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**Report by**

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**World Order and National Interest**

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**(I)**

**The evolution of world order**

When the so-called “cold war” ended at the beginning of the 1990s, expectations were running high for the emergence of a *new* and *peaceful* world order.<sup>1</sup> It was widely hoped that the rivalry between that era’s two superpowers, which was commonly characterized as “East-West conflict,” would be transformed into a stable system of co-operation among all states at an equal level and on the basis of common goals.

The prophesied golden age of “liberal democracy” and “peace,” however, quickly turned out to be a *Fata Morgana* when it became clear that one party to the erstwhile confrontation – that saw itself as the winner in the global struggle for power – insisted on a monopoly of definition of the basic principles of world order, including human rights and the rule of law. In the years that followed, the majority of United Nations member states nonetheless challenged the remaining superpower’s claim to political and ideological supremacy. Francis Fukuyama’s initial

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<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the term “New World Order” and its ideological implications see the author’s paper: *Democracy and the New World Order*. Studies in International Relations, Vol. XIX. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 1993.

proclamation of the “end of history,”<sup>2</sup> implying global acceptance of the supposedly victorious doctrine, was quickly proven premature.

The sudden disappearance of the global power balance, in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, resulted in a constellation of *hegemony* where the dominant global player felt emboldened to present its **national interests** as if they were the **universal interests** of mankind.<sup>3</sup> In the new unipolar framework (after the end of the bipolar order of the cold war period),<sup>4</sup> the lack of checks and balances in inter-state relations led to a profound destabilization of the international system, represented by the United Nations, and to a kind of legal anarchy that condemned the world organization to the role of impotent spectator of the hegemonial power’s unilateral actions. The wars of aggression against Yugoslavia (1999) and Iraq (2003) are just two examples of how the United Nations’ system of collective security – that is based on the balance of power among the Security Council’s permanent members – was eroded, and eventually undermined, in favour of the interests of essentially only one member state.<sup>5</sup> This development had already become obvious in the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq when the United States succeeded in exploiting authorization for collective enforcement action against Iraq to advance its peculiar agenda of a “New Middle East.”<sup>6</sup> The measures, officially conducted by a so-called “coalition of the willing” on the basis of binding resolutions of the UN Security Council,<sup>7</sup> included punitive economic sanctions against the country’s entire civilian population that caused the death of up to a million people.<sup>8</sup> In the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 it has again become obvious that in the absence of proper checks and balances the strive for power virtually knows no limits.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” in: *The National Interest*, Vol. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18. See also Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York and Toronto: Free Press and Maxwell Macmillan, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> American political commentator Charles Krauthammer pointedly and, for his part, affirmatively described this imperial understanding of the global hegemon’s role: “America must be guided by its independent judgment, both about its own interest and about the global interest.” “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” in: *The National Interest*, Winter 2002/03, pp. 5-17; p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> For details see, *inter alia*, Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, “American Primacy in Perspective,” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (July/August 2002), pp. 20-33.

<sup>5</sup> See the author’s analysis: “Quo Vadis, United Nations?” in: Hans Köchler, *World Order: Vision and Reality. Collected Papers Edited by David Armstrong*. New Delhi: Manak, 2009, pp. 189-204; esp. ch. II, pp. 192ff.

<sup>6</sup> On this concept see also Trudy J. Kuehner, “A New Middle East? A Report of FPRI’s History Institute for Teachers,” in:

*The Newsletter of FPRI’s Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 2005), Foreign Policy Research Institute, USA, at [www.fpri.org/footnotes/101.200501.kuehner.newmiddleeast.html](http://www.fpri.org/footnotes/101.200501.kuehner.newmiddleeast.html).

<sup>7</sup> For details of the marginalization of the United Nations in the handling of this conflict see Hans Köchler (ed.), *The Iraq Crisis and the United Nations: Power Politics vs. the International Rule of Law. Memoranda and declarations of the International Progress Organization (1990 – 2003)*. Studies in International Relations, XXVIII. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> See, *inter alia*, the report of the “Harvard Study Team”: *Unsanctioned Suffering: A Human Rights Assessment of United Nations Sanctions on Iraq*. Center for Economic and Social Rights, May 1996, [www.cesr.org/downloads/Unsanctioned%20Suffering%201996.pdf](http://www.cesr.org/downloads/Unsanctioned%20Suffering%201996.pdf).

