



## ORIGINAL PAPER

# The Evolution of the Post-Cold War International Relations System. Bipolarity

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### Abstract:

Throughout time, the evolution of international relations has mostly been dominated by the distribution of power within the system of international politics. Therefore, the decade following the year 1990 can be characterized as a period of development of democratic norms and institutions, in which the American triumph represented the central point of the entire international political system that governed the next historical period.

An important aspect of the system has been the power distribution by emphasizing the term polarity as a configuration of the structure of international relations according to the number of the state actors. Polarity means exactly a supposed distribution of power and that is why, in the current vocabulary of international relations, we can refer to alternative structures of the international system of bipolar, unipolar, multipolar nature. Consequently, the configuration of power forces or power poles is an essential element that has been used for several decades in order to define the structure of the international system.

If we analyze the situation for this period from a security point of view, there has been recorded a flurry of controversy, thus some authors have mentioned the new created environment as a unipolar one, while others see it as multipolar: in his work "The Unipolar Illusion": "Why New Great Powers Will Arise?" (1993) V. Layne, stated that the international system is not a multipolar one, but is characterized by a "unipolar moment".

At a certain point in history, unipolarism could find in the United States the only center acknowledged internationally as a worldwide authority, and yet we could say that unipolarism has often been counterbalanced by multipolarism, as a revival of some countries which have lately proved their superiority and influence several times. On the other hand, the distribution of polarity power within the system is undoubtedly the most important feature, which involves its stability as well.

**Keywords:** *security; bipolarity; unipolarity; system of international relations.*

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### **Polarity, as a characteristic of the system of international relations post cold war**

An important aspect of the system of international relations was the way the power was distributed by emphasizing the term polarity as a configuration of the structure of international relations according to the number of actors. In order to explain the general configuration that the international scene has adopted, an important part of it will use the concept of polarity in different theories of international relations. The variety of their usage depended mainly on the definition of power and the relevance of its distribution in different international currents.

In what the realistic theories are concerned – theories whose basic notions are the national interest, the anarchy of the international system and the balance of power - polarity is a fundamental variable. In Kenneth Neal Waltz's neorealist theory, polarity plays a major role in theoretical development (Leyde, 2014). Neorealism tries to explain the changes in the international structure using two principles: the principle of order, as a way of distributing authority in the legal system and the principle of power distribution (Leyde, 2014). Because the principle of ordering is considered a fixed variable when the system is regarded as anarchic, the changes that occur in the international system depend exclusively on polarity changes. On the other hand, the predominant transnational economic perspective takes into consideration the polarity of the state only as a relevant instrument, as long as it is useful to the global actor on the international market.

In what the extrastate theories are concerned (Leyde, 2014) – theories which highlight the influence of civilian actors on international interactions – the principle that applies is the principle of minimizing or denying the importance of the structural configuration of the international system. This theory makes the actor's position on polarity similar to that of the theory of economic domination, which means becoming useful. However, this utilitarianism, instead of focusing on the beneficial effects of the economy, focuses on the effects that polarity can have on the influence of civil, governmental or foreign actors.

Although there is no consensus on the definition and application of polarity in the formulation of international relations, almost all theories admit that this is an extremely relevant direct or indirect variable. This consideration is fundamental when assessing foreign policy, as it conditions the level of cooperation and conflict within the system. For developing countries, this is a topic of importance that can determine the polarity of the system as a necessity of the capacity for growth in the structural sphere, in the case of emerging powers in order to determine the limitations exerted by the system (Leyde, 2014).

Its importance also lies in the fact that it is one of the few concepts in the theory of international relations whose historical evidence is timeless and indisputable. Although the origin and the way in which the polarity changes of the system develop are not yet clear, the main generally accepted forms of polarity are of three types: unipolarity, bipolarity and multipolarity.

