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The Nature of Contemporary Conflicts and Prospects for Adapting Collective Security Systems: A Triadic Approach

Natalia I. Kharitonova  

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation

 natahari@yandex.ru

Abstract. The study focuses on the analysis of the nature of modern conflicts, and the prospects for the adaptation of collective security systems in the context of the emergence of a polycentric world order. The analysis draws upon three key factors: the hybridization of conflict interactions in the modern world, the actualization of the civilizational approach in practical international politics, and the legitimacy more or less inherent in collective actions. The purpose of the study is providing an answer to the question of whether international organizations will continue to play the role of regulators and insurance mechanisms against new global conflicts in the future. The study's tasks are threefold: first, to characterize the international context that both shapes and reflects changes in the nature of conflict; second, to identify key changes in the nature of modern conflict interactions; third, to determine new requirements for collective security systems in a polycentric world. The parameters of the problem being analyzed are determined by the fact that the nature of conflicts has changed significantly over the past half-century and continues to change, while changes in the basic principles of the existence of international organizations have either not occurred at all or represent rather modest attempts to define acceptable formats for the world community. This discrepancy signifies a pivotal challenge in contemporary world politics, exemplifying systemic transformations within the international relations framework. The methodological framework of the study incorporates a triadic approach, facilitating the identification of intricate characteristics that define specific phenomena. The use of the triadic method in order to determine the characteristics of modern conflicts (by “coupling” the phenomena of strategy, sovereignty and hybridity) and systems of collective security in the context of polycentrism (by “coupling” the phenomena of civilization, collective action and security) made it possible not only to determine the main parameters of changes of the modern conflicts nature in the transition period and the requirements for collective security systems in the new international political conditions. Furthermore, it has facilitated an exploration of future trends in order to outline the contours of new approaches to analyzing the international situation, taking into account the experience of the current global upheavals.

Key words: hybrid war, collective security, civilization, polycentricity, international system, new world order, sovereignty

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Природа современных конфликтов и перспективы адаптации систем коллективной безопасности: триадический подход

Н.И. Харитонова  

Российский государственный гуманитарный университет, Москва, Российская Федерация

 natahari@yandex.ru

Аннотация. Проанализированы природа современных конфликтов и перспективы адаптации систем коллективной безопасности в условиях становления полицентричного мирового порядка. В качестве ключевых выступили такие факторы, как гибридизация конфликтных взаимодействий в современном мире, актуализация цивилизационного подхода в практической международной политике, а также легитимность, в той или иной мере присущая коллективным действиям. Цель исследования — дать ответ на вопрос, сохранятся ли в будущем за международными организациями роль регуляторов и страховочных механизмов от новых глобальных конфликтов. В числе задач — охарактеризовать международный контекст, формирующий и одновременно отражающий изменения в природе конфликтности, выявить ключевые изменения в природе современных конфликтных взаимодействий, а также определить новые требования к системам коллективной безопасности в условиях полицентричного мира. Параметры рассматриваемой проблемы определяются тем, что природа конфликтов существенно трансформировалась за последние полвека и продолжает меняться, в то время как изменения в базовых принципах существования международных организаций либо не происходят вовсе, либо представляют собой достаточно скромные попытки определить приемлемые для мирового сообщества форматы. Именно этот разрыв выступает в качестве одной из ключевых проблем современной мировой политики, отражающих структурные изменения в системе международных отношений. В качестве методологической базы исследования наряду с системным анализом был привлечен триадический подход, позволяющий определять комплексные характеристики тех или иных явлений. Применение триадического подхода с целью определения характеристик современных конфликтов (путем «сопряжения» феноменов стратегии, суверенитета и гибридности) и систем коллективной безопасности в условиях полицентризма (используя триаду «цивилизация — коллективные действия — безопасность») позволило определить основные параметры изменений природы современных конфликтов в переходный период и требования к системам коллективной безопасности в новых международно-политических реалиях, а также наметить контуры новых подходов к анализу международной обстановки с учетом современных глобальных потрясений.

