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FUTURE OF US HEGEMONY

МАЙБУТНЄ АМЕРИКАНСЬКОЇ ГЕГЕМОНІЇ

БУДУЩЕЕ АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ГЕГЕМОНИИ

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Abstract. *The demise of the bipolar system of international politics has revived interest in such closely related and contested terms as "superpower", "hegemon", "empire" and "imperialism". This article represents an attempt to define the most probable trend in the future evolution of the international system with regard to the role of the United States of America as the most prominent state power of today's world. This article seeks to analyse the US power posture in today's world politics by comparing its core capabilities to those of the classical empire of the previous century - the British Empire - with analytical emphasis on both the "hard power" and the "soft power" dimensions. The author maintains that the notion of US hegemony or even American Empire is still relevant despite a clear historic tendency of hegemonic decline seen throughout the second part of the 20th century. The United States still ranks high on the scale of most traditional power factors and, what is by far more important, they continue to be able to shape and control the scale and the volume of international exposure of all other major players within the framework of contemporary global international system. The relative decline of US influence upon world politics at the beginning of the new millennia has been effectively off-set by the profound change in the nature of American power which is now assuming the form of a structural dominance. The author's personal view is that US hegemony is not doomed to wane, given the enormous impact the United States have already made economically, politically and intellectually upon the post World War II international relations. The continuance of the US playing the pivotal role in the international politics of the 21st century will be dependent on the ability of the US political class to adapt to and to harness the social power of numerous non-state international actors that are due take over the leading role in the future world's politics.*

Key words: US foreign policy, empire, monopolarity, hegemony, world order.

Анотація. *Занепад біполярної системи міжнародних відносин відновив академічний інтерес до таких дуже взаємопов'язаних та суперечливих категорій як «наддержави», «гегемон», «імперія» та «імперіалізм». Ця стаття є спробою визначити вірогідний тренд в майбутньому розвитку системи міжнародних відносин з акцентом на можливу роль Сполучених Штатів Америки як найбільш потужної*

держави сучасного світу. Ця стаття має на меті дослідити силовий компонент американської присутності в сучасній світовій політиці за допомогою порівняльного аналізу його основних складових з силовим потенціалом класичної імперії попереднього століття, - Британської Імперії, - приймаючи до уваги компоненти як "жорсткої сили", так й компоненти "м'якої сили" обох держав. Автор вважає, що поняття "гегемонія США" або навіть "Американська імперія" не втратили своєї актуальності, незважаючи на очевидний історичний тренд занепаду панування Сполучених Штатів, що спостерігався впродовж другої половини ХХ століття. Сполучені Штати продовжують буди лідером в максимізації традиційних чинників силового потенціалу сучасної великої держави і, що є безперечно більш важливо, вони продовжують бути в змозі визначати та контролювати обсяг та форми участі в міжнародних відносинах всіх інших провідних гравців світової політики в контексті сучасної глобальної системи міжнародних відносин. Відносне зменшення обсягу впливу США на процеси світової політики на початку нового тисячоліття було ефективно компенсоване глибинними змінами у природі американської могутності, яка сьогодні все більше набуває характер структурного домінування в системі міжнародних відносин. Особиста позиція автора з цієї проблеми полягає в ствердженні, що американська гегемонія зовсім не приречена до занепаду з урахуванням того величезного впливу, який Сполучені Штати вже здійснили на міжнародні відносини після Другої світової війни. Подальше продовження домінування Сполучених Штатів Америки в міжнародній політиці ХХІ століття залежатиме від здатності американського політичного істеблішменту пристосуватися до умов постбіполярного світу та використовувати у власних інтересах політичний вплив чисельних недержавних міжнародних акторів, які, з часом, все більше і більше будуть відігравати провідну роль у формуванні політичного порядку денного світового глобального процесу.

Ключові слова: зовнішня політика США, імперія, монополярність, гегемонія, світовий устрій.