At the beginning of the XXIst century, we have been faced with a new reorganization of the international system, in which power is globally distributed for the first time in history; thus providing a transition to a multipolar system, where states are no longer the only active agents of power, but a group of emerging powers fighting and acting in alliances with the aim of achieving a new distribution of world power, thus trying to put an end to the unipolar coalition led by The United States, after the change of political regime in the socialist states of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

It is very important to define that a system can be conceptualized as a set of interacting elements, thus forming a whole and representing a true organization. In the case of international relations, as a result of a systematized analysis it can be highlighted that the interactions between the actors constitute a system that has certain characteristic features, thus forming the structure of the system. These characteristics are distinguished according to the rules of the game and sometimes weigh as obligations that can be observed in the actors' behaviour.

Polarity contains exactly a supposed distribution of power, which is why in the current vocabulary of international relations; we can speak about alternative structures of the international system of bipolar, unipolar, multipolar nature (Leyde, 2014).

**The bipolar system** - In this system two powers dominate their rivals until each of them will be at the center of a coalition, thus being forced as secondary actors to be in a relationship according to the blocs. The objective of the main actors is not to be at the mercy of the rival in order for him never to acquire superior means over him (Leyde, 2014). Thus, we are witnessing the realization of permanent alliances within which each party will receive both rewards and constraints. Some theorists will consider the bipolar balance to be the most effective (Leyde, 2014), as happened during the Cold War from 1960 to 1991. Although the existence of various important actors in the global international system tried during this period to model in one way or another the international scene. Through various actions, the relevant polycentric character will remain the Soviet-American bipolarity.

**The unipolar system** - The distinctive feature of this system is the main actor, which absorbs the others, eliminating potential international agents. A classic example is the Roman Empire where political units were conquered and thus becoming part of the imperial system, with a higher degree of dependence, but which are accountable to the same hegemonic authority.

In the twentieth century, the international system was unipolar between 1945-1950, and the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, more precisely the years 1991-2011 were dominated by the existence of a single world superpower that will not reach in terms of system development to a historical multicentre. In the period 1991-2011, the United States, in its position as a superpower, will not be able to win any war even if globally it will benefit from the characterization of a military oversizing.

**The multipolar system** - The peculiarity of this system is that the main actors are more than three, and their forces are not equal enough. Within this system we can observe a forecast of the unfolding of events by reducing the possibility of the outbreak of the conflict as a result of diplomatic actions, which will characterize the pre-war period in order to maintain a balance in the international system. A concrete example in the history of international relations is the Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries. In the twentieth century, the international system was multipolar, between 1929 and 1945, thus covering the period of World War II. The alternative of a multipolar international system with autonomous decision centers would be the incorporation of a union of states / countries, both from the south and from the north, in the development process of the world economy.

This configuration of international forces has implications that go far beyond international economic barriers. In such a situation no state has preponderance over the international system, which is why the need for a union of centers of power would be able to make decisions on the various and complex issues of international politics. If we refer to the multipolarity in the southern part of the globe, we can talk about a

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pluripolarity of international relations, where we will encounter a diverse configuration of geopolitical forces, with different cultural identities, heterogeneous with a much changed political ideology. In what the Latin American states are concerned, the existence of a new mentality regarding the modeling of some power poles could form an international pluripolar system (Leyde, 2014).

Therefore, the configuration of forces or poles of power is an essential element that has been used, for several decades, in order to define the structure of the international system. However, other characteristics can be considered a precedent: the hierarchy of powers, the homogeneity and existence of international regimes, ie a set of rules in a new sphere of international relations: trade and navigation through which the interaction between states can be regulated and establish less conflicting relationships (Leyde, 2014). In the case of state actors, they transfer the interests of their domestic policies to the international scene, generating heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting situations in the international system. Therefore, a second element in the systematic analysis of international relations is the difference between the internal and external aspects of the system. Some historians have presented the history of international relations as a succession of systems or as a configuration of the same system (Leyde, 2014). In this sense, we can say that there are four distinct stages of the international system.