Ключевые слова: гибридная война, коллективная безопасность, цивилизация, полицентричность, международная система, новый миропорядок, суверенитет

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Introduction

The contemporary period is characterized by the onset of a new era in the realm of international relations. Like any other turning point in world history, especially when it constitutes an epochal transformation, it is accompanied by turbulence, erosion or complete breakdown of the old system supporting structures, and deep structural reorganization. The subjects of world politics react differently to the occurred changes and anxiously await further

transformations that will inevitably and inescapably come.

The key questions that must be addressed at this juncture are as follows:

- What will be the outcome of these changes?
- What should we expect from the new international system?
- What will be at its core?
- How effective will the rules underpinning the system be?

—Who and how will ensure the security of international relations, their subjects and determine the status in this system?

This is by no means an exhaustive list of questions, each of which requires separate consideration.

The Yalta-Potsdam system, which demonstrated remarkable stability in the conditions of confrontation between the two superpowers, was formed during the Second World War. The documents regulating its functioning, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, which formed the basis of modern international law, are permeated with peaceful rhetoric and extol peace as the supreme value. However, the generations that have experienced all the horrors of war and have been “inoculated against Nazism” have already withdrawn from the leadership of countries and international structures. And the fear of war is receding not only among the ruling elites, but also in modern society. The so-called ‘cancel culture’ and the ‘war against monuments,’ campaigns to rewrite history, that is, its falsification (Leshchev & Kharitonova, 2016), are designed to erase the remnants of fear, respect for the fallen, and patriotism from the collective memory of entire nations. Therefore, the current transition period entails the risks of unleashing a new global war. Obviously, the factor of nuclear weapons and a relatively universal military escalation mechanism automatically give the possible Third World War a total character and make the analysis of the conflict potential of the modern world relevant and in demand not only by science, but also by international political practice.

However, whatever the parameters and specific features the potential global conflict may acquire, the fact is that it is a profound restructuring of the international relations system, accompanied by conflicts of varying intensity. At the same time, the bright feature of the Yalta-Potsdam era in the form of collective security systems, formalized as intergovernmental organizations, turns out to be

mostly incapable of preventing these conflicts or influencing them in such a way as to reduce the scale of bloodshed (suffice it to recall the League of Arab States during the Arab Spring). This naturally gives rise to the question of the effectiveness of such systems, rather than the reasons for their poor adaptation to the transitional period, as well as their prospects in the context of the emerging global order.

The article presents a call for discussion on the nature of contemporary conflicts and the future fate of collective security systems in the context of the civilizational approach actualization in practical geopolitics. As a methodological basis for the study, along with the system analysis, the triadic approach was employed, which facilitates the determination of complex characteristics of certain phenomena. It should be noted that in this study, the distinction between the concepts of ‘conflict’ and ‘war’ was not drawn, due to the voluminous nature of this discourse in political science, Conflict Studies, military science, etc., the emphasis was placed on conflict in general, changes in its nature, hybridization of conflict interactions.

International Context

In analyzing the nature of conflict and the prospects for collective security systems (in the challenge — response system), it is important to take into account the international context, which both shapes and reflects changes in the subject of analysis. One of the key characteristics of the transition is turbulence in the international relations system. A phenomenon generally familiar to internationalists, it nevertheless has a number of distinctive features. We are witnessing at the same time the tendencies of competition, rivalry and cooperation with an unprecedented arms race, as well as increased conflict, which is generated both by the collision of the major players power fields and by the “power vacuum” resulting from the failure to fulfill the obligations of the country that has positioned itself as the world hegemon for the

past 30 years. As a result, we see an unprecedented aggravation of the military and political situation in Eurasia, further polarization of approaches to the problem of defining the parameters of the new world order, a deepening of confrontation and an increase in the potential for conflict in relations between the old and emerging superpowers.