Анотація. Конец биполярной системы международных отношений восстановил академический интерес к таким очень взаимосвязанным и противоречивым категориям как «сверхдержава», «гегемон», «империя» и «империализм». Эта статья является попыткой определить возможный тренд в будущем развитии системы международных отношений с акцентом на возможную роль Соединенных Штатов Америки как наиболее мощного государства современного мира. Эта статья имеет целью исследовать силовый компонент американского присутствия в современной мировой политике, используя сравнительного анализа его основных составляющих и силового потенциала классической империи предыдущего века, - Британской Империи, - принимая во внимание компоненты как "жесткой силы", так и компоненты "мягкой силы" обоих государств. Автор считает, что понятие "гегемония США" или даже "Американская империя" не потеряли своей актуальности, несмотря на очевидный исторический тренд упадка господства Соединенных Штатов, наблюдавшийся в течение второй половины ХХ века. Соединенные Штаты продолжают буди лидером в максимизации традиционных факторов силового потенциала современной великой державы и, что несомненно более важно, они продолжают быть в состоянии определять и контролировать объем и формы участия в международных отношениях всех других ведущих игроков международной политики в контексте современной глобальной системы международных отношений. Относительное уменьшение объема влияния США на процессы мировой политики в начале нового тысячелетия было эффективно компенсировано глубинными изменениями в природе американского могущества, которое сегодня все больше и больше приобретает характер структурного доминирования в системе международных отношений. Личная позиция автора по

данной проблеме заключается в утверждении, что американская гегемония вовсе не обречена на упадок, с учетом того огромного влияния, которое Соединенные Штаты уже осуществили на международные отношения после Второй мировой войны. Дальнейшее продолжение доминирования Соединенных Штатов Америки в международной политике XXI века будет зависеть от способности американского политического истеблишмента приспособиться к условиям постбиполярного мира и использовать в собственных интересах политическое влияние многочисленных негосударственных международных акторов, которые, со временем, все больше и больше будут играть ведущую роль в формировании политического повестки дня глобального мирового процесса.

Ключевые слова: *внешняя политика США, империя, монополярность, гегемония, мировой порядок.*

The current problem. Since the bipolar system of international relations disappeared, the issue of its future transformation has been pivotal in academic discussions among the leading scholars of international relations for thirty years already. The vast majority of scholars agree that a system based on multipolarity will be the most probable configuration in a post-bipolar world. This suggestion implies that the US will ultimately lose its world's empire status. However, there are numerous objective factors acting counter to this forecast. Having repeatedly proven its viability, American imperialism may even in the short-run appear to be the only possible scenario for an upbeat future of humanity.

The aim of the article is to validate that the US is not to lose its hegemony in the global system of international relations. There are numerous objective factors favourable to the ongoing US hegemony in international politics to safeguard a peaceful and democratic progress of the global society.

Analysis of the latest research and publications. There are at least a few approaches to define a notion of the “empire”. The first is based on the historic and retrospective approach that defines “ideal types” of empire such as Roman, Spanish, British, Ottoman and Russian [Morgenthau, 2005]. A most telling example of this approach is Max Boot’s views [Boot, 2004]. The second is grounded in empirically defined “empires” as a set of predetermined parameters [Motyl, 2006]. The third appeals to the ontology of “constructivism”, defining the empire as a socio-ideological construct with historically transcendental characteristics as Dimitri Simes [Simes, 2003] or Adam Watson [Watson, 1992] suggest. The fourth continues the Marxist critical mainstream tradition, as evidenced by the views of Terry Boswell [Boswell, 2004]. This paper seeks to combine historical-retrospective and systemic analysis of the prospects for the future dominance of the United States as a fundamental component of the international system.

The important research results. During the second half of the twentieth century, the term “American Empire” was used only by radical critics of US foreign policy. In the wake of the terrorist attack against the United States on September 9, 2001, the debate about the status of the United States as an Empire became an important part of the political, scientific, and media discourse. In the context of this debate, the term “empire” is not always fraught with a negative connotation. Such authors as Thomas Donnelly [Donnelly, 2008] and Charles Krauthammer [Krauthammer, 2014] enthusiastically embrace the existence of *Pax Americana*.

