

The Charter of Paris and a New European Order

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Abstract

The end of the Cold War opened up new vistas for building a new international order in Europe, free of dividing lines. The more so since the liberal world order, which emerged due to the evolution of the global order in the field of security, on the one hand, and the rules, norms, and practices established within the community of Western countries in 1945-1991, on the other hand, was formally the most successful combination of the effects of such categories as the balance of power and international institutions. At the global level, this combination for a long time made it possible to avoid revolutionary situations that might have been caused by utter dissatisfaction of one or several major powers with their position. However, in Europe, where the institutional basis of international

interaction was most developed, the rules of the liberal world order brought about significant distortions in favor of one of the participants in this interaction—the European Union, which acted as an instrument for increasing individual capabilities of major Western European countries. This happened because the factor of military capabilities was excluded from the overall balance of power of the main actors. Since for a long time after the end of the Cold War Russia was limited in all factors of power except for the military one, its position in relations with the EU was weak, which is why its interests and values were ignored in building an EU-led European order. This eventually paralyzed the entire system of multilateral interaction in Europe, which, along with the shift of the global center of power competition towards Asia, considerably marginalized the European space in global affairs.

Keywords: international order, liberal world order, European integration, Cold War, powers, institutions, interests.

The year 2020 was the last in the history of “special” relations between Russia and Europe the way they were seen by many thinkers and translated into reality in international politics. The construction of the European order without Russia’s participation is over and now it is in the phase of internal development, which sometimes looks like a crisis of the institutional model of European integration, which after 1991 became the main foreign policy instrument for Western European countries. This historical landmark coincided in time with the end of the liberal world order, which emerged as a result of the Cold War through the fusion of the international order within the community of Western countries and the global security institutions that existed between 1945 and 1990.

The liberal world order was the last “European” order in the history of international politics. In terms of nature and content, its foundation—a combination of the strongest power’s hegemony and relatively fair rules for all—fully embodied the experience accumulated in Europe since the emergence of the international system of sovereign

states which is commonly referred to as “Westphalian.” By virtue of its origin, this order offered maximum feasible opportunities for ensuring that “political changes,” inevitable as a result of changes in the balance of power, should for a sufficiently long time reduce the likelihood of “revolutionary changes,” like those that triggered two world wars in the 20th century (Carr, 1964, 2001).

November 2020 marked thirty years since the heads of state and government from the participating states of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the main multilateral document that put an end to the Cold War of 1945-1990. Formally, the Charter of Paris determined the principles of a future international order in Europe, which had been divided for several decades and remained a scene of major confrontation between the world’s two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. However, the spirit and principles of that document were addressed to the entire international community. At the same time, as we will see later, it was in Europe that the regulators of the states’ foreign policy behavior, inherent in this order, were least effective, for which reason the crisis of the liberal world order occurred there earlier than on the global scale.

As the liberal world order was perfect in its nature and institutional form, its demise was not associated with revolutionary behavior by one or more powers, contrary to what happened to the Vienna or Versailles international orders. However, this is the best proof that, within the framework of the international system, which is archaic in nature, the period of relative governability can only be a short-lived consequence of a historically unique balance of power. In other words, the liberal world order collapsed not as a result of growing internal contradictions, but due to objective factors inherent in the international system as such.

Currently, we are witnessing the disappearance of the most important assets of the liberal world order, such as the freedom of movement of goods and investment, the renunciation of the use force in handling interstate disputes, the spread of individual rights and freedoms, and the leading role of the United States in international

affairs.¹ These assets were generated after World War II within the international community of Western countries. After the end of the Cold War, they spread globally. In this paper it is presumed that the liberal order as such emerged within a narrow community of countries after 1945, and after 1990 it became worldwide and known under its current name. The Charter of Paris is seen as a document proclaiming this qualitative change—the transition of rules and norms from within a narrow community to a global level.

Alongside the liberal world order, the present study discusses such categories as Europe and the balance of power. For the purposes of this study, it seems justified to equate Europe with the European Union, since after the Cold War it was the EU as an institution that furnished the basis for the interaction of European states in forming a new regional order. Thus, the European Union's Europe is contrasted with Russia and other most important participants in the international system—the United States, China, India, and other countries. As for the notion of the balance of power, this study follows the classification proposed by Ernest Haas in his article *The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda?* (1953). Hence the balance of power is understood herein as a balance resulting from uneven distribution of power among the leading countries and causing relative stability of the entire international system (Haas, 1953, pp. 448-449, 450-451).