The current US-Russian confrontation is a struggle between two worldviews and two different approaches to the future world order. However, this confrontation is not the only story in the rapidly changing global environment. Experts note the importance that it is taking place in conditions that occur once in several centuries — there is a period of structural redistribution of power and resource potentials in the world. This process has a partial impact on our country and the United States.¹ In the long term, the center of world production and consumption will move to Asia. In this context, the next stage of the confrontation between Moscow and Washington will remain one of the key lines, but far from being the only one. The problems of relations in the U.S. — China — India triangle will become increasingly important.

A further pertinent question pertains to the eventual form a polycentric world order might take in terms of security. Hypothetically, under ideal conditions, a polycentric system would allow for more effective resolution of old conflicts and prevent the emergence of new ones. However, there is no firm assurance that as the polycentric world order matures, the ambitions of new centers of power will not lead to the ignition of new conflicts against the backdrop of unresolved old ones (Huntington, 1996). Of course, observing the bloody conflicts that have played out in the Eastern Hemisphere in recent decades,

the aspiration for a new world order that is safer and fairer is compelling.

Undoubtedly, the current turbulence in the international relations system poses a host of threats and challenges to global and regional security. But at the same time, these developments represent an opportunity, a chance for the world community to rethink and discard those outdated structures that are no longer capable of ensuring peace in the new conditions. The present situation thus calls for a re-evaluation of the very structure of the international relations system itself.

The world is moving towards polycentricity. This transition is an objective historical process and there is every reason to believe that the new multipolarity will be not just a relations system of equals, but these relations will be truly democratic in nature, based on respect for each other's interests and orientation to the search for compromises in choosing the world development paths. In many respects, the BRICS is now acting as a prototype of such a model. Moreover, it is anticipated that the emerging balance of power will be built on a new economic basis, which will no longer be based on the individual countries monopoly in certain sectors of the world economy and finance. This suggests the emergence of a more equitable global order.

Reflections on the current geopolitical confrontation outcome, which is based on contradictions related to the competition between two world orders and two visions of the future international relations system, usually lead to one of the key questions: Will international organizations retain the role of regulators and insurance mechanisms against new global conflicts? The problem is aggravated by the fact that the conflicts nature has undergone significant transformation over the past half-century and continues to evolve, while the fundamental principles underpinning the existence of international organizations remain largely unaltered or represent only minor efforts to delineate formats that are acceptable to the international community.

¹ Sushentsov A. Nowhere to Hurry: The Long Confrontation Between Russia and the United States // Valdai International Discussion Club. January 11, 2024. (In Russian). URL: <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/nekuda-toropitsya-dolgaya-konfrontatsiya/> (accessed: 20.01.2024).

This gap is one of the key problems of contemporary world politics, reflecting structural changes in the system of international relations.

The Nature of Modern Conflicts

Many modern and foreign researchers agree that modern conflicts, regardless of their scale and the configuration of the parties' positions, are mostly hybrid in nature (Akulinin & Epifanova, 2015; Chizhevskiy, 2016; Bartosh, 2017; Sokolova, 2017; Kuchinskaya, 2018; Popov, 2019; Tikhanychev, 2020; Van Creveld, 1991; Hoffman, 2007; Kilcullen, 2009; Kaldor, 2012; Murray & Mansoor, 2012). In this case, the invariable characteristic of hybrid conflicts or hybrid wars is the encroachment on sovereignty. That is to say, the distinguishing feature of 'hybrid war' (in contrast to the generally accepted definitions of the concept of 'war') is that it is, in fact, an offensive strategy that pursues the goal of depriving the victim country of political sovereignty (Maksimov, 2021).

