an era of “Multiplex Multilaterality,” where power is distributed among states and non-state actors, and norms and institutions are fragmented and compete with each other.

Class, racial, and interethnic conflicts continue in many countries. Revolutions and wars continue to intertwine as usual, but they do not grow into a “great conflagration” on a global or continental scale. Tensions increase but there is no inexorable escalation of the hot warfare.

Calls such as “put an end to the enemies once and for all, even if it means a global conflagration” are sometimes heard, but they remain marginal and are not supported. On the contrary, there is a conscious effort on the part of the major players—the leading Western countries, China, India, and Turkey—to prevent the expansion of the zone of high violence. Everything is tense, difficult, painful, generally “bad”, but so far “under control”.

The approximate parity of the opponents, taking into account the major powers and their supporting coalitions, blocks the possibility of a complete and crushing victory by either side. There are no clear winners and losers, nor are there any trends toward a convincing triumph or failure.

There is no dramatic collapse of orders and worldviews, though both are under severe strain and clearly corroded. The moderate level of destruction in localized conflicts results in a relatively low rate of attrition, prolonging the life of even unfit, outdated authoritarian regimes and weak, acquiescent international orders.

The current period was originally defined as “sluggish turbulence.” However, the recent upheavals, especially in various regions of the world, no longer allow us to speak of “sluggishness”. By analogy with “protracted war, it is more accurate to characterize the last two decades as *protracted turbulence*.

The main phases of global geopolitics that have led to this situation are shown in **Figure 1**.

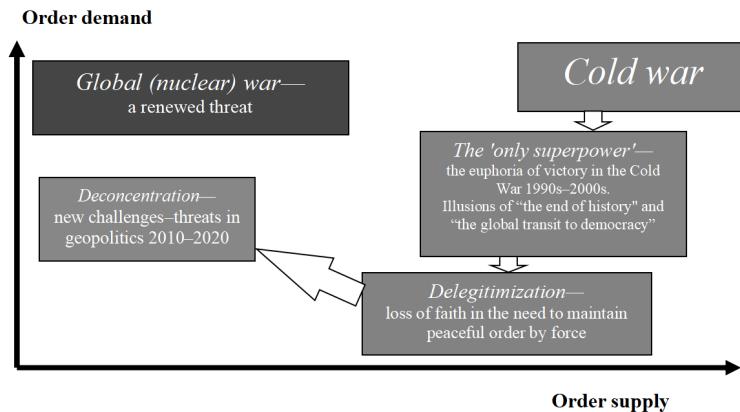


Figure 1. Major phases of global geopolitical dynamics over the last half century.

The characteristic features of this current period are as follows:

- There is no expected triumphal march of globalization with the displacement of nation-states and cen-

ters of power by horizontal networks, transnational corporations, etc.^[16];

- Economic crises have not been overcome and global inequality is worsening;
- vast regions of the world are suffering from poverty, violence, lack of clean water, even hunger; waves of migration are resuming; old radical groups are not disappearing and new ones are emerging;
- At the same time, scientific and technological progress continues in the leading countries, especially in information technologies, new materials, armaments and medicine;
- there is no reliable stability with “rules of the game” and universally recognized authoritative forces to support them; new armed conflicts and ongoing wars are perceived as inevitable^[18–20];
- There is some consolidation around the major geopolitical players, but so far there is no sign of an inexorable escalation of hostilities and conflicts leading to world war.
- What can we expect from such a period? The following main scenarios can be seen, the extremes of which—pessimistic and optimistic—are presented as “ideal types”.

3. Negative-Confrontational Scenario

With the combination of increased tensions, disasters, and hostilities, there will be a series of shifts in the determination of the parties to respond to violence and humiliation with even greater—already armed and organized—violence^[18]. This scenario is close to the Allisons’s “Catastrophic collision” (attempt to preserve global order by force)^[6].

This scenario depicts the most dangerous possible outcome of the current geopolitical rivalry, primarily between the U.S. (the established hegemon) and China (the rising challenger)^[3]. It represents the ultimate failure to manage the inherent tensions of a power transition—what Allison famously terms the “Thucydides’s Trap.” The U.S. fundamentally rejects the idea that great powers like China or Russia have legitimate, exclusive spheres of influence in their immediate neighborhoods (e.g., Taiwan for China,

Ukraine for Russia). It insists on maintaining its own global sphere and actively contesting theirs. The U.S. is committed to defending the existing U.S.-led liberal international order everywhere, viewing challenges to it anywhere as existential threats requiring forceful response.