This article offers a retrospective analysis of the international order (the 1990 Charter of Paris being the declarative basis) at the intersection of the realistic and liberal theory of international relations, studies the specific features of this international order with respect to relations between Russia and the European Union, and discusses how interaction between these international actors may evolve in the new conditions. A close look at the nature and content of the liberal world order in terms of interaction between such phenomena as the balance of power and

¹ The author understands “liberal international order” as a set of norms and customs that emerged within the community of free market democracies after World War II under the leadership of the United States and spread after 1990 throughout the global international system (Ikenberry, 2011, pp. 56-68).

institutions makes it possible to single out those of its features that were most important for maintaining its stability, and at the same time pushed it towards inevitable demise under the influence of objective structural factors of international politics. Methodologically, this paper is based on the systematic approach, as well as on major principles of scientific research—analysis and synthesis, advance from the particular to the general, induction and deduction.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE LIBERAL WORLD ORDER

The initial hypothesis of this study is that in terms of interaction of the most important categories of the realistic and liberal theories—the balance of power and international institutions—the liberal international order of 1990-2020 became perhaps top-of-the-line model in the history of international politics. As a result of its own evolution—from the rules and norms within the community of Western countries in 1945–1990 towards global rules and norms after 1990—it derived two basic conclusions from the experience of the first half of the 20th century—about the central role of power and the importance of international institutions, which reflected the maximum possible justice in relations among states. During the Cold War, within the community of liberal market democracies there developed a system of rules and practices that took into account the distribution of forces and ensured relatively equal access to economic benefits and, most importantly, to political ones (Ikenberry, 2004, 2011, 2018).

The constraints that existed within the framework of the liberal world order after 1990 set certain limits that the United States and its allies had to abide by in exploiting their power advantages, although in practice those limits were violated quite often. At the same time, the potentially revolutionary or revisionist powers, while being quite unhappy about the limits imposed on their foreign policy, did not feel humiliated, in contrast to Germany after World War I. The choice of Russia's path of development in favor of accepting Western values and, often, interests, remained the prerogative of the Russian leadership until the first half of the 2000s, although the United States and its allies were lecturing

Moscow on how this choice should be implemented. Restrictions regarding the freedom of such a choice or Russia's policy towards former Soviet republics resulted from general requirements for the foreign policy of states within the framework of the liberal world order, which Russia sought to join up to the first half of the 2000s.

By virtue of its integration into the global security order, embodied in the UN Security Council, the most important institution of the Cold War era, the liberal world order created a convincing and theoretically substantiated impression that political privileges were distributed no less evenly than economic benefits, which was recognized even by its critics (Mearsheimer, 2019). After 1990, thanks to the liberal world order, there was no group of states whose unfair position would be unbearable or required focusing all efforts on changing it in a revolutionary way. The main obstacle to the emergence of such a situation was precisely the integration into the liberal world order of the most important global Cold War-era institution—the UN Security Council—where Russia and China were represented on an equal footing with the United States and its closest allies in Europe. Moreover, the liberal order by virtue of its nature encouraged the emergence of international institutions and rules, even though they were not within the range of immediate interests of the most influential group of powers.

It would be too superficial to claim that the revisionism of China and Russia manifested itself only when they had built up the necessary resources for this; it was latently present in the foreign policy doctrines of both powers from the very end of the Cold War. At the same time, the liberal world order, due to its structural features, with the institution of the UN Security Council taking center stage, kept both powers in a privileged position and allowed them to derive significant benefits, provided they complied with their own voluntarily assumed obligations. And yet, in Russia and China's subjective opinion, the liberal world order was still not fair enough, because the leaders enjoyed more rights than the others. But one should also remember that even the "ideal" Vienna order established after 1815 was also unfair in the absolute sense—Russia, Britain or even France could afford far more than Prussia or Austria, let alone Spain. At the same

time, the Western countries were in no hurry to demonstrate an openly predatory attitude towards Russia; moreover, they invited it into all of their institutions, except for the most important ones, not for ethical reasons but because the world order that maintained their dominance also included such a constraint as formal equality of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, one of which was Russia.

The second half of the 20th century created an institutional and legal environment that could be considered an instrument capable of easing the inevitable injustice of the leading powers' policies. Therefore, the post-Cold War world was structurally different from the world after the Treaty of Versailles. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe—a fundamental legal document of the new era—was not an act of surrender signed by the loser in the classical sense, even though such interpretations did take place. The prerequisites for a general harmony of interests were more ambitious and had the achievements of globalization to rely on. The scale of these achievements created benefits for a vast majority of participants in international communication. The preconditions for a revolutionary situation were thereby smoothed over and postponed indefinitely by the shock absorbers embedded in the system, which gradually took shape within the Western community after World War II.