Sovereignty, in its turn, to a certain extent has self-value, acting in the political realism tradition as an indispensable attribute of an established state. At the same time, as is known, each state, entering into interaction with other states, for example, within the framework of international, primarily intergovernmental, organizations, voluntarily gives up a part of sovereignty, acquiring in return certain benefits — economic preferences, security guarantees, broader opportunities for humanitarian cooperation, etc., as well as other benefits. At the same time, the state often implements a certain strategy to increase its importance in the international arena or in a particular region, to form an areola of friendly states, to promote its values, and so on. In this part, it is worth mentioning that the traditional three pillars of a state's foreign policy — interests, security and prestige — as a certain universal rule are still relevant. Although the approach itself is

under strain as the world order undergoes restructuring.

In connection with the above, the relationship between the phenomena of strategy, sovereignty and hybridity in the context of thinking about the contemporary conflicts' nature is of interest. The attempt to define this relationship was based on the qualitative certainty triplicity (the idea of triadic quality), J.G. Fichte's ideas about triadic inferences and R.G. Barantsev's ideas about the semantics of triadic structure (Barantsev, 1998; 2000), since qualitative analysis and qualitative modeling have a cognitive value because they allow generating categorical combinations of various forms. In other words, the triad provides the completeness of the object description at the current level of detail (decoding) while meeting the requirement of minimum content.² Therefore, the triadic approach (triad method), as one of the universal cognitive tools representing the methodology of categorical schemes, was used to determine the specifics of the contemporary conflicts' nature.

Most military science classics consider war (in the order of maximum generalization, first of all, as a large-scale conflict) as a political order phenomenon, nevertheless, a significant part of the 'war' concept in terms of the purpose type characteristics in the interaction between the international relations actors does not mention the deprivation of the country sovereignty against which the war is unleashed (Kozyrev, 2013). In its turn, hybrid war (or hybrid conflict) aims precisely at depriving the enemy of sovereignty and transferring its territories and influence spheres under its geopolitical control. The latter is realized taking into account the fact that the "direct control of certain spaces can now bear more costs than benefits, and influence by indirect means is much

² Razumov V. I. Categorical-System Methodology in the Training of Scientists: Textbook. Omsk : Omskiy gosudarstvenniy universitet publ., 2008. P. 81, 125, 261. (In Russian).

more effective.”³ And in this part, the key role is played by strategy (military strategy, strategy in conflict), based on the need to achieve this goal by minimizing the use of aggressor country resources. In this sense, the logical connection between the concepts of ‘strategy,’ ‘sovereignty’ and ‘hybridity’ can be presented within the framework of the triadic approach in the form of a triad, where the conjugation of these concepts allows us to identify the key characteristic of a contemporary conflict (war).

It is evident that contemporary conflicts (wars) are of a hybrid nature, wherein hybridity functions as an offensive strategy with the objective of subjugating the victim country’s sovereignty (a feature that distinguishes a hybrid war from an ordinary war, and a hybrid conflict from an ordinary conflict). Thus, the triadic approach demonstrates the possibility of achieving a synergetic effect within the systemic triad (Barantsev, 1989) — the emergence of a new quality of modern conflicts (wars), which are realized as hybrid — it is an effective way to seize, expand or retain political power. By the way, the above-mentioned three pillars of a state’s foreign policy — interests, security and prestige – can also be considered within the framework of the triadic approach of qualitative characterization of sovereign state foreign policy. If at least one of the elements is eliminated from the triad, one can state either the failure of foreign policy or an absence of real state sovereignty.

The level of interacting subjects’ technological development is of great importance in hybrid interaction, including that of a conflict nature. It is primarily about the extent to which the subjects use the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution (STR) and especially the humanitarian-technological revolution (HTR), in their foreign policy strategy

(Ivanov, Malinetskiy & Sirenko, 2018; Malinetskiy, Posashkov & Skurlyagin, 2019). The higher the level of technological development, the more profound the resulting hybrid impact of one subject on another.