In an effectively hegemonial environment the very *legitimacy* of the use of armed force on behalf of the United Nations Security Council is undermined, even negated, and the system of collective security is rendered dysfunctional. This is mainly because of the *abuse* of the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter by the *most powerful* actor for the sake of its own strategic agenda. Under such conditions, the dominant country will seize any authorization of the use of force by the Security Council as an opportunity to advance its strategic interests. (In the period that followed the end of global bipolarity, this was clearly the case with the United States, the self-proclaimed winner of the cold war.)

The practice of power politics under the conditions of *military* unipolarity has become the most serious challenge to the principle of national sovereignty, and in particular to the *sovereign equality* of nations, enshrined in Art. 2(1) of the United Nations Charter. The dominant global player has increasingly tried to cloak its national interests behind the veil of *universal values* such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law – albeit in its own parochial interpretation.<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, has triggered a counter-reaction from members of the international community that are resisting marginalization by the reassertion of their national interests.<sup>10</sup> In the name of trade “liberalization,” the hegemonial country also uses predatory economic globalization to advance its strategic interests. In response to this comprehensive and global claim to power, new forms of intergovernmental co-operation have developed such as the grouping of the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) or the Shanghai Co-operation Organization.

In the post-cold war environment, global tension is also the result of an increasing *disparity* between unipolarity in the military-political domain and multipolarity in the socio-cultural (or civilizational) sphere.<sup>11</sup> What Samuel Huntington described as “clash of civilizations”<sup>12</sup> is partly also an effect of this tension and the dominant global player’s tendency to establish civilizational (and ideological) supremacy over the rest of the world.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As early as during the Second World War, General Charles de Gaulle noticed in the declarations of the President of the United States the tendency to cloak the will to power in idealism: “Je écoute Roosevelt me décrire ses projets. Comme cela est humain, l’idéalisme y habille la volonté de puissance.” (Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre*, Vol. 2, Issue 1: *L’Unité. 1942 – 1944*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1956, p. 238.)

<sup>10</sup> This has also been observed by Charles Krauthammer who, in regard to the United States, acknowledges that “[o]ur experience with hegemony historically is that it inevitably creates a counterbalancing coalition of weaker powers ...” (*op. cit.*, p. 8). He is mistaken, however, when stating that no such “counterbalancing” occurred in the unipolar environment after the events of September 11, 2001 (*ibid.*).

<sup>11</sup> For details see, *inter alia*, the author’s paper: “The Shifting Balance of Power and the Future of Sovereign States,” in: *Bulletin 2010*. [Moscow]: World Public Forum “Dialogue of Civilizations,” 2009, pp. 129-142.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.

<sup>13</sup> See also Hans Köchler, “Civilization as Instrument of World Order? The Role of the Civilizational Paradigm in the Absence of a Balance of Power,” in: Fred Dallmayr, M. Akif Kayapınar, İsmail Yaylacı (eds.), *Civilizations and World Order: Geopolitics and Cultural Difference*. Foreword by Ahmet Davutoğlu. (Series “Global Encounters:

A new balance of power will thus be indispensable for the *politics of the national interest* not to lead to global dictatorship and permanent conflict. The exercise of national interests must be pursued in a *cooperative* framework and on the basis of *mutuality*, which alone is in conformity with the United Nations' principle of sovereign equality of states. That notion does not conform to a stable international order of peace if it is interpreted in an exclusivist (or absolute) sense, excluding – or, more precisely, absorbing – the interests of all other international actors as competitors for global influence. The politics of national interest must not remain the *domaine réservé* of the dominant power(s) of the moment.

The urgency of this is even more obvious in the light of claims expressed following the events of September 11, 2001 that the United States' "unique global power allows it to be the balancer in every region,"<sup>14</sup> and in view of the propagation of a so-called new unilateralism that "argues explicitly and unashamedly for maintaining unipolarity, for sustaining America's unrivaled dominance for the foreseeable future."<sup>15</sup>