There are four most important structural factors that have fostered the liberal world order at the global level.

First, U.S. and Western countries' foreign policies in general were far more complex than actions taken by the victorious states after World War I. They were limited by international law and institutions that emerged during the Cold War. Mutual nuclear deterrence of the Cold War era continued after 1990-1991. Within the framework of the liberal world order the institutions created for a different historical era (the UN and its Security Council) were based on the unique military capabilities of a narrow group of states and remained effective. Therefore, these institutions acted as constraints on the political opportunities of Western countries and created conditions where the discontent of others could make itself felt in the least revolutionary forms, since they (Russia and China) were still represented in the main international security bodies at the global level and retained

opportunities disproportionate to their real power in politics (China) or the economy (Russia) after the Cold War.

Second, the economic interdependence that began to be experienced by all not just created an illusion of the harmony of interests, as was the case before World War II, but actually restricted the desire of potential revisionists—Russia and China—to put at risk their gains from globalization. Globalization was the most important economic groundwork of relative justice that could be referred to as a reality up to the end of the 2000s at the global and regional levels, because it counterbalanced the mammoth gains of the strongest Western countries with opportunities created for others.

Third, the international political institutions that emerged as a result of World War II became the proponents and agents of international law and practices in the broadest sense, strategically important for security, and at the same time reflected the strategic balance of power. Institutions increase the predictability of states' behavior (proportionately to the extent of their involvement in these institutions), and in this respect the mechanisms of the UN Security Council and the “hot line” between the Kremlin and the White House are structurally not different from each other. Institutions create a large variety of mechanisms for formal and informal communication (Hoffmann, 1986). Institutions enable countries to reap more political and economic dividends. This, in turn, reinforces the illusion that a “harmony of interests” is possible. For any would-be revisionist power, challenging institutions would be tantamount to questioning, in the first place, the legitimacy of its own rights that those institutions provide.

And, **fourth**, the liberal world order created conditions for pluralism in discussing global and regional problems without its leaders—the U.S. and Western Europe—taking a direct part. The BRICS group, which China and Russia created with India's support in 2011, is an excellent example of attempts to change the order without destroying it. Growing Sino-U.S. contradictions are now the most serious challenge to the existence of BRICS, but it is the liberal world order that is about to become the first victim of this conflict. BRICS is just one example, albeit a graphic one, of the benefits that countries not directly involved in the

distribution of benefits from monopoly on power received from the liberal world order.

It was the presence of these internal checks and balances that made it possible to postulate that the liberal world order is objectively stable. The previous international orders (Vienna, Versailles-Washington, and Yalta) could not even come close to achieving a combination of several important circumstances at once: the power factor at the global level, economic globalization, international law, and international institutions. In this respect, the liberal order contained the formal conditions for eventually evolving towards a permanent balance of power based on negotiations between the leading powers and existing institutions.

Europe was the main theater of the Cold War, and it was there that the main hostilities would have unfolded in the event of an escalation of the conflict. But here one finds the greatest concentration of international institutions and organizations having the ability to restrict the behavior of states, in which representatives of the liberal school in IR science (including the author) have firm faith. These institutions were diverse in terms of functionality, and theoretically they created the necessary conditions for achieving the fairest solutions for their participants. At the same time, none of the universal European institutions—the OSCE or the Council of Europe—was based on an objective distribution of their member-states' military capabilities and, consequently, did not reflect the most important factor in international politics.

INTERNAL IMBALANCES

The colossal power capabilities of the United States and Europe had a downside: they made the leading Western powers ever more certain that the constraints (in fact, very moderate ones) inherent in the liberal international order were unfair towards them and too fair in relation to the interests of non-Western states. The academic and political debate during the first fifteen years after the Cold War was largely focused precisely on how to overcome these constraints. Two most important tracks can be distinguished in these discussions: the reform of global security institutions—the UN and its Security Council, and

the contradiction between the inviolability of state sovereignty, on the one hand, and the observance of basic human rights, on the other hand (Keohane, 2002; Moravcsik, 2004). It is reasonable to assume that both these discussions were caused by the contradiction between the formal status and the actual capabilities of individual powers.