Analyzing modern conflict interactions (Kharitonova, 2024, pp. 29–32), along with encroachments on sovereignty, among the trends of the time we should also point out changes in subjectivity when analyzing the qualitative characteristics of the parties to modern conflicts. As demonstrated by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) research over the past 30 years, more and more often non-state actors (often used by states as proxies), rather than states, which was characteristic of previous eras, are the parties to conflicts. In addition, the situation with civilians in conflict zones has changed qualitatively: whereas previously civilian deaths were perceived as undesirable but inevitable or collateral losses, today civilians are increasingly perceived as the target of offensive forces and means (Donbas, Gaza Strip). Moreover, there is active work to legitimize such methods of influencing the enemy (in fact, armed violence), while the arguments of countries using such methods are untenable and increasingly resemble the rhetoric traditionally used by terrorist organizations that justify their actions to achieve political and ideological goals. And in general, against the background of the growing international processes ideologization and the activation of radical ideologies, ideas and concepts in certain regions of the world, decision-making processes regarding the methods of conducting military operations are also being ideologized to the detriment of respect for international humanitarian law.

When discussing the nature of modern conflicts, it is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal role of information and communication technologies, which are used everywhere, realizing various strategies and hybrid struggle tactics. However, in the context of this article, it is advisable to point out in particular the information and propaganda effects of hybrid actions that work to consolidate and mobilize the

³ Lukyanov F. The Current “Third World War” Will Be Stretched in Time and Distributed in Space // *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. November 8, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://rg.ru/2023/11/08/chto-budet-posle-status-kvo.html> (accessed: 20.01.2024).

population of the countries used as proxy forces (e.g., Ukraine, the Baltic States, Poland in the US hybrid war against Russia). In addition, a “side” effect of such large-scale propaganda campaigns is that these countries themselves, literally racing against the clock, begin to transfer their sovereignty in exchange for ephemeral security guarantees, the validity of which cannot be verified in peacetime (while history demonstrates their complete failure: for example, the Anglo-Polish military alliance of 1939, which implied mutual assistance in case of aggression by one of the “European powers,” meaning Germany).

Obviously, that paying sovereignty for security, regardless of the final result, is possible only if there is a public consensus or if the political leadership is completely detached from society, which is usually described by the categories of neocolonialism or occupation. And if only 10 or 20 years ago, issues related to the superpower geopolitical interests in the absence of a consensus at the level of the UN Security Council could be solved through the creation of a ‘coalition of the willing’ (operations of international armed intervention in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, etc.), which acted with regard to the UN, while today we see the Western countries forming a united front (i.e. on the basis of almost complete consensus) against Russia without regard to international law, which is based on the principle of preserving peace. The point is that collective action provides international legitimacy, as demonstrated by the very ‘coalitions of the willing’ that the U.S. put together to realize its own foreign policy adventures under the slogan of promoting democracy / fighting weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism and so on. Today, the slogan is the struggle of the enlightened democratic West against tyranny and inhuman evil (“flowering garden” versus “jungle” in the rhetoric of the former High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and

Security Policy Josep Borrell⁴ and the ideologue of American neoconservatism Robert Kagan (2018)).

In such conditions, Russia is compelled to quickly reorganize literally in all directions where activity is needed, even in the mode of defensive actions. However, our theory of hybrid warfare is traditionally lagging behind; our country’s success in the confrontation is clearly defined on the battlefield and in a comprehensive defense that includes a number of measures in the economic, financial, and humanitarian spheres aimed at mitigating the consequences of the West’s sanctions policy, as well as political and civil mobilization of the population. The lack of Russia’s full-fledged allies in the hybrid conflict with the West should also be seen as a problem. Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine has shown that ‘soft alliance’ as an approach to collective security in the post-Soviet space has not yielded the expected results. We have not seen any manifestations of a collective approach or coalition actions (with the exception of steps taken by Belarus) that could legitimize Russia’s actions to protect its interests in the eyes of the international community to the same extent as in the West. One of the positive aspects of this approach, taking into account the de facto absence of ‘bloc discipline,’ was the fact that these associations continue to operate in the same composition, at least for the time being.