Publicly representing the United States, the officials never mention the international role of the country in this context. It seems highly plausible that, given the environment in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the failure to treat the US as an “empire” derived from the *sui generis* Stockholm syndrome. That said, the fact is that the United States most likely falls under the notion of “empire” to a far greater extent than its official name suggests.

While defining the role of the US in the world, many students of international relations who have parsed the post-war US foreign policy, utilize the term “hegemon”. In so doing,

they stress that its foreign policy is extensive in reach, but is not imperial. More often than not, such notions as “unipolarity”, “global leadership”, and “the sole superpower” [Nye, 2002] are used interchangeably. Granted that such classical materialistic parameters as territory and population are a point of departure in their narrow sense, the US and all of its former dependent territories occupied less than 10 per cent of the Earth’s land mass and accounted for an approximately 5 per cent of the world population. By contrast, the British Empire, for instance, totaled as much as 20 per cent of the global populace [Fergusson, 2004a]. It is not the formal measurement but rather the logic of history that makes the comparison of the British Empire with the modern United States entirely feasible. Both countries have undergone a period of rapid territorial expansion accompanied by a total takeover of local communities. It must be conceded that the United States accorded a lower priority to territorial acquisitions, especially on other continents. To all intents and purposes, during the Cold War the United States had a total of over 700 military bases in 130 countries [Fergusson, 2003: 65]. Today, the situation has not changed much, which makes American military presence in the world indisputably imperialistic. The United States outpaces all other major powers in defence expenditures. The US also sits atop the tech world leaving other contenders for global leadership lagging behind. American military pre-eminence topples Britain's respective leadership, and if the military supremacy is an indispensable constituent of the imperial power, the United States can indeed be regarded as a modern-day empire.

Despite an intrinsic correlation between the level of global military presence and the corresponding economic costs necessary for its maintenance, which eventually leads to economic decline, the United States is not going to face this prospect any time soon. Military spending equalled 4.05% of GDP in 2005 [The World Factbook, 2011: 691]. This is much less than the critical level of 10%, which, according to Paul Kennedy, spawns “imperial overstretch”, a phenomenon that eventually triggered Great Britain's loss of an overwhelming global dominance [Kennedy, 1989]. Taken in their entirety, economic aspects – at a scale not less than that of military capabilities – of the US seeking to position itself in the contemporary world, illustrates the grand role of this country in global economy, even despite the downfall of American standing in global GDP that started in the 1950s. Tremendous economic and military capacity leads to the creation of imperial-like agenda in country’s foreign affairs. The current National Security Strategy proclaims dissemination of freedom’s advantages as the goal of US foreign policy and even goes further to presume the possibility of a preventive strike against any nation deemed to be a threat to the American interests [The U.S. Army and the New National Security Strategy, 2003]. It seems to be self-evident that such foreign policy determining factors and tools defined in such a manner are fully consistent with the imperial policy of the Victorian era.

One of the arguments frequently used to point out the difference between the British empire and modern United States comprises the reference to so the called “soft power”, which is essentially an American trait in contrast to the United Kingdom in the early of XX century. According to Joseph Nye, “a country can achieve its preferred outcomes in world politics because of other countries admiring its values, emulating its example, and aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness” [Nye, 1990: 86]. In other words, “soft power” is more efficacious than “hard power” in the long run. The resort to “soft power” is not implicitly inconsistent with the assertion about the imperialist nature of the present-day US policy. Quite the contrary: It bears significant resemblance to the UK foreign policy in the interval between the mid-XIX and the beginning of the XX century. The British Empire likewise strived to make its system of social values alluring for others. Its businessmen, clergy and officials were providers of eurocentrism throughout all the territories of the British Crown. Novel technologies were put to the service of the imperial propaganda since the dawn of the XX century. What is now BBC World Service was established in 1932 as BBC Empire [sic!] Service, so the genesis of broadcasting landmarked invisible presence of the Great Britain in the world information field even beyond the British frontiers, although it failed to prevent its