Of course, throughout the entire post-Cold War period, the Western countries had a practical opportunity to pursue a policy from the position of strength, even in cases when this happened in violation of the formal status of countries within the framework of the UN Charter. Therefore, as long as the constraints within the liberal world order remained nominal—the global level of security being the sole exception—the Western countries could afford to tolerate this. However, China and Russia gradually gained not only rhetorical, but also military capabilities to resist the military domination of the West. The turning point was reached in 2015, when Russia carried out military intervention in Syria at the request of that country's official government, in other words, in strict compliance with the UN Charter. In the Syrian case, the exercise of a right formally envisaged within the UN system entered into the most acute conflict with the balance of power in the world.

As the formal status of states within the UN system acquired real meaning again, the liberal world order (that part of it which relied on the UN system) turned ever less fair towards its leader and its allies. Europe experienced the feeling of injustice to a far smaller degree. Its capabilities to achieve military goals were more limited than those of the United States. Respectively, there were no grievances in Europe towards the UN on this issue. But at the regional level, where relations between Europe and Russia developed, Europe did not have any formal constraints. Russia (not to mention China) did not have not only the right of veto, but even a voting right in resolving the most important issues of the regional order after the Cold War.

Until a certain moment, the readiness of the Russian elite to play by Europe's rules was high enough to create institutional mechanisms limiting the risk of a conflict in the future. But there was also a fundamental institutional obstacle: the West's collective security organizations, in particular, European integration, had already reached

a level of development where the actual change in the balance of power on which they were based might have easily threatened their very existence. “Russia is too big to become a member of the European Union” and “NATO is possible only if the U.S. remains its leader” are the most frequent mass media clichés that describe the problem. Since international institutions are in any case the product of a combination of the balance of power and categories of relative justice, an order that would be fair in relation to Russia’s interests inevitably requires including it in this balance. But this would mean the destruction of the liberal order, at least in the form that emerged after World War II inside the community of Western countries.

In both cases the factor of strength, primarily military, played the decisive role. Globally, the gradual change in the relative balance of power made a new round of bargaining inevitable due to the revisionist behavior of major powers. We are witnessing it right now. In Europe, the situation is even more remarkable. Within the framework of the new order, military strength was removed from the factors that determine relations between Russia and the European Union. However, this could not cancel policies pursued from the position of strength as such. Europe’s supremacy in all but military aspects of power in terms of its consequences has proved to be even more important for international security. Power per se has been and continues to be of absolute importance for the simple reason that no institutional mechanisms of mutual limitation are available.

In structuring discussions about the liberal world order in terms of power politics, we cannot ignore Kissinger’s postulate that the optimal solution is one that equally does not suit all parties (Kissinger, 1956). In his work *Vienna Congress: A Reappraisal*, he cites as a model the Vienna order, which emerged as a result of a “deal” among European monarchies in 1815. A solution that fully suits only one of the participants is the alternative. In terms of the general balance of opportunities and constraints that it would impose on the main participants, ***the liberal world order, despite the leadership of the United States, was closer to the former model than one might think retrospectively, after its actual collapse.*** This was the source of hope

for its stability, and it was also the reason for the uncertainty created by its erosion under the influence of the change in the balance of power in world politics by the mid-2010s.

The expectation that the liberal world order would be sustainable was naturally linked with the Cold War period—ideal in its simplicity. Towards the end of the Cold War, a system was established that simultaneously accounted for the interests and privileged position of the strongest and furnished a legal basis for preserving the minimum justice for the weaker. With the end of the bloc-to-bloc confrontation in 1990, the balance of power between the major powers actually changed, but this was not followed by formal changes in the international order (Goldberg, 1993). In other words, the restrictions, equally related to power and morality that existed during the Cold War survived and remained effective, primarily at the level of international politics in general. All the inconveniences they might have caused in practical terms were offset within the framework of the liberal world order by the fact that to a certain extent these institutional constraints were part of the power potential of the United States and leading Western countries. The United States managed to reject these constraints only under President Trump.

EUROPE IN A COMFORTABLE WORLD

Even though the United States became Russia's main partner in the West after the end of the Cold War, a vast majority of practical issues that arose as a result the new distribution of power had to be resolved at the regional, European level. A new European international order was created as a reflection of the general liberal order in a region where the Cold War confrontation was most acute. In this regard, Europe was inevitably considered a “platform” where the institutional potential for cooperation and resolution of contradictions, accumulated during the Cold War years within the framework of the community of liberal market democracies, should be implemented in the most convincing form. No other region of the world had such an extensive and developed system of international institutions as Europe. However, given the extent of Russia's participation in them,

these institutions did not reflect the distribution of the participating countries' aggregate power, above all in its most important—military—dimension.