## (II)

### National interest in a multipolar world

In theory as well as in practice, the term "national interest" has always been used in a rather vague manner – and this in spite of its centrality in inter-state relations. While, in the realist doctrine of international relations, national *interest* is generally defined "in terms of power"<sup>16</sup> (or, more precisely, the interest in the preservation of power), making it the "perennial standard by which political action must be judged and directed,"<sup>17</sup> the notion needs to be described in its implications for the different spheres of state action (economic, social, cultural, military, etc.) in order to be useful for understanding the dynamics of inter-state relations and for appropriately identifying today's global challenges. Apart from conceptual precision, every state should play with open cards and clearly define and indicate the *parameters* that define the scope of its national interests. This is one of the most essential requirements of a *rational* foreign policy, which alone will make a state a reliable member of the international community. A stable order

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Studies in Comparative Political Theory.") Lanham/ Boulder/New York/Toronto/Plymouth (UK): Lexington Books, 2014, pp. 19-33.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Krauthammer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Knopf, 1966, Chapter "A Realist Theory of International Politics," "Six Principles of Political Realism," principle 2. See also Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951.

<sup>17</sup> *Politics among Nations*, p. 9.

of peace is only possible if states make it possible for their fellow states to rationally calculate their behavior.

A definition of a state's national interests must be precise and comprehensive.<sup>18</sup> The policy of the national interest should be *transparent* and the underlying principles must be declared vis-à-vis the community of states. Naturally, such a definition will focus on the aspect of *national security* that is to be guaranteed in order to enable citizens and society to realize their aims in the social, economic and cultural fields, and it will have to establish a clear hierarchy of interests (values).<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, "national interest" is a *multidimensional* concept that can only be described in a concrete operational framework and on the basis of specific historical circumstances. As the self-preservation of the state as collective of citizens is at stake, national interests are nonetheless long-term in nature. Their *international* dimension, with the central aspect of military defense of the state, follows from the fact that each sovereign entity must operate, and define its role, in the concert of all other sovereign actors. It cannot do so in splendid isolation. Legal "sovereignty" alone – and the status of sovereign equality – does not shield a state from the potentially hostile intentions of other states or from the adverse effects of the pursuit of their interests. This is even more so in our era of global interdependence.

Furthermore, as said earlier, in the era of globalization, a *rational* definition of the "national interest" is only possible on the basis of *reciprocity*, i.e. by taking into account the *interdependence* of the actions of sovereign states and considering the interests of other state actors when outlining one's own state doctrine. This is particularly relevant in regard to global environmental issues – concerning which we are all "in the same boat" – and in view of the nuclear arms potential, whether declared or undeclared, of some of the major global players. Regional conflicts – whether in the Middle East, Central Asia or Europe – have also made drastically evident the *complexity* of national interests and the interrelatedness of that notion with interests related to the international level (in terms of peace and stability, regionally as well as globally). The conflict in and around Ukraine is a case in point.

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<sup>18</sup> On the need for a precise definition see e.g. James F. Miskel, *National Interests: Grand Purposes or Chatchphrases?* Newport (RI): Naval War College, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> As examples see the national security concepts of the United States and Russia announced at the beginning of the new millennium. The President of the United States identified as "vital" interests of the US "those directly connected to the survival, safety, and vitality of our nation." (William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*. Washington, D.C.: White House, December 2000, p. 4). In a statement of principles released in the same year, the Russian Federation described the country's national interests as "a totality of balanced interests of the individual, society and the state in economic, domestic, political, social, international, informational, military, border, ecological security." (*National Security Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Presidential Decree No. 24 of 10 January 2000*, Chapter II.) For a structural comparison see also: *Russia and U.S. National Interests: Why Should Americans Care?* Task Force on Russia and U.S. National Interests Report. Center for the National Interest and Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Washington DC, October 2011.

In the era of globalization, the most challenging question, however, is whether a sound notion of “national interest” requires the inclusion of *general* (or *universal*) interests that are shared by all. In other words: Is, under those conditions, the *bonum commune* (not merely of the community of the state’s citizens, but of the international community) a defining element of the national interest?

The question becomes even more complex in terms of realpolitik. Will sovereign states only be prepared to include the global *bonum commune* in their definition of “national” interest if the power constellation is actually *multipolar* – while in the absence of a *balance of power* (in a *unipolar* framework where all are “at the mercy” of one dominant player<sup>20</sup>) it would be a struggle of all against all, an unrestrained assertion of each one’s interests, trying to gain favour vis-à-vis the hegemon at the expense of all the others?