Crises erupt in contested zones (most dangerously, Taiwan, but also Ukraine, South China Sea). Both sides believe core interests (sovereignty, security, honor, global leadership) are at stake. Diplomatic efforts fail. Actions taken for deterrence (e.g., military deployments, sanctions, support for allies/proxies) are perceived as aggression by the other side. Fear, pride, and domestic pressures override caution. A localized incident (e.g., naval clash, accidental shoot-down) spirals uncontrollably into direct, large-scale conventional warfare between the U.S. and China (or NATO and Russia).

A full-scale war between nuclear-armed superpowers would be devastating, even if it remained conventional initially. The economic fallout (collapse of trade, finance, supply chains) would trigger a global depression dwarfing 2008. The risk of nuclear escalation, either intentionally out of desperation or accidentally through miscommunication/failure, would be extremely high. Allison emphasizes this is an existential threat to humanity.

The existing international order would shatter. Institutions like the UN, WTO, and IMF would likely become irrelevant or collapse. Global governance would cease. Massive loss of life (especially in conflict zones like Taiwan), widespread destruction, long-term global instability, and a potential “Dark Age” following the conflict. It’s not just a major war; it’s a war with the highest conceivable stakes fought between the two most powerful nations, possessing vast arsenals, including nuclear weapons.

The outcome wouldn’t be a “victory” for one side but a mutually assured destruction (MAD) of the global system and unprecedented human suffering. Allison presents this scenario as the gravest danger facing the world, stemming directly from the refusal to pragmatically acknowledge and manage the realities of competing great powers and their spheres.

Rebellions and revolutions, even with the participation of broad masses, will not lead to greater equality of rights and protection of citizens, but to the strengthening of state control over society, with very different ideological and/or

religious bases and slogans.

Counter-modernization trends will prevail, especially in the aspects of authoritarian rollback, desecularization (in the form of religious fundamentalism supported by repressive regimes), denationalization of the economy, and bureaucratization oriented not to the right but to power and hierarchy. Instead of ascending to a new stage of social evolution (to a new phase of development) ^[16], there will be either stagnation or even regression to the previous, seemingly outdated phases, for example, with estates, class, caste, and racial segregation.

Crises and armed conflicts tend to form positive feedback loops between the trends of aggression and destruction. Internal instability in weak states and small regional wars, together with the next manifestations of environmental degradation, may well converge somewhere and sometime.

Once *Pax Americana* weakens and other states and non-state associations and networks gain even more organizational capacity one is likely to see an enormous geopolitical worldwide transformation. Moreover, as climate change and other environmental variations intensify including global warming, continuous population expansion and the excessive consumption of non-renewable resources, the nature of the war-state-society nexus is likely to become even more prominent (p. 81) ^[20].

The spiral of escalation of armed violence interacts with the growth of deficits, tensions, and disasters in the spheres of ecology, climate, and vital resources.

As much of the available, evidence based, forecasting demonstrates, climatic changes are bound to further increase CO2 emissions which ultimately are likely to bring about a less hospitable planet—severe water shortages for large parts of the world, dramatically rising tides of oceans and seas with periodic tsunamis, the gradual disappearance of fossil fuels, the scarcity of minerals, the lack of arable land, and so on [...] Once these states prove unable to feed and protect their citizens this is likely to spark large-scale migrations of people moving from the uninhabitable to the habitable parts of the globe. Such unprecedented population movement might trigger violent

responses (pp. 81–82) ^[18].

All of these disasters will naturally lead to a broader megatrend, “The Well”—a steady intensification of the trends of collapsing connections and general decline (pp. 29–37) ^[11].

Fundamentalist Iran has taken a frontline position against the United States as the recognized geopolitical leader of the West, and especially against Israel. It prefers not to engage in major battles, but in the spirit of the Cold War, it acts through its most radical satellites, including Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis of Yemen, al-Qaeda, and ISIS. Some of these groups are strong in Central Africa. At present (winter–spring 2024), they do not extend beyond their region, but if the confrontation spreads, they could also become involved in military conflicts. According to British Defense Secretary Grant Shapps (January 2024):

... These combined threats risk tearing apart the rules-based international order—established to keep the peace after the Second World War. Today’s world then, is sadly far more dangerous. With the UN reporting that we are facing the highest number of violent conflicts since the Second World War [...] So, we find ourselves at the dawn of a new era. [...] *Moving from a post-war to a pre-war world* (emphasis mine—N. R.) ^[19].