decay. Thereby, it begs the question whether the global media presence of the USA can be viewed as an element of the power politics in the contemporary international relations, and whether the American popular culture can be considered a leverage to impact the policies of other states in the world. Even in the era of global communication networks, American media presence is focused on Europe, Japan, Korea, Australia and Latin America. Its presence in the other regions is of a complementary nature. That is to say that according to J. Nye terminology American “soft power” has no global dimension. On another hand, the US remains mass migration country. About 16,7 million people immigrated into the country from 1974 to 1998 whereas in Great Britain this figure accounted for 18 million people over the period from 1850 to 1950 [Fergusson, 2004b: 267]. According to the partisans of “soft power” approach, for instance, a large share of the US tertiary students repatriate with a considerable set of American values which they disseminate, asserting the loyalty to the US across continents. These figures, however, do not necessarily indicate great (on the historic scale) potential of the US soft power compared to that of Great Britain. The significant proportion of people who studied in the US remain in the country and even those returning home do not necessarily become proponents of American domination in other world regions. This can be illustrated on the example of Great Britain which faced similar phenomenon in terms of training elites for its colonies [Howe, 2002: 53].

Arguably, all trappings point to the fact the United States of America is the imperial nation. There is no such state that could challenge the USA in the military and technical domains as well as in the economy. The impact of the American culture is world-spanning and overarching although it also faces some obstacles. Unlike Great Britain, its dominance is founded upon immigration, but not upon colonization. In its broad sense, it is not only about the immigration of people, but of capital inflows and presence of the foreign companies in the American legal system. There are some substantial reasons for being pessimistic about the USA capacity to retain the status of alluring centre for investment and institutional presence for the foreign economic agents taking into consideration the high rate of the American foreign debt. As of now, this debt has run to 18 trillion US dollars. That makes the American economy lie in the power of a constant influx of foreign capital. In the meantime, the deficit of the current capital account has for a long time remained in order of 500 billion US dollars [CIA World Factbook, 2014]. In case of Great Britain, if we take the period from the 1870s to 1914, there was always a surplus of net foreign investment, and in 1913 it reached the height of 9% of the GDP [Fergusson, 2003: 68]. This is not to say the decline of the American hegemony in international relations will happen over the coming decade. This means that the United States is no longer a superpower. Transnational threats such as terrorism, international crime, nuclear proliferation and global environmental crisis cannot be neutralized by America's unilateral actions.

This does not necessarily imply that the US is losing its status as an imperial state with a global presence in international politics. It can no longer be considered a global hegemon, but will remain the leader of the coalition of the world's most powerful states for many years to come. The US interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria have proven that America's global role cannot be realized without the effective assistance of other states as well as without the existence of the pro-American international coalition. Moreover, the European countries are even outpacing the United States in terms of economic and financial development aid, aimed ultimately at stabilizing the social and economic situations in countries embroiled in the regional conflicts of the post-bipolar world in order to guarantee their loyalty towards the Euro-Atlantic community. In today's world, an empire can no longer live in a situation of “splendid isolation”, as Britain did at the end of the 19th century.

Recognition of the imperial character of the United States by the political class in that country is fundamental for maintaining the low-conflict nature of the modern world. The Iraqi example shows that the United States mistakenly relied on the fact that their presence in this country would only be short-lived and that the extent of its support for that country might

be limited. These calculations turned out to be false. A successful empire is never based on direct coercion, and economic and other long-term incentives are needed to ensure the loyalty of local elites. Today, the US is investing too little in its "empire." Their outstanding military and economic potential is incapable of bringing about the preferred social, political and, in part, economic transformations in other countries. By the majority of objective parameters, conceivably besides the socio-cultural, the US dominates the British Empire of the early twentieth century, but there is a clear structural weakness of American hegemony in the modern world. The United States is an importer, not an exporter of "human capital". It ignores the direct economic presence in politically important regions of the world, such as the Middle East. It discounts the need for the continued support for its actions on the part of the Euro-Atlantic allies. Therefore, the future of a sustainable international order and a stable international foundation will depend on a fundamental change in the attitude of the US political class regarding the need to continue and strengthen the global nature of its foreign policy and to involve all countries in the Euro-Atlantic community in a concerted joint action to support the modern international order. Unlike the multi-polar system of the power balance of the seventeenth century, the hierarchical structure of the modern international system can be called monopolarity in the absence of a hegemony. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US emerged from the Cold War as the only superpower.