However, despite the complexity of the situation, Russia managed to find a way to change its positioning in the hierarchy of the world political system. By defining itself at the height of the special military operation in 2023 as the core of a special civilization (Gapizov & Kharitonova, 2023), Russia de facto established the fact of the arrival of polycentrism and established itself as an international subject participating in the global agenda formation

⁴ European Diplomatic Academy: Opening Remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell at the Inauguration of the Pilot Programme // EEAS. October 13, 2022. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-diplomatic-academy-opening-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-inauguration-pilot_en (accessed: 20.01.2024).

(although the factor of the special military operation in its informational dimension had previously created appropriate conditions for the perception of this message throughout the world). Moreover, the prerequisite was created to dilute the concept of conflict interaction with Russia in its current form: the West, being a civilization (“a flowering garden”), is fighting not with cannibal savages possessing the second army in the world and the largest nuclear potential, but with another civilization. Russia has independently endowed the current conflict with the status of a civilizational conflict, which means that it has stated that the stakes in the current struggle are as high as possible — the future world order and the “first composition” of the world centers of power.

New Requirements for Collective Security Systems

As previously stated, a series of conflicts involving territorial changes in Europe became an attribute of the new world order formation. Moreover, there is a view that the Third World War is a series of regional conflicts and wars below the threshold of nuclear war, and it is in full swing.⁵ The succession of armed conflicts began in the last decade in the Middle East (Yemen, Syria), then continued with Ukraine (from 2014), the South Caucasus (2020) and Palestine (2023). It is evident that this list can be extended further. This makes experts pay more attention to regional processes, given the fact that there are no similar situations here, and therefore no universal recipes for neutralizing crises. However, in the context of globalization, which, although it has slowed down, remains a key factor in the development of human civilization, despite the trends of glocalization, regional processes often have a determining influence on the global situation, including the state of global

⁵ Lukyanov F. The Current “Third World War” Will Be Stretched in Time and Distributed in Space // *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. November 8, 2023. (In Russian). URL: <https://rg.ru/2023/11/08/chto-budet-posle-status-kvo.html> (accessed: 20.01.2024).

security. For example, the conflict in Gaza has divided the world into those who support Israel and those who support the Palestinians. Earlier, the armed conflict in Ukraine began to fulfill a similar function. A similar dynamic is observed in the Taiwan Strait. In such a situation, the responsibility of regional collective security systems is constantly increasing, while their real capacity to fulfill their statutory goals is shrinking. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the structure of conflicts is often determined by hybrid actions, and regional collective security systems themselves become the object of hybrid aggression (Kharitonova, 2024, pp. 32–35).

Meanwhile, there is a growing debate about the future of the UN. The organization is constantly being criticized, including the fact that the discussion within its walls has long ago turned into the voicing of positions. Experts recognize that in the foreseeable future, venues such as the G7 meeting will not be able to replace the UN and its peacekeeping mechanisms.⁶ However, the UN can be preserved, while losing its effectiveness, as was the case with the League of Nations, or on the contrary, it can be revived, for example, when people in key countries, tired of the West’s dictates, bring to power new leaders who will focus on national interests and follow the UN principles. At the same time, we are witnessing the emergence of platforms that, without claiming to play an alternative role to the UN, unite countries in formats aimed at satisfying national interests at the regional level within the framework of rather flexible interaction

⁶ See: Head of the General Assembly: There Is Nothing to Replace the UN // UN News. November 22, 2023 (In Russian). URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2023/11/1447022> (accessed: 20.01.2024); Ivanov I. S. What Are the Core Benefits of Multilateralism at the Present Stage? // Russian International Affairs Council. July 3, 2023. (In Russian). URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/podlinnaya-mnogostoronnost-osnovannaya-na-strogom-soblyudenii-ustava-oon-i-obshchepriznannykh-norm-m/?sphrase_id=173135562 (accessed: 20.01.2024).