In today’s world, there are not only militant radical groups at work, but also powers with grievances and ambitions that are willing and already using armed force to achieve their goals and interests. All sorts of imbalances in power, demographics, and access to resources will only increase.

Hot wars and waves of revolutions will get out of control, which is fraught with world and/or even nuclear war ^[19]. The winners of a possible world war (or the strongest of the survivors) will impose their own new order, acceptable to themselves but rigid for everyone else.

This option is comparable to the transition from the “Global War” phase to the “World Power” phase in the concept of long cycles of hegemony ^[9], as well as to the “decisive war”, the subsequent “simplification” of territorial control in the theory of geopolitical dynamics (pp. 41–42) ^[10].

240 years ago, Kant allowed for the possibility of hell

on earth and total devastation, but he relied on the “secret wise guidance in Nature”^[21]. Let us try at least mentally to connect the fate of the human race with wisdom, understood as the humanistic meaning of history.

4. Positive-Reform Scenario

Realizing that the optimistic scenario is the least probable under the current circumstances, we will deliberately present it in the brightest colors, forgetting about realism and caring only about attractiveness^[22,23]. This scenario is close to the “Liberal-Western order” (weakened), or “Restructuring” (reform of the liberal order to reflect the realities of multipolarity, especially the role of China), “Renewal of liberalism” (requires radical internal reforms in the West), and the “Multilateral Governance of Global Goods” (cooperation on climate, health, digitalization despite geopolitics).

Unfortunately, when presenting a desirable future, contemporary authors almost completely disregard the principle of the rule of law, particularly in geopolitics, i.e., matters of war and peace. The following description aims to address this shortcoming. I agree that this scenario is highly unlikely. I also would like to emphasize that implementing the project of a legal world order will require enormous intellectual, moral, political, and organizational efforts.

With the inability of both sides to achieve complete victory, with the general fatigue of the confrontation, with the growing widespread rejection of aggression, illegitimate violence, violation of the rules of peaceful coexistence, the demand for new political ideas, strategies, projects will increase (pp. 32–36)^[9]. Let us assume that they will be aimed at the creation of a more peaceful and secure world order, with the reduction of tensions and conflicts, with civilized negotiations and the peaceful resolution of contradictions.

... It would mean a rather dramatic shift from geopolitical autonomy to a more law-governed world order with effective mechanisms to serve the whole of humanity (emphasis mine—N. R.) rather than being focused on the wellbeing of its distinct territorial parts^[17].

If such ideas and actions of influential leaders, gov-

ernments, socio-political movements enter into synergy, then positive feedback loops will be formed, but already between trends of moral and political-legal progress (the megatrend “Lift”) (pp. 32–37)^[11]. This will make it possible to gradually establish new rules, while limiting and rewarding those strong players who do not benefit from them.

In the concept of long cycles of hegemony^[9], this variant corresponds to the “World Power” phase, but in the mildest and optimal version, when the rules are not imposed by force by the hegemon, but are established collegially, taking into account the interests of the weakest. This structure of international relations is closer to multipolarity (“fragmentation phase” (pp. 42–43)^[10], with each state bound by force and the authority of international law.

In such a system, a dominant coalition with a leader or authoritative coalition at its head performs the functions of maintaining order and security, but does not use its power to enhance its own hegemony. This is its “self-interest” in not losing its legitimacy and leadership. International armed conflicts, including wars, if they do not cease, become rare, exceptional. They are quickly ended because any belligerent adventure delegitimizes the aggressor and turns it into a pariah without any external support.

In this scenario, rebellions and revolutions also become rare, as political regimes are increasingly bound by the domestic legal framework. The external normative order influences the internal national order, which allows social and political forces to resolve conflicts through public discussion, parliamentary procedures, judicial processes, and, consequently, the succession of power through open and fair elections.

When revolutions take place and win, the new, post-revolutionary regimes are forced to meet basic democratic and legal standards in order to be legitimized externally.

Accordingly, *modernization trends* will prevail, especially in the aspects of democratization, secularization (expansion of freedom of conscience), growth of economic freedom, property security, demonopolization (pp. 152–176)^[10].