**The first stage** of the Cold War is marked by the construction of the main rules of operation of the bipolar system. **The second stage**, represented by the relaxation period, is characterized by the cooperation and competition of the international bipolar system, **the third stage** is differentiated from the other two stages by the sudden degradation of the relaxation process, thus accentuating the bipolar confrontation and resulting in a conjunctural unipolarity of the international system. **The fourth and last stage** of this cycle is represented by the disappearance of the Soviet Socialist Union in 1991, with the appearance of a single superpower in international relations.

In this regard, the Gulf War, in 1991, the “humanitarian intervention” in Somalia, in 1992, the bombings against Yugoslavia, in 1999, and the wars against Iraq, in 2001, Afghanistan, in 2003, Libya, in 2011, were a clear example of “novelty”. an imperialist interventionism implemented on the basis of a bloody sacrifice under the direct guidance of the United States, in order to geopolitically control important territories on different continents and to impose its authority on the main energy and mineral resources that will constitute in the future close to the main American targets (Leyde, 2014).

As a result of all mentioned above, we can admit that unipolarity, as a dimension of the military and political force of one power, corresponds to the global reality of 1991-2011, but also represents a correlation of international forces that shows a deep trend towards a multipolar system. Thus emphasizing the heterogeneous and diverse nature of international relations in the 21st century.

Will the European Union remain a pole, or will it disintegrate as a result of the economic crisis that has negatively affected the economy and the financial system? Will there simply be the China pole or a China-Japan pole or the Russia-China pole? Will Russia's strong consolidation be a pole of world power?

The answer to these questions, related to the place that each of the above-mentioned powers will occupy in the configuration of the international system of the 21st century, represents another considerable degree of uncertainty, knowing that the structural transformations of the international environment can extend over a long

period. However, these tendencies may be accelerated or delayed by the wars of imperial powers or altered by the current effect of the economic and financial crisis to which are added the health problems facing all mankind.

If we accept that the peak of American power has already been consumed, it is necessary to note that the evolution towards a multipolar or pluripolar international system does not equate to the total decline of the United States. The decline means a weakening in some layers of power, but not in all, so the rise of other actors indicates the beginning of a period of relative decline in American influence. In order to establish a diagnosis about the process of decline, it is necessary to deepen the analysis of the US situation, its possibility to rebuild new economic capacities by looking for solutions / resources in its capitalist system.

If the change in the dynamics of current geopolitics continues to spread at an accelerated pace, the change in global leadership could occur by 2030, and the only way the US could avoid a large-scale war would be due to its dominant position in international politics. Therefore, in the short and medium future, the United States is likely to remain one of the central powers of the international system without being recognized for the privileged position of unipolarity gained after the demise of the USSR in 1991, which does not mean that the empire will give up on international politics, but rather will act in accordance with other related world powers in the form of a collective imperialism without facilitating the transition to organized multipolarity.

Mainly, the multipolar structure of the international system is based on the five main world economies, in the following order: USA, China, European Union, India, and Japan, to which is added Russia, which through its military capabilities could be included in the above-mentioned group. This configuration of forces is a consequence of the changes that take place in the depths of the economic structures in the USA, England and Japan representing a non-compact distribution order which tries to catch the USA in an economic amalgam by directing it in an oscillating direction, in an impact directly with the economic networks of China, India and Russia, in order to attract Europe led by Germany, which has gradually strengthened its control over the continent despite the contradictions between European powers.

In fact, the movement to establish a multipolar international system is driven by the great capitalist economic crisis that began in 2008 and aimed at the depletion of Western forces and the expansion of China. Some economists believed that the dollar, as the main international currency, is certainly nearing the end of his reign, which could lead to severe financial difficulties for the United States. The US government is facing a suffocating debt, a market for goods whose roots have failed, with a bloated banking system, an extremely high unemployment rate, in conclusion with a show of a hesitant economy (Leyde, 2014).

This is not the image of a superpower truly worthy of the privileges obtained from the currency of world trade. Therefore, as we have shown, other states have begun to observe this process of superpower degradation and have gradually begun to use other currencies in international trade and financial transactions.