An understanding of the national interest on the basis of *mutuality* is most relevant in the military domain, namely in all matters that relate to the armed defense of a state’s vital interests, first and foremost its very survival. In this sense, national security is the *conditio sine qua non* for the exercise of a state’s interests in all other domains, whether political, social, economic or cultural. In the era of arms of mass destruction, and in particular nuclear arms, war, in its ultimate consequence, is no longer – as put in the famous dictum of von Clausewitz – the continuation of politics by other means,<sup>21</sup> but a recipe for *universal annihilation* – “mutual assured destruction.”<sup>22</sup> In all issues where the survival of mankind is at stake, the exercise of the “national interest” has thus to be conducted in an *inclusive*, not *exclusive*, manner, i.e. by respecting the rights of other states on the basis of mutuality. This is the very essence of peaceful co-existence among nations. In a context where arms of mass destruction are the ultimate means of the assertion of the national interest, an exclusivist attitude, putting the interests of a particular nation (state) above those of all the others, would be intrinsically *irrational*. The withdrawal of the United States, in 2002, from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty<sup>23</sup> is indeed one of the

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<sup>20</sup> A report issued by “The Commission on America’s National Interests” is an example for the definition of “national interest” in a strictly unipolar framework, which is meant to justify that country’s (the United States’) claim to “global leadership.” See *America’s National Interests: A Report from The Commission on America’s National Interests*. Washington DC, July 2000.

<sup>21</sup> “So sehen wir also, daß der Krieg nicht bloß ein politischer Akt, sondern ein wahres politisches Instrument ist, eine Fortsetzung des politischen Verkehrs, ein Durchführen desselben mit anderen Mitteln.” Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege. Hinterlassenes Werk; ungekürzter Text*. New edition. Berlin: Ullstein, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> The term was coined by US mathematician and strategist John von Neumann during the 1950s. However, for an assessment of the notion in the context of the prevention of war see now Michael Shermer, “Will Mutual Assured Destruction Continue to Deter Nuclear War?” in: *Scientific American*, Vol. 310, Issue 6, June 1, 2014, at [www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-mutual-assured-destruction-continue-to-deter-nuclear-war/](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/will-mutual-assured-destruction-continue-to-deter-nuclear-war/).

<sup>23</sup> The Treaty was signed in 1972 between the Soviet Union and the United States. In 1997, a Memorandum of Understanding determined that, for the purposes of the treaty, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine are successor states to the Soviet Union.

most drastic illustrations of an exclusivist, *unilateral* understanding of national interests that is in itself a challenge to global peace and security.<sup>24</sup>

The need for an “inclusive” – and comprehensive – interpretation of the national interest is also evident in *global environmental issues* and in matters of *global economy and finance*. The self-destructive nature of a unilateral, un-coordinated approach has revealed itself, among others, in the economic as well as political instability triggered by the global financial crisis of 2008 and in the inability of the community of states to agree on effective measures to deal with the ecological problems resulting from either unforeseen or deliberately ignored effects of industrial production and consumption.

In today’s hegemonial environment, the arrogant assertion and unrestrained (unilateral) exercise of national interests has brought chaos to geopolitically sensitive regions such as the Middle East or Central Asia and has led to an *unstable global order*. Due to the imbalance in global power relations, the militarily strongest international actor is always tempted to intervene even in distant regions and continents, outside its “natural” sphere of influence. Under these conditions, a lone superpower such as the United States will increasingly define its national interests in a global, all-encompassing sense, and without due consideration for the interests of the weaker players. The hegemon will not recognize any geographical limits to the assertion of its power. It is no coincidence that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), established as an instrument of *collective defense* in the era of the cold war, redefined its mission shortly after the end of this era. When the United States emerged as the sole superpower during the 1990s, NATO declared virtually the entire globe as area of operation, effectively transforming what had been a *defensive* into an *offensive* posture.<sup>25</sup> Originally, the organization’s mission had been to assist member states in case of an attack (according to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949).<sup>26</sup> This mandate (that applied to the territory of the member states) was based on the principle of collective self-defense according to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter and was meant to complement that organization’s system of collective security.<sup>27</sup> Following the collapse of the bipolar balance of power, this approach was completely abandoned and the concept of “out-of-area operations” or, more euphemistically, “non-Article 5 crisis response

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<sup>24</sup> For a critical assessment see Jing-dong Yuan, “Bush’s ABM bombshell: The fallout in Asia,” in: *Asia Times Online*, Hong Kong, January 8, 2002, at [www.atimes.com/China/DA08Ad01.html](http://www.atimes.com/China/DA08Ad01.html).