The central bureaucracy, the administrative hierarchy in each state, becomes subordinate to the law, efficient and small, as many functions are transferred to lower levels of local government (subsidiarity), as well as to the private

sector, social movements, and volunteers.

This expansion of democracy and republicanism in the nation-states will in turn contribute to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts, marking the realization and triumph of the theory of “democratic peace” (exactly according to Kant^[1,21]).

In this scenario, the leaders of the lawful world order

will rise to a new level of social evolution, i.e. to a new stage of development^[10,13]. In this utopian future, it will be possible to combine equality of rights, opportunities, and social protection with economic efficiency, technological progress, and cultural flourishing.

The worst-case and best-case scenarios are shown schematically in **Figure 2**.

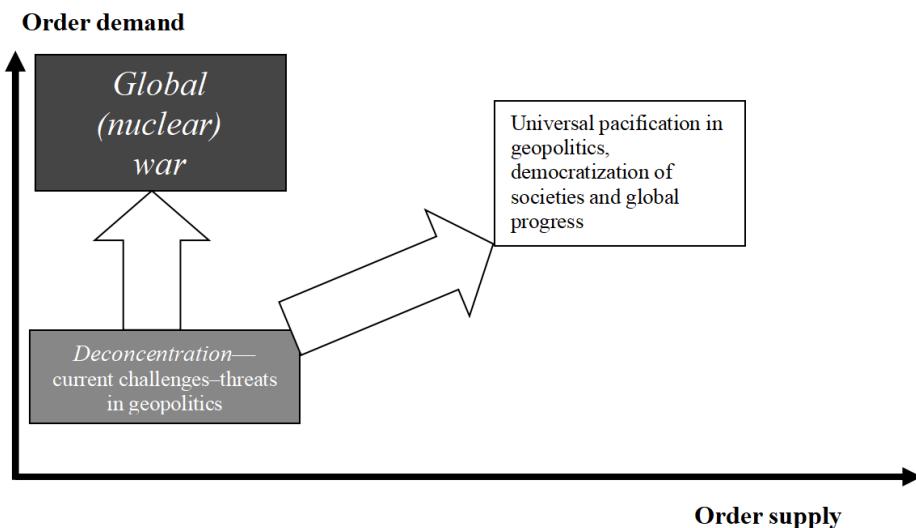


Figure 2. Polar scenarios of the global future: pessimistic and optimistic.

5. Inertia Scenario

The protracted turbulence will continue for two or three decades or more. During this time, the major players in world politics will “flex their muscles”, try to expand their alliances, renew wars, or engage in traditional and new armed conflicts in “hot spots”.

Judging by the events of recent years, there is a kind of new Cold War with relapses of hot proxy wars. The “Big West” or “West-plus” remains at one pole, together with Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and other satellites. While still powerful, the West is somewhat weakened by internal tensions, growing “left-liberal,” “green,” and “anti-colonial” fronts, and relapses of right-wing radicalism.

The West is no longer confronted by the mighty Soviet Union and the Warsaw Bloc, but by a rather loose alliance in which China not without reason claims to be the hegemon. Russia, India, Turkey, the large and rich Arab countries, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico, scattered around the globe, are alienated to varying degrees from the

West, especially from the United States, but are hardly capable of any real militant consolidation.

The outlook for inertia is not particularly rosy. It is tragic for the inevitable future victims. In this scenario, due to the limited scale of the wars, there will be no collapse of international and national orders, no identification of clear winners.

The inertial scenario does not mean stagnation. The most natural and likely are rhythms of stability/instability. When the strongest powers are not focused on escalation and starting a new big war with the risk of escalation into a world war, militarization leads to better protection of the weak potential victims of aggression. The logic of patronage favors the resumption of bipolarity. The arms race ends with a new “détente” between the poles and a partial demilitarization. The accumulation of imbalances, tensions and vulnerabilities leads to new challenges—threats and relapses of aggression. However, with the general fear of world war, aggression is blocked by a new militarization of the defenders of the victim, and the cycle repeats itself (**Figure 3**).