### **The bipolar power system and its implications on the behavior of states in international relations**

Among the actors in international relations that may be part of the bipolar power system, we will analyze the Russian Federation, China and the EU.

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### **a. Russian Federation**

In what Russia is concerned, the evolution is very different from that of the USA. After the disappearance of the USSR, the Russian state had a huge loss on all levels, but especially in everything that meant the size of power. Despite this situation, Russia was quick to rebuild its forces, especially its military capability, gradually but surely rebuilding its world power and influence to such an extent that it was called by the United States "the special partner" in international politics, although in matters of its own strategic interests, America has always ignored Russia.

In the end, Russia was gradually excluded from the project aimed at building the European Union, thus contradicting Mikhail Gorbachev's dream. The way NATO and the European Union have been enlarged has led to the exclusion of Russia from what Gorbachev called the "European common house", because from his point of view being part of the "European house" means being a member of NATO and of the European Union. As a result, Russia is pursuing its own independent power, backed by its military capability and natural resources, plus support from allied neighboring states with which it has signed neutrality treaties, engaging in a multipolar international system. This is probably the most comfortable position according to its geopolitical configuration, as a power located on two continents, Europe and Asia.

As a consequence, Russia made a major effort to convert the Collective Security Treaty (CSTO) into a politico-military alliance, but had to deal with the mutual distrust of the majority of its members, in addition to the many differences within the security of each. The inability of its members to identify internal threats and to separate them from external ones by counteracting them was a real problem that could not be solved by the Collective Security Treaty (Leyde, 2014).

If the European Union remains subordinate to the US security strategy, Russia will most likely seek a counterweight, in this case the Asian side, thus increasing its cooperation with the former Soviet republics and especially with the People's Republic of China, which appears as the main power of the international system in the second half of the 21st century. However, the main states of Europe: Germany, France and Italy recognize in Russia a power outside the framework of the European Union, taking into account its energy capacity and its strategic policy.

On the other hand, Russia approved, in 2010, an armaments development program, until 2020, which provides for the delivery to its armed forces of a number of 8 strategic missile carriers, about 20 multifunctional submarines, over 50 warships, about 100 spacecraft for military use, over 600 modern aircraft, including fifth-generation fighter jets, over 1000 helicopters, over 38 complex missiles Iskander-Mšisk more than 2300 tanks (Leyde, 2014).

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, Russia successfully launched an intercontinental ballistic missile from the Ojos nuclear submarine in the far east of the country. A few days later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, they conducted a new test of a new intercontinental ballistic missile, launched from the Kapustin Yar range in the southern part of the country, which was successfully completed for Russia (Leyde, 2014). Similarly, in the second week of October 2012, Russia undertook the largest military exercise in recent history with the massive involvement of the entire nuclear triad, which consists of nuclear missiles at sea and on land.

All of these are part of the strategic nuclear forces and are of particular importance to the US military in terms of Russia's stockpile of nuclear weapons (Leyde, 2014). On the other hand, Russia is working to strengthen the Customs Union, as an

embryo of the Eurasian Union. The Customs Union was achieved by signing the act on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus (Leyde, 2014). This union is considered the brick that underlies the gradual lifting of what was called the Eurasian Union in 2015. The crisis in the European and American economy, coupled with the growth of the Chinese economy, were the decisive causes that led to deepening the multipolarity of the international system. .

Another important step in this process was the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001, when the military-strategic agreement between Russia and China was signed (Leyde, 2014). Both powers will oppose the aggression against Syria by preventing the approval of the resolution by the Security Council, which wanted to conduct a UN military air operation against Damascus. These were the turning point towards a multipolar international system which could undoubtedly ensure a higher level of stability and peace in international relations. The trend towards multipolarity was gaining followers, and the global space was to strengthen or weaken depending on the dynamics and purpose of the conflict in Syria in which Russia was the first player (Leyde, 2014).