Therefore, in our context, we cannot but expand the main argument used by the critics of the institutionalist approach to security—“institutions have the minimal influence on the behavior of states” if they do not reflect the objective distribution of the aggregate power of the participating countries (Clapham, 2002). It is this problem that international institutions in Europe and, respectively, relations between Russia and Europe faced after the Cold War. Conversely, when institutions reflect the distribution of power, as in the case of the UN Security Council, NATO or the European Union, they become more resilient to the negative consequences of national selfishness and the wish to maximize opportunities. It is not unreasonable to assume that a decrease in the factor of military potential in measuring the balance of power within the framework of an institution further contributes to its transforming influence. The example of European integration confirms this. At the same time, it is one of the reasons for excessive optimism about the prospects for relations between Europe and Russia that emerged after the Cold War.

After the Cold War Europe appeared to be an even more complex picture than the world; yet the interests of the victor powers remained in its center. The U.S.-led NATO bloc remained the main institutional agent of the Western power monopoly. For some time, Russia recognized the relative fairness of the liberal world order and correlated its own views with its norms and customs, especially since it was offered full participation in all regional institutions, except the EU and NATO. At the same time, Russia's membership in such institutions as the OSCE was increasingly tied to the agenda of its relations with Europe and the West as a whole and the criteria of contribution to the common good that they proposed. This is not to mention purely regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe and its working bodies, which were originally created as part of the West's ethical platform during the Cold War, that is, basically independent from the general balance of power.

The countries of Western Europe, united in the European Union, accumulated colossal non-military power, which, in terms of its practical significance in the region, was no less significant than the military capabilities of the United States globally. But they never had a chance (or tried) to lay claim to conducting a large-scale traditional (military) power policy, having been forever “withdrawn” from the international power paradigm following the results of World War II. In addition, their foreign policy was inevitably limited by the inability to build up military potential to a degree comparable to that of the United States. This impossibility was institutionalized within the framework of NATO, whose tasks remained confined to the formula “keep Germany (Europe) down, Russia out and America in” (NATO, n.d.). This formula is noteworthy as it was precisely Europe’s lack of its own military capabilities that had a decisive effect on the role of the balance of power in its interaction with Russia after the Cold War.

However, *it would be wrong to say that the exclusion of the traditional military component from European policy (except for NATO-Russia relations) made it less strong-arm than any other international policy.* First, the influence of the Western military power monopoly on politics in Europe remained decisive after the Cold War, anyway. The issues that were of key importance to regional security—the deployment of conventional armed forces and nuclear weapons, NATO’s expansion and the settlement of the armed conflict in former Yugoslavia—were nevertheless resolved at the global level, where the United States had the final say. Secondly, in Europe, there was the second largest member of the Western community after the United States—an alliance of European states within the European Union. Although the EU did not have military capabilities, its economic and political resources were overwhelming in interaction with Russia and other external regional partners. Up to the end of the 2000s, the EU countries acted in conditions where their lack of military capabilities was not an obstacle to power domination in all respects, wherever they clashed with Russia and others.

In assessing the power advantages of the EU in 1991–2008, it is worth mentioning Susan Strange’s concept of “structural power”

(1987). Within its framework, we can assess the power dimension of international politics in Europe after 1991 in accordance with the aggregate power of its member states, and the effectiveness of their power in relation to circumstances. The conclusion is that up to 2008 the overall balance of power in the liberal world order was more beneficial to Europe than to the United States. The EU countries were not restricted in relations with their neighbors by a rigid international security system, as was the case with the United States at the global level. Their relations with Russia were based on power but the military component, where Russia had an indisputable advantage, was excluded from them by virtue of liberal world order requirements, while other dimensions—above all, the economic one where the EU dominated completely—occupied the central place.

This factor determined the European countries' actions from the position of strength in relations with Russia, other neighbors or, before their accession to the EU, candidate countries. But as a result, the liberal world order in the European theater turned out to be less stable than globally, and the efficiency of its institutions proved to be much lower. This is because their foundation lacked an objectively strong power component equal to the combined capabilities of Russia or China.