However, the future multipolarity will not imply the return to the initial stage of the Westphalian model of international relations. The structure, supported by a certain array of isolated, autonomous, sovereign states, gives way to a set of interdependent, heterogeneous elements, including states, state like institutions, international corporations, non-governmental international organizations, virtual communities, transnational communities of interest and political organizations, etc. The plurality of existing international actors is foreshadowing a rather rapid evolution of monopolarity towards more dispersed configuration of power capacity and more complex role-stratification in the international relations of the near future [Nye, 2002: 244].

The main parameters of the international order will now be determined not only by states, but also by the amalgamation of various international actors that in their actions are likely to consider territorial boundaries as an obstacle to the achievement of their global goals. States will continue to exist, but increasingly as the institutional context of social processes and disruptive technologies that have partially got out of hand.

Very often in order to describe general characteristics of the international relations within the traditional, archetypal, "Westphalian" concept, a metaphor of the pyramid billiard table is used where unicolourous object balls move and collide. In the light of today's internal and external challenges to the supremacy of the modern "sovereign" state, a more appropriate analogy seems to be that of the multitier network that encompasses a wide variety of international actors in its development. In terms of dialectics, such a conceptualization of international relations means the return of international relations to the state of the hierarchical international community of the Middle Ages with a predominantly concentric configuration of the structure of the international system.

A policy that overemphasize its own interests and actions with great probability will be extremely ineffective under these new conditions. None of the world's leading powers is able to withstand the financial burden of completely independent action and cannot allow self-imposed go it alone in the conditions of the global economy. Most of the problems that help to solve the age-old problem for humanity in modern circumstances require a collective interaction that inevitably transforms any policy based solely on independent actions and converting its own interests into an absolute.

The policy of electoral alliances within a limited number of partners may become an alternative to pursuing politics of self-contained actions. However, in a world where there is no clear bipolar simplicity, the delineation into probable or desirable allies and opponents is no easy task. Moreover, it is often the case when security allies turn out to be competitors in

the field of international trade, finance or technological development. Instead of a greater controllability or even predictability of development of world politics, countless blocks and situational coalitions will lead to both fears of being marginalized on the part of those who remain outside the coalition and uncertainty in the strength of the compromises reached by the participants in such alliances.

However, in a world where sovereign territorial states will coexist with international actors without territorial localization and sovereign status, in all probability such a form of maintaining primacy of cooperative activities will be limited in its practical effectiveness. While universal in terms of the participation of states, it leaves behind non-state international actors. Integration of the latter will require not only establishing formal foundations for more equal relations among them and traditional actors, but also governing relations with social communities and, first and foremost, in openness and social responsibility. Private corporations, international organizations, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, as well as individualized international actors, can no longer ignore legitimizing their political activities, claiming their enhanced status within the framework of transnational and global political projects of the future. However, the latest point seems to be even more problematic in the near future *vis-à-vis* the states coming to terms with losing dominant monopoly in public politics.

However, there is a fundamental provision that this substantially stateless community of international actors will shelter the critical bulk of processes determining the macro-configuration of the international relations system and the future of international politics. This newly established community may become both a driver of fundamental changes and a factor inhibiting the radical transformation of the world order thus providing for the perpetuation of the basic features of the Westphalian system in their modified modus. Smooth evolution of the international system maintaining the dominating position of the United States largely depends on its ability to ensure the broad support coalition in this dynamic dimension of modern international relations. So far, the US politics in this sphere has been focused predominantly on the economic aspects of establishing the fundamental structure of the global world order that attracts economic agents regardless of their national jurisdiction. Programs facilitating social and economic transformations and stand-by programs implemented by institutions including IMF and the World Bank under the incentive of the US, provide for grand-scale privatization, liberalization of financial transactions and intensification of the role of financial sector generating the favorable conditions for capital accumulation.