Regarding the global development system of the last 20 years, including the period of unipolarity and Russia's new role in world geopolitics, the Russian leadership said that the unipolar force was not able to guarantee the stability of the international system and the increased unpredictability of the economic field and the military call for responsible and trusting cooperation between states, especially between permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Russia's new critical vision considers that the great economic powers serve as locomotives for development, offering greater stability to the world economy, but at the same time with an increased risk to international politics. Regarding these imbalances, Russia aimed to restore economic power, eradicate poverty by creating a professional workforce, a middle class that could keep up with the tectonic process of global transformation, a new cultural, economic, technological and geopolitical era at world-level (Leyde, 2014).

#### **b. People's Republic of China**

China was not at first a superpower of the international bipolar system. Therefore, referring to today's China as a superpower was a way of anticipating historical time. The truth is that this country reached this rank in the coming decades, imposing at national level a development policy that started near the 1970s, reaching its maximum supremacy in the years 2018-2020 (Leyde, 2014). China is par excellence the main Asian power, with an important presence in Europe, Africa and a vision to expand in Latin America and the Caribbean. Almost all international analysts have predicted that, over time, China will overtake the United States in terms of gross domestic product and is expected to become the world's largest economy (Leyde, 2014).

Ultimately, the Asian nation is already a world leader in several economic and social fields. China has launched a foreign policy, which was aimed at gaining international recognition and respect while giving priority to the development of the economy, military technology, especially for the maritime and cosmic space where cooperation between it and Russia is very strong. This allowed China to warn the US, without fear, about the danger of the militarization of outer space and about the constant military maneuvers carried out very close to the conflict in the Korean peninsula (Leyde, 2014).

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At the same time, we must add the allegations, well-founded or not, offered by the Pentagon in the sense that the Republic of China would own most of the American technologies applied in the military industry, through intelligence and cyber intelligence services. In reality, China has begun the process of innovating and renewing its armed forces and military technologies, by introducing the first aircraft carrier among other modern weapons (Leyde, 2014).

China, due to its prospects, in the future hierarchy of the international system, is a power with which most states want to promote relations based on mutual respect. Some actors in the system prefer developing relations in the regional sector, based on sustained economic growth (Leyde, 2014), thus marking the behavioral capacity of each to adapt to a new international policy. While the gross domestic product of the traditional powers is declining, that of China continues to grow steadily.

Making an analysis, although the US dollar is the most used currency in over 45% of transactions, in addition, in just one day it is traded on the money market about five trillion, the equivalent of a third of gross domestic product in the US year, the dollar gradually loses global currency status. To this we can add the fact that one of the world's major economies does not use the US dollar to trade, the example of China which maintains similar agreements with countries such as Japan, Brazil, India, Russia and Australia (Leyde, 2014).

Therefore, it is very difficult not to accept that the international situation is in the process of change, and the end of the 21st century could bring with it many economic changes, in which China was considered in 2018, a great superpower of the international system. Along with the spectacular progress, we must not forget that the People's Republic of China has an emerging economy today, and the average income of a Chinese is even lower than the income of an American (Leyde, 2014).

However, if there were a surprising process of destabilization of the Chinese political system following the changes in the geopolitical world, as a result of a war provoked by the US and its allies in order to disrupt China's progress, it would be certain that such a situation would trigger a serious global crisis with unpredictable consequences for the stability and functioning of the entire set of international systems.

Nonetheless, everything seems to indicate that the People's Republic of China will be able to avoid all challenges and threats, both political and military, especially economic ones, which since 2008 has threatened and affected most of the economies of the European Union, the United States, Japan, including Russia's economy

### **c. The European Union**

The European Union is the first regional pole in a multipolar labyrinth, in which we meet the states that founded this European bloc and the countries with the vocation to become members or aspirants of the political, economic and military bloc in the old continent. Thus, the states within the pole are seen as a circle inside which are located those that hold European economic and political supremacy, while outside gravitate the states whose status is that of member and aspirant. The circle increases in time with the entry into the great pole of the countries that were once outside it.