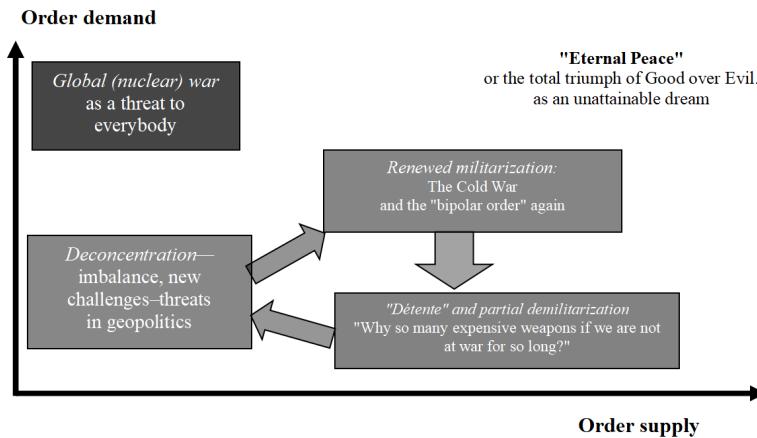


Figure 3. The most probable—inertial—scenario for the 21st century. Protracted turbulence.

6. Which of the Three Scenarios Is More Likely?

Unfortunately, from all indications of the current situation, a positive, peaceful, reformist scenario is the least likely. The current circumstances, from the low quality of the world's elites to the growing aggressiveness of the masses of the “humiliated and insulted” and the strengthening of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, feed not so much hope as moods of hopelessness and despair.

Let us consider the main unfavorable conditions. Authoritarian regimes and leaders with hidden or explicit aggressive intentions towards the outside, with internal repression, have mastered the market economy, they are provided with resources, technology and are building power. Some achieve this through the hard work of millions, others through the export of natural resources. Such regimes are more actively consolidating among themselves and with the “globally offended” in explicit or implicit opposition to the “postcolonial,” “neoliberal,” and “capitalist” West.

Anti-Western rhetoric and policies have massive support potential. The “rest of the world” (the “global South” and not only) has a growing resentment against the “golden billion”. Obviously, the greatest irritation is caused by the arrogance and arbitrariness of American foreign policy, the hidden but tangible double standards in the positions and actions of the European Union. One can speak of a wide and natural spread of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism, paradoxically combined with waves of immigrants to the USA and the EU.

At the same time, the Western world itself, especially its leaders, is experiencing bad times due to divisions and aggressive attacks from within. Many Western analysts complain about the erosion of democracy, social and cultural fissures, growing alienation, and the danger of a new rise of populism under various flags. The main attacks come from the left: against capitalism and the market, against freedom of speech (so-called hyper-political correctness). Right-wing radicals are raising their heads because of the influx of immigrants.

Left-wing and right-wing radicals who undermine the foundations of Western civilization—freedom and common sense—are supported from outside by West-haters driven by imperial and/or religious—fundamentalist resentment. The responses of the coalition of Western powers (to the extent that they can be recognized as deliberate strategies at all) can hardly be considered adequate. They often aim to treat the symptoms without revealing and blocking the nature of the diseases (pp. 24–26) ^[11].

In the domestic politics of Western countries, especially in America, the practice of “positive discrimination” is expanding, which in no way contributes to overcoming racism. Movements even for socialism with forced statist redistribution are growing, which inevitably leads to dangerous over-bureaucratization.

The foreign policy of the West, led by the United States, is in a state of flux, from adventurous plans to “export democracy” (with the depressing political results of the second Iraq war, the ignominious flight of the Taliban who took over Afghanistan) to outright connivance with repressive and aggressive regimes and enclaves of terrorism.

We should not hope that “the better angels of our nature”^[22] or “natural historical progress” will bring humanity a peaceful and prosperous future^[23]. A negative–confrontational scenario cannot be ruled out.

If Western leaders continue to weaken and undermine themselves, if the aggressive appetites of authoritarian regimes intensify, if the “humiliated and insulted” in the poorest countries of Asia, Africa, and South America are filled with despair and radical ideas, wars will be joined by spreading revolutionary conflagrations^[12,24]. Then the escalation of armed violence will no longer be contained as it is now contained and localized.

An escalation and expansion of violence can occur when the leaders of one side of the confrontation believe in the weakness and indecisiveness of the enemy and decide to weaken its positions with a powerful blow, to seize particularly important symbolic centers or transportation routes that are particularly important for the world economy. The enemy will not tolerate such humiliation and will rally and respond with an even more crushing and insulting blow. In such a situation, any “red lines” that previously kept the parties from the most dangerous escalation will be broken and even erased.