With no less success, the United States also aspired to export its own model of social and economic fabric within the framework of the central zone of the most developed countries of the world economy. In the endeavors to take a driver's-seat-position in their industries, European and Japanese companies are bound to provide a permanent and substantial presence in the US market that leads to the need to adapt their business and corporate strategy to the requirements of US law and the ruling liberal economic ideology.

In the post-bipolar world, the configuration of the structure of international relations will not be able to shape up a global empire based on the clear violence of one dominant hegemonic state. To a greater extent, as was typical of the previous historical period, the world order will be derived from the ability of the contenders for leadership to mold the political and economic environment of their main competitors' existence and, consequently, to modify the content, shape, and priority of their foreign policy goals and means of their implementation.

The safeguard to preserving the monopolar structure of international relations in the international system is the USA's ability to frustrate the efforts to establish the regional integration community in the Far East where Japan, China, and the ASEAN countries will network in the form of "free trade zone" with preferential schemes for commodity and investment flows, or with elements of the monetary union. A prerequisite for the further systemic dominance of the United States is not only its ability to use the market mechanisms

to assert its global advantage in the production of goods and services, but also the expansion of structural penetration into and dominance over the central area markets of the world economy and the preservation of control over the international division of labor. The overall trajectory of American policy towards reshaping the internal make-up of the central-area countries of the modern international system is defined by an effort of the United States to unobstructed concentrate capital in sectors that are vital to securing American advantage fuelled by the country's enormous financial opportunities. However, dividing the international system nucleus into autonomous jurisdictions and preserving diversity of the socio-cultural and political identities significantly reduces efficiency of the US policy.

The role of the United States as a structure-forming component of the international relations system will depend on the factors that are endogenous in nature. These also includes the issue of the duration of the macroeconomic expansion wave that was a distinctive characteristic for this country's development in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Finally, there is a long-term possibility that the United States will lose its global role as a result of changes in the hierarchies of US foreign policy priorities and enhancing its regional focus with elements of neo-isolationism stemming from socio-political and demographic changes within the country. An increase of the share of citizens with non-European historical background, in particular those from Latin American countries, may become an additional factor in the regionalization of American foreign policy and the weakening of its system-forming role at the global level.

Conclusions. A conceptual understanding of the United States of America as an imperial state has the right to exist in a current historical context. Using the classical arsenal of «power factors», defined by the *Realpolitik* tradition of international studies, it can be argued that the USA prevails over other states in the military, technological, economic and partly, in the cultural areas. Hence, it objectively creates a gravitational field of imperial domination in international politics. The imperial role of the United States reached its peak immediately after World War II: it played the role of hegemony in international politics and economy. The post-war period saw a decline in the American superiority over other states in merely quantitative aspect of the power factors, but the country remains in the dominant position in the current international system. Thus, the shaping of the post-bipolar system of international relations develops as a dialectical process of interaction of trends of maintaining continuity with the previous historical form of existence of the international system on the one hand, and radical renewal in its most significant features, on the other. The major regulatory framework that defines the proportion of these two trends, for the time being, is the USA foreign policy which is generally characterized by focusing on preserving and even strengthening the overarching principles of its historical predecessor in the post-bipolar structure of the international system. Primarily, this relates to the central place of the USA as the dominant and structural component of the international system. If the dynamics of globalization of international relations remains at current high level, such policy of the USA may lead to preserving, under new historical circumstances, some features of unipolar configuration of international system as a consequence of the internal consolidation of its nucleus likely to consist of the few most developed states which will be opposed by the periphery, more increasingly unified and homogenous in its basic socio-economic structures, and comprising the rest of the world states.

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