<sup>25</sup> See the new defense doctrine of NATO: *The Alliance’s Strategic Concept Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C.* Press Release NAC-S(99) 65, issued on 24 April 1999, at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm).

<sup>26</sup> *The North Atlantic Treaty*. Washington, DC, 4 April 1949.

<sup>27</sup> “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.”

operations” was introduced to describe NATO’s new defense doctrine.<sup>28</sup> It was unavoidable that this posture brought NATO member states in direct conflict with national security interests of many non-member states – particularly when the organization was entrusted with operations in the course of the so-called “global war on terror,” proclaimed by the US administration after 2001.<sup>29</sup> The problem was further aggravated by the expansion of the organization’s membership after the disappearance of its erstwhile rival, the Warsaw Pact.<sup>30</sup> Due to the increasingly frequent use of NATO for military operations outside the treaty area, and often without proper UN authorization (as in Yugoslavia/Kosovo in 1999 and Libya in 2011),<sup>31</sup> the implementation of collective security on behalf of the treaty states was widely perceived as a *threat* to the very security of states in the affected regions, and subsequently to global security.

The escalation of tensions in the Middle East and North Africa, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe, including the armed conflict in Ukraine, is a direct result of this hegemonial policy that is tantamount to the projection of the leading power’s national interests to distant regions of the globe. It is equally unavoidable that this post-cold war imperial policy of “containment” of other powers will lead to the *reassertion* of their national interests by those countries whose influence and projection of power – in the strategic logic of the global hegemon – ought to be “contained” in their own geographical region. Under such circumstances, these countries have effectively no other option; there is no other rational response to this crude exercise of realpolitik (in fact, power politics). The proclamation of universal values (principles) defined by the dominant power alone – and to which all countries are expected to conform – is neither morally credible nor will it convince the weaker states. Any idealism in the face of a monopoly of power is out of place.

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<sup>28</sup> Article 52 of the Alliance’s Strategic Concept (1999).

<sup>29</sup> For details see the author’s analysis: “The Global War on Terror and the Metaphysical Enemy,” in: Hans Köchler (ed.), *The “Global War on Terror” and the Question of World Order*. Studies in International Relations, Vol. XXX. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2008, pp. 13-35.

<sup>30</sup> This has become one of the main reasons of increasing geostrategic tensions in Eurasia. An American commentator aptly drew attention to the question of reciprocity (totally overlooked by a country that sees its role as that of the global hegemon): “How would the United States react to a Russian incursion in the Western hemisphere?” Jeffrey Tayler, “The Seething Anger of Putin’s Russia,” in: *The Atlantic*, September 22, 2014, at [www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-west-united-states-past-future-conflict/380533/](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-west-united-states-past-future-conflict/380533/). For a critical assessment in the early years after the end of the cold war see the words of the late George Kennan who emphatically warned of the consequences of NATO expansion: “I think it is the beginning of a new cold war ... I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves.” Thomas L. Friedman, “Foreign Affairs; Now a Word From X,” in: *The New York Times*, May 2, 1998, at [www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html).

<sup>31</sup> On the legally dubious military operations of NATO countries (under the effective leadership of the United States) in Libya see *MEMORANDUM by the President of the International Progress Organization on Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011) and its Implementation by a “Coalition of the Willing” under the Leadership of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*. International Progress Organization, Doc. P/22680c, Vienna, 26 March 2011, at [www.i-p-o.org/IPO-Memorandum-UN-Libya-26Mar11.pdf](http://www.i-p-o.org/IPO-Memorandum-UN-Libya-26Mar11.pdf).

The lesson to be learned from these developments in different and distant regions of the globe – not only in the above mentioned regions, but including the Philippines and the South China Sea – is that the assertion of national interests (particularly by the most powerful countries) is only compatible with peace under conditions of a global power balance, i.e. in a framework of *checks and balances*, which was originally to be provided through the very might of the veto-wielding countries in the UN Security Council, its permanent members. Although the system has always only worked imperfectly, it had certain credibility and efficiency as long as a bipolar constellation existed between the United States and the Soviet Union. In this framework of mutual control of the two great powers, the national interests of smaller or weaker countries were not entirely marginalized, but those states enjoyed at least a modest margin of maneuver between the two global competitors, and the UN Charter’s principle of sovereign equality was not entirely obsolete or ineffective.