All these states are subject to a process of progressive integrity of the objectives set by the institutions, which from Brussels, lead the European construction. They must carry out a process of adapting domestic law to the standards of Community law, developing the so-called rule of law, adopting the rules of liberal democracy, fighting corruption, guaranteeing the rights and freedom of human beings and of all minorities

(Leyde, 2014). Their candidatures force them to make legal and institutional changes, given that they will receive advantages in the medium or long-term integration.

It is also important to note that the enlargement of the European Union, over a period of time, has led to a visible decline in the quality of European standards in all respects, as the enlargement process took place at a time when economic policy was one of neoliberal draconian, also known as "austerity" applied by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. Added to all these is Germany's enormous influence through its "austerity policy", Germany being the main economic power in the region and therefore the driving force behind the construction of the European concern (Leyde, 2014).

In this situation, a second circle of countries is pursuing a "neighborhood policy", a policy whose geographical and material outline is still poorly defined given that it is not very clear whether these states will be allowed to integrate into the European bloc. The logic of this applied policy is one of attraction, not domination, arguing in different scenarios the benefits they can have by complying with certain conditions, because of which to obtain future benefits through the reciprocity mechanism by joining the great European pole (Leyde, 2014).

To these the project of the Mediterranean Union can be added, an idea promoted by France, in order to influence the European Union, in a place where the cultural, political, economic and military character contrasts strongly with European principles, values and methods (Leyde, 2014).

Resistance within the European Union, coming from Germany and Great Britain, based on competition and rivalry in order to control this area has been an important point in European politics over time, resistance that can be compared to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict created by the Americans. However, there are reasons to say that the model of building the European Union remains a regional one, led by a Franco-German reconciliation, which is the miracle of international relations after 1945, for the benefit of peace on the old continent.

In 2013, Germany and France form the axis of the European Union (Leyde, 2014), an axis that in the current conditions of the economic and financial crisis cannot achieve a comprehensive border and a leadership in accordance with the new global reorganizations of international relations. Taking into consideration its power, this criterion of reorganizing the global world does not exclude a universal influence and even a domination of the periphery, the third world. In any case, the European Union has lost the credibility and prestige of maintaining effective world domination by moving towards a paradigm of pursuing other nations or regions of the international system.

All the structures that make up the functioning of the European Union are limited by its weak military dimension; therefore, it is not able to ensure international security, even if we refer only to the European continent, which is why it will not be able to intervene successfully in conflicts outside its borders (Leyde, 2014). If we talk about our own security, we can say that it is placed under the US protectorate through the North Atlantic Pact (NATO), which implicitly makes it dependent on the American military strategy.

We should ask ourselves whether our own defense could develop within the North Atlantic alignment, as France's "new foreign policy" seems to aspire to. Even in this situation, the states of the European Union are free to express their point of view in international politics. Within the UN, for example, the member states of the European

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Union present their own political positions, which are not always necessarily convergent, as the bloc has failed to consolidate a common foreign security policy.

Weighing this weakness, the European Union could not be disintegrated from the outside, but a fragmentation from inside as a consequence of the divisions of the Member States by the nature of the distinct differences of political mentalities can happen, and in such a conjuncture, we can witness a degradation from all points of view of the European continent.

Members of the European Union are major contributors to the UN budget - more than a third, but this financial strength has not turned into political influence (Leyde, 2014). Yet, the European Union is a pole of the multipolarity of the international system of the 21st century, by opposing the American foreign political unilateralism, that is, the hegemony of the only superpower, with this not being done in a frontal manner. Without a break with the US, in recent years, contradictions between the two sides have been visible with the use of force against Iraq, the compromise of European countries on the environment, the limitation of the consequences of climate change through multilateral action.