Still, there is hope that the darkest predictions will not come true. Even now, peaceful international trade is more profitable for many (semi-)authoritarian regimes, including such leaders as China, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, than major wars, especially those burdened with rebellions and revolutions. Except for radicals who are extreme in their fanaticism and have “nothing to lose,” everyone else “wants to live,” including the ruling elites of powers with even the most aggressive rhetoric.

The inertial scenario with the coexistence and struggle of a multitude of multidirectional trends, with a sluggish and therefore protracted confrontation of rather loose Western and anti-Western coalitions in a new Cold War is the most likely in the foreseeable future. Such an era of “no time”, for all its inconvenience and alarming uncertainty about the future, is already a challenge—an opportunity for intellectuals: what ideas and projects can be proposed, and not just general, well-meaning “for all good things”, but also with visible ways and means of realization.

Take into account the consolidation of authoritarian regimes and the new Cold War. The great authoritarian

powers prone to external expansion have “found each other,” forming formal and informal alliances, attracting allies from the “global south,” and using anti-liberal, anti-capitalist, anti-Western, and above all anti-American rhetoric quite effectively. The West itself, especially the U.S. and the EU countries, as mentioned above, is suffering from internal divisions, with attacks coming from both the left and the right.

With almost complete and universal disillusionment with the UN’s regulatory and peacekeeping role, politicians, elites, and opinion leaders may not even have such options as moving toward a lawful world order in mind^[25–28]. All hopes are tied either to the strengthening of national military power, or to the growing power of defensive alliances, or to sheltering under their umbrellas. Metaphorically speaking, “everyone is battening down the hatches in anticipation of the coming storms.”

As for the negative scenario of a “Third World” and the risk of its escalation into an exchange of nuclear strikes, suffice it to point out that knowledge of the causes and factors of war may well serve as a basis for collective action to avoid such an Armageddon.

The third—inelastic—scenario was recognized as the most probable, prolonging the “protracted turbulence”.

There are possibilities of socio-evolutionary progress towards the lawful world order with the rule of law in geopolitics through the rivalry of world regions and mega-regions (the notional *World of Rules* and *World of Tradition*). The sequence of overcoming very high barriers on this path begins with the agreement of the USA, Great Britain and the leaders of the European Union to actively recognize the priority of international courts in the area of war and peace. This is a topic for special consideration.

The widespread anti-Western and anti-liberal sentiments of the “Global South,” as well as countries with authoritarian regimes, pose a significant barrier to inevitable restrictions on sovereignty by any external legal order.

7. Development of Power Structures, Power Control and the Growth of Authoritarianism

A universal heuristic for understanding the causes of historical dynamics is the accumulation of costs from the

functioning of support structures and the achievement of critical levels of tension, which present challenges and threats requiring answers. Here, we will only point out two main types of costs associated with the growth of organized violence.

First, power structures can rapidly consume material and human resources, especially during wars, and they constantly require replenishment. In the context of an arms race (the hope for which has proven elusive), more financial and intellectual resources must be allocated to technological development in this area. This development is associated with growing tensions in other areas, such as budget deficits and discontent among elites and the population due to tax increases. Failing to replenish growing gaps and falling behind in modern armaments increases the threats of external aggression and the risks of losing conflicts^[29,30].

Second, those who occupy the highest positions in the structures of violence, such as military or police positions, often acquire their own subjectivity. This means they begin to realize their own interests. For these individuals, the potential for violence becomes an opportunity to achieve higher political positions, up to and including the seizure of supreme power, as well as personal enrichment through the forceful seizure of other people's goods, resources, productive capacities, assets, and financial flows^[18].

Thus, rulers and power elites have derivative concerns about controlling their structures of violence and leadership. For this reason, they develop corresponding control practices and structures: accountability, prosecutorial checks, purges, internal oversight services, opportunities for civilian inspections, encouragement of whistleblowing, and managed conflicts between power agencies. Sporadic deep crises and coups by army leaders and/or intelligence agencies and the police point to the weakness and failure of such control structures^[8,12].

Wide fluctuations associated with the growth of violent structures, the corresponding growth of costs, and differences in control effectiveness form dramatic waves in the fate of empires and large militant states. These waves do not often lead to collapse and death (as with most empires and the USSR), but sometimes lead to a long period of successful development (as with the British Empire from the 17th to the 20th century, the U.S. from the 18th century, and perhaps a renewed China in the future).