mechanisms — BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and others. The composition of these platforms is constantly expanding, and the composition of the joining countries shows that these platforms are demanded primarily by the so-called ‘global majority,’ which is dissatisfied with the hegemonic ambitions of the United States and has suffered a lot from Washington’s hybrid actions, which have long become a tool of foreign policy (including, of course, sanctions). An analysis of these new formats reveals that what distinguishes them favorably from, for example, NATO and the European Union, where Washington’s dictate and rigid ‘bloc discipline’ are evident, is flexibility and mutually beneficial cooperation between equals. At the same time, unlike the U.S., the member states of the new associations still need the UN, and they actively advocate preserving its key role in ensuring international security.

The international situation, which testifies to the change of epochs, is accompanied by the collapse of key formats for maintaining stability in the world and in specific regions. The suspension of the dialog between Russia and the United States on strategic stability and the end of the era of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe again automatically form a new agenda for regional security systems. The question therefore arises as to whether the prevailing systems possess the capacity to effectively address such challenges. Unfortunately, it is necessary to state, first, the problem of the inconsistency of the changing nature of conflicts (first of all, their continuing hybridization) in the absence of significant changes in the basic principles of the existence of international organizations and the obsolescence of the categorical apparatus and definitions used in modern international law. Secondly, to emphasize that, as a consequence, in the new system of international relations, those organizations that will be able to adapt and cope with such challenges will obviously continue to function, while the place of the others will be

taken by new organizations that will operate on different principles that are more in line with the evolving realities.

Discussing the new conditions of international organizations existence representing collective security systems, the question of the factors that unite states within them naturally arises. We know two main types of collective security systems — alliances formed by countries from different cultures and historical traditions with ambiguous perceptions of each other (usually *ad hoc* alliances or temporary coalitions to confront a common enemy), and alliances of culturally similar countries that often share a common history, political tradition, etc. (long-term alliances that are more stable and have a higher level of adaptability). It is not excluded that in the foreseeable future, thanks to the civilizational context so timely updated by Russia, another type of organizations will emerge, reflecting the formation of a polycentric world, in which each pole is represented by a civilization and countries that are in the gravitational field of these civilizations (of course, such organizations may include countries — representatives of different civilizations that have common ideas about security). It seems that this type of organization may be more sustainable. In this sense, as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Secretary General I.N. Tasmagambetov notes, the collective security systems in the Eurasian space already have a substantial backlog and enviable experience (Tasmagambetov, 2024).

In order to determine the characteristics of collective security systems under polycentricity, it is also advisable to consider the ‘conjugation’ of the civilization phenomena, collective action and security within the framework of the triadic approach. This will make it possible to identify the necessary qualities of collective security systems as an effective way of ensuring peace and stability in the world within the new, polycentric system of international relations. In contrast to the realities of a unipolar world, conflict relations will mostly be classified as

conflicts between civilizations that position themselves as equal to each other. On the one hand, this may complicate the search for a mutually acceptable basis for developing universal mechanisms for the prevention, resolution and settlement of conflicts. On the other hand, this search can be based on the idea that security is a resource, or more precisely, the most expensive resource and determine the place of collective security systems in the distribution of this resource, its multiplication and ensuring its inviolability. For this purpose, the adaptation of international law to the realities caused by the widespread use of hybrid actions must necessarily occur (revision of basic concepts such as ‘war,’ ‘peace,’ ‘threat to peace,’ ‘aggression’ (Kharitonova, 2024, pp. 31–32); definition of the boundaries of civilizational sovereignty, which includes humanitarian sovereignty and information sovereignty, etc.; drawing clear boundaries between contradictions and hybrid conflict actions; improvement of humanitarian law in order to protect civilians in conflict zones, the law of international bodies and international organizations, etc.). And in general, the conceptualization of security law in new historical conditions should be continued in order to exclude the possibility of actualization the “flowering garden — jungle” paradigm of relations, peculiar to the unipolar world and neocolonial in nature.