Of particular significance was the confrontation developed around the International Criminal Court. The United States has committed itself to concluding bilateral agreements with states that are part of the Rome Convention, with the aim of exonerating its citizens living abroad under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, while European countries fight against alleged claims, which are opposed to the Convention (Leyde, 2014). These legal differences have reached the Security Council on the immunity of US military forces engaged in peacekeeping operations. European countries were at the center of these legal confrontations, but they obviously could not win.

All these clearly show that, although it is true that the European Union and the United States are considered the bastions of the old order of capitalist domination on a global scale, in their international projections there are oppositions or rivalries between the two conceptions: one that perceives international politics through the primacy of multilateralism and international law, and the second based on coercion, pressure and the use of force, thus preventing compliance with the rules of international law.

In constitutional terms, the European Union is an entity separate from the power, in fact, a unit of European states, which can evolve towards a balancing factor in an international multipolar system. In this sense, redefining future ties with the United States is a key issue for the European Union. At the economic and financial level, the sensitivity and vulnerability of European states, in the current situation of the euro crisis and the one in the medical field manifested at global level, will represent the main points of imbalance in the relations within the international system.

Hence, Germany's idea of a free trade area between the European Union and the United States (Leyde, 2014), which over time would strengthen economic interdependencies, in order to achieve an economic NATO that could fuel competition and rivalry between capitalist economies.

With regard to security as the main tool "in the fight against terrorism" and "the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction", we must mention two aspects that both sides have: the first aims to achieve a political framework in defense of Israel, while the second highlights discrimination and an attack on Iran and Syria. If we talk about the political aspect between the two, we can notice the existence of a silent rivalry between NATO and the European Union, the US using the military line as a control mechanism

over the expansion process of the European Union, thus trying to direct and why not, to control this expansion process evoking a Western alliance of democracies in a hypothetical borderless international system from North America to Australia (Leyde, 2014).

All these indicate that in the current globalization of international relations, the interdependence between the new power configurations could work for the benefit of both, and the weakening of US power offers opportunities for greater influence of emerging powers and a greater margin for action for the countries, which are part of the pattern of capitalist periphery.

In the case of the European Union, we should ask ourselves whether it will be able to equip itself with the necessary tools to enable it to become a superpower of the 21st century, a full player in international relations, leaving behind the era in which it was considered by the USA is an important pawn in international politics. Observing the situation of the next decades of the 21st century in the international system, the US challenge will not only be for the European Union, which often disagrees with exacerbated militarism and its policies in general, but especially for the great emerging or reappearing powers which, just like Russia, develops following a very different logic from that of American unipolarity without abandoning the claims of great power, seeking to contribute to a different prospective design of international relations.

In what Russia is concerned, the European Union is carefully managing its energy dependence on other emerging powers such as China and India, which are gradually controlling the market for hydrocarbons and raw materials, overtaking other producers; accepts rivalry in the agricultural export sector even if this is made by an increasing number of countries, reducing the competitiveness of its services.

The continuation of international regional conflicts affects the image of the European Union as an international player, which is why the disputes between Kosovo versus Serbia, Armenia versus Azerbaijan should be avoided. This situation is a consequence of the US's inability to impose its integral domination in the international system of the 21st century to overcome the power of Russia, when we talk about strategic weapons and to overcome China, when we talk about the economic-trade system.

These will be some of the characteristics of the international multipolar and multicenter system predictable for the next decades of the 21st century.

### **Conclusions**

In the context presented above, we can point out a consequence that was not visible in the early 1990s. Therefore, the events that characterized the Cold War were placed in a historical-chronological perspective, until the 21st century and showed that the two important things of a state: the global power and the unipolar hegemony of the United States of America were not enough to create a new international order, on the contrary, they opened a geopolitical competition in which an important group of great powers, big societies and political games have greatly violated the agreements of the Western world. In this context, despite its economic and military power, the US specifies the need to create an active diplomatic structure that will allow it to build a consensus to act internationally. In conclusion, it is clear that the economy and demographics are among the factors that will slightly increase the power of countries such as China, India, Russia, Brazil and South Africa.

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