Social orders are both supported and transformed by the explicit or implicit participation of organized violence. With every significant change in social orders and political orders, rulers and elites risk losing their power and privileges. Power structures are usually designed to ensure the stability of orders and, with it, the position and resources of the upper strata of society (or even primarily, according to Marxist approaches).

8. Should We Preach “Higher Values” or Robustly Defend Human Life and Rights?

It's difficult to imagine a future global legal order without principles that protect human beings and their inalienable rights and freedoms. Why even discuss “legal orders” that permit genocide, ethnocide, wars of aggression, slavery, the slave trade, torture, rape, self-mutilation, summary repression, murder, and mass deportations? Few countries' rulers and elites openly insist on the necessity and justification of such practices or allow them in their territories (even if they occur and are not suppressed). To maintain decency and dignity in the international arena, we can at least discuss moving towards humanity and what used to be called “moral progress” and “softening of morals.”

Such considerations suggest a principled way of overcoming the aforementioned barrier. It is necessary to speak less in terms of “higher values” and stop insisting on their “universality.” The purpose of the world legal order is not to create a “paradise on earth,” but rather to prevent “hell.” Despite their cultural, religious, and political differences, all elites and the general population want protection from illegitimate violence, humiliation, enslavement, and extermination. The legal norms with the greatest chance of being adopted by different regimes, peoples, and civilizations are the corresponding prohibitions. Any prohibition that does not threaten imminent sanctions commensurate with the punishment is no longer legal; it becomes a well-meaning moral exhortation. Therefore, we must discuss not only the high ideals of the triumph of law in the future and the ways to achieve them, but also more practical issues of ensuring the most vital norms that prevent “hell on earth” for any present or future generation.

9. Conclusions

Drawing up such plans is not a matter for theorists, but for practitioners: leaders and activists of progressive, peace-loving movements and parties. Of course, politicians, associated groups of international lawyers and diplomats will act according to their own programs, so the sequence of steps presented below is nothing more than an “invitation to talk”:

- To create broad formal and informal international coalitions, associations, and networks that unite the efforts of dozens (hundreds?) of peace centers and movements, involving all those who are concerned about the risks of a new world war, who are unwilling to tolerate military aggression, relapses of genocide and ethnocide, and political repression;
- To establish communication and cooperation among centers, networks of peace activists, international legal scholars committed to global constitutionalism, and research centers for the study of war, geopolitics, and peace-oriented development;
- To develop and promote institutional measures and projects for the prevention of wars, taking into account the identified typical and underlying causes of aggression, armed conflicts and the escalation of violence; develop appropriate information, cultural and educational strategies for peacemaking, with a focus on improving the legal culture of societies;
- Peacemaking centers, movements determined to prevent wars through the lawful world order should find a common language with leftist, anti-capitalist and other protest movements in order to shift them from the goals of “oppressing, destroying the enemy” to the goals of limiting the enemy (“global hegemony,” “aggressive world capitalism,” “neo-colonialism,” “exploiting class,” etc.) through legal norms and courts backed by force;
- To the extent possible, establish international courts at the regional level, the procedure for their interaction with states, with the UN, with other international organizations, and among themselves;
- If these courts take on serious conflicts, and if the strongest powers in each region (or broader coalition) agree to do so, the courts will gain the necessary authority and legitimacy, and will not be perceived by the world as instruments of arrogant, self-serving “hegemonies” to increase their power, privileges, and retaliation against “wrongdoers”;
- To promote the legitimacy of assessments of parties’ involvement in armed conflicts and wars and any acts of violence, on a strictly legal basis, ideally in accordance with the decisions of authoritative international tribunals, existing ones such as the UN ICJ and ICC, new regional ones, and possibly unofficial “voluntary” tribunals;
- On the basis of the experience of the proceedings, to clarify and supplement the norms of international law concerning the actions of states in the field of geopolitics on the basis of the principle of the protection of human beings;
- Drafting peaceful economic and political measures of a sanctioning and preventive nature; it is important that such documents be prepared so that they can be placed on the “table of alternatives” in due course in the negotiations that will discuss new institutional forms of global security;
- The idea of an “emergency platform” could be useful to promote the creation of regional arrangements or bodies within and outside the UN that assert their subordination to judicial decisions and are ready to implement them by various means.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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