The role of collective security systems, formalized as international organizations, should be decisive here as well. This is not only because collective efforts are in themselves more legitimate than unilateral ones, but also because collective security systems offer consensual solutions. Finally, the actualization of the civilizational approach in the analysis of international relations, and in particular, in areas related to the activities of collective security systems, will inevitably lead not only to a new vision of the knotty problems in Conflict Studies, but also in general to the international relations foundations in the new geopolitical conditions. Thus, the emergence of an approach according to which the hegemonic

ambitions of any state are by definition an encroachment on the sovereignty of all countries and the sovereignty of civilizations (the conceptualization of the latter is in full swing), and global security is not excluded, which automatically connects collective security mechanisms to the solution of the problem in neutralizing such ambitions.

Conclusion

Thus, when discussing the nature of modern conflicts, it is advisable to point out their constant transformation towards hybridization of conflict interactions, regardless of what concepts we use to designate these interactions — ‘conflict,’ ‘hybrid conflict,’ as well as the concept of ‘hybrid warfare.’ The analysis of the transition period conflicts reveals that the global hybrid war, which is being waged around the world through the efforts of the U.S. and its allies, is essentially a strategy in the struggle against the establishment of a multipolar world through the external provocation of different types of asymmetric conflicts within the target states, between them and in the zones of their geopolitical influence. That is, the U.S., considering itself the world hegemon, is waging an aggressive struggle for the preservation of a unipolar world and a rules-based international order.

In fact, we are talking about the confrontation of two worldviews and two concepts of the future world order, where the U.S. stands for a unipolar world universalized according to American models, based on the idea of the exclusivity of the American nation, and Russia, which is now in the vanguard of the ‘global majority,’ stands for a polycentric world, ideological pluralism and equality of unique civilizations. This confrontation, realized by hybrid methods, constitutes the main contradiction of modern international relations and is a key factor affecting the state of international and national security systems of modern states, Russia in particular. The latter requires the development of special tools for its

neutralization. It is assumed that the answers will be found within the framework of the civilizational approach, actualized by Russia in the field of practical geopolitics last year at the height of the special military operation. Russia has officially defined itself as the core of a special, unique civilization, which implies a new quality of foreign policy and a number of other changes that are designed to strengthen the weight of our country in the international arena in a polycentric world.

The current global shifts, combined with the escalating number of conflicts around the world, raise the question of the future of collective security systems, which are not always able to demonstrate their effectiveness in dealing with contemporary crises. The ability to adapt to new conditions and to counter crises based on hybrid actions is one of the main criteria for the survival of these organizations and the assertion of their key role in ensuring stability in the new world order.

The application of the triadic approach to determine the characteristics of contemporary conflicts (by “coupling” the phenomena of strategy, sovereignty and hybridity) and collective security systems under polycentricity (by civilization — collective action — security triad) allowed not only to determine the main

parameters of changes in the nature of contemporary conflicts in the transition period and the requirements for collective security systems in the new international-political conditions, but also to look beyond the horizon of events in an attempt to determine the nature of the conflict environment of the changing world.

The results of the reflections on the present and future of the changing world conflict environment presented in the article form a number of other topical questions:

— What are the essence, goals and prospects of the ‘civilizational turn’?

— What will be the real parameters of state and civilizational sovereignty?

— What are the limits of international law adaptation to the new conditions?

— How will the strategic thinking of national and Western elites change in the course of the current confrontation?

— How will the tools of social mobilization be transformed?

All of these questions require careful study and theorization: the needs of political practice persistently push the scientific community in this direction.

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About the author:

Kharitonova Natalia Ivanovna — Dr. of Sc. (Political Science), Associate Professor, Chief Research Fellow, Russian State University for the Humanities; eLibrary SPIN-code: 6491-4442; ORCID: 0000-0002-7980-6562; e-mail: natahari@yandex.ru