In structural terms, the problem of the national interest is indeed similar to that of the definition and exercise of *national sovereignty*. In order to be compatible with an order of peace, sovereignty must be practiced on the basis of *mutuality* – and not as an absolute right of unrestrained self-assertion at the expense of any and all members of the community of states.<sup>32</sup> In the latter case, sovereignty would be *mutually exclusive* and, thus, a recipe for perpetual conflict and anarchy – a state of international relations German terminology aptly describes as *Souveränitätsanarchie* (anarchy among sovereign states).<sup>33</sup>

The very system of collective security, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, depends on a non-exclusivist understanding of sovereignty and national interests. The coercive powers of the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter would be meaningless and self-contradictory in a context where each state is authorized to exercise sovereignty in an *absolute* sense, including the right to wage war solely at its own discretion.<sup>34</sup> An approach that focuses on an interpretation of sovereign rights in an *isolated* sense (a mindset which is behind the unilateralist doctrine and strategy of hegemonial powers), is not only incompatible with the UN system of collective security, but will ultimately be *counterproductive* because it challenges the very security of each individual actor it is meant to protect; in this sense, it would also be *irrational* – except in a situation where only one world state exists, a leviathan that may not be

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<sup>32</sup> For details see the author’s paper: “Sovereignty, Law and Democracy versus Power Politics,” in: *Current Concerns*, No. 34, Zurich, 22 November 2013, Supplement, pp. 18-25.

<sup>33</sup> For a further description of the notion in the context of today’s global order – after September 11, 2001, see the author’s paper: “The Politics of Global Powers,” in: *The Global Community. Yearbook of International Law and Jurisprudence*, 2009, Vol. I, pp. 173-201; pp. 182ff.

<sup>34</sup> The *jus ad bellum* – the right to wage war – has anyway been abrogated in the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, the basic provision of which is incorporated in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter.

an enviable model for mankind, and particularly not in the era of globalization. In view of the multitude of states who are destined to co-exist on a globe with limited resources, a state's national interests can only be advanced if the ever more complex interdependencies of a state's actions – in the economic, social, cultural and military fields – are entered into the strategic and foreign policy calculus.

## Conclusion

The emerging international system is *multipolar*, and the resulting balance of power will require that each of the global players “negotiates” its national interests in consultation with all other states competing for power and influence, at the *regional* as well as at the *worldwide* level. Under the conditions of global interdependence, this is the essence of *realpolitik* that alone offers a chance of stable peace<sup>35</sup> – as opposed to idealistic posturing and claiming a kind of ideological supremacy, as has become the habit of those who see themselves as arbiter, indeed “the balancer in every region.”<sup>36</sup> As Andrew Moravcsik aptly observed, “[t]he unwillingness to accept the multi-polar nature of world politics is a critical intellectual failure,” which global powers that enjoy military supremacy at a particular point in time are inclined to make.<sup>37</sup> A *coordinated*, instead of an insular, approach towards the definition and assertion of national interests will be the best antidote to the reemergence of imperial rule of only one power, and it will make it increasingly difficult for such a country to veil its aspirations in the cloak of *universal values*.

Wherever and whenever the *bonum commune* of mankind is at stake, the definition and policy of the national interest should thus be in conformity with the “pursuit of mutual global interests.”<sup>38</sup> As Thomas J. Christensen has argued, such a universal, *multilateral* approach is more appropriate than a mere *bilateral*, utilitarian strategy and course of action between individual state partners who pledge “to respect each other’s core interests,”<sup>39</sup> but in the process may alienate all the others and risk undermining their own long-term security.

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Taylor, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Charles Krauthammer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, *The Myth of Unipolarity in a Post-Cold War World: Lessons about Power from the US and Europe*. China and Global Institutions Project, Princeton University, USA, December 2006, at [www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/unipolarity.doc](http://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/unipolarity.doc). Moravcsik’s remarks refer to the policies of the US administration under George W. Bush.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, *The Need to Pursue Mutual Interests in U.S.-PRC Relations*. Special Report 269. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, April 2011, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Loc. cit.*