The impact of the Western power monopoly on regional institutions of international cooperation and security in Europe after the Cold War was decisive. This predetermined the nature and capabilities of these institutions, and also made their gradual degradation inevitable, as Russia gradually acquired the resources and willpower to limit European interests. The restrictions on the influence of national egoism, embedded in the system of relations between Russia and Europe, were so insignificant that they inevitably led to the paralysis of international institutions and practices. For example, negotiations between Russia and the EU were possible a priori only on condition of mutual consent. As soon as Moscow disagreed with something in principle, the entire negotiation process was stalled.

This paradox is more manifest in Russia's and Europe's attitude towards the most important regional security institutions and the problem of European security as such (Rumer, 2016). The collective

interest of European countries, arising within the framework of their institutional cooperation, is always the result of such a complex compromise that it inevitably cannot accommodate the interests of their external partners. It is a very difficult task for any state to take into account all the nuances of cooperation in its foreign policy behavior, since it does not fit in well with the national interests. For the foreign policy behavior of a group of states united in an institution, this becomes an even more difficult task and, as we can see from the example of relations between Europe and Russia after the Cold War, in some cases utterly unsolvable.

THE RESULTS OF POWER DOMINATION

While at the global level the West was not completely satisfied with the results of the Cold War, at the regional level the countries of Western Europe, on the contrary, were quite happy with its outcome. It was in Europe that the influence of Western domination in the power and ethical space turned out to be the most pronounced, and its consequences, most dramatic for regional security. The fact that Europe was actually withdrawn from the system of global military containment, a priori created the conditions for European states to turn to traditional power politics in its worst manifestations. Without the military component, which is not taken into account within the framework of one of the basic norms of the liberal international order, the imbalance of power in relations between Europe and Russia contradicted the formal status to an ever greater degree .

After the Cold War, international politics in Europe remained much more archaic than in the world. At the level of a separate community of EU countries, it managed to move quite far in terms of institutionalization and the use of functional agencies of European integration. But this progress did not encompass the European countries' behavior in relations with their external partners. Moreover, the collective interest of EU countries has become a by-product of the intra-European harmony of interests. Reinhold Niebuhr's formula "reason is always the servant of interest in a social situation" (Niebuhr, 1932, XIV-XV) is fully applicable to Europe's foreign policy behavior

after the Cold War. The greater unity the Europeans achieved within their community, the more difficult it was for them to seek opportunities for taking Russia's interests into account. Ultimately, on European soil, the liberal world order met with an insurmountable obstacle of the selfish collective interest of EU countries, which had reached record highs in interstate cooperation among themselves and in justice with regard to the basic interests and values of the participating countries (Moravcsik, 1999).

In the short term, the archaization of European international and foreign policy has significantly simplified the setting of goals and the choice of means for achieving them. The enormous short-term advantages that the liberal world order provided in Europe tempted it to make a light-minded approach to issues that could have far-reaching effects. In a sense, the EU's eastward enlargement lured the member-countries into a habit of making a primitivistic approach to handling even the most difficult problems and proposing solutions that rule out discussion.²

Also, a serious increase in the work burden on the EU's functional agencies—the EU Commission in the first place—created a situation where the means of achieving goals depended on the functionality and worldview of the institutions in question. The political change that Edward Carr wrote about on the eve of World War II, even at the global level—in the form of a liberal world order—proved to be vulnerable to structural changes the transformation of the balance of power brought about. But at the global level, this order was possible, at least to a small extent, due to the basic initial components. For Europe, which had not completely overcome the consequences of national egoism both internally and in external relations, any constraining factors were completely absent. Its collective interest was multiplied by the national interests of the participating countries and totally unlimited by formal institutional mechanisms that might somehow reflect the distribution of power—those components of it that were critical for Russia.

² “Prefab change by definition did not allow for adjustment of the formula or give-and-take among current and prospective members about its design, thus excluding countries (like Russia) that demanded a say in such matters” (Charap and Colton, 2017, p. 45)

At the same time, most of the issues concerning relations between the EU and Russia were transferred to the jurisdiction of those EU executive bodies (European Commission) which, in terms of their functionality and tasks, should not—and could not—have taken into account the traditional power categories even at the most abstract level. For their part, the European Union's joint security issues-related bodies had not yet developed well enough to be involved in discussions on fundamental issues, even at the most approximate level. The lack of the need for and possibility of implementing a full-fledged foreign and security policy hindered the formation of appropriate strategic thinking (Lucarelli, 2019).

Ultimately, the absence of a military-strategic factor in relations between Russia and Europe after the Cold War has become a cause that destabilized these relations and the entire European order. The European states enjoyed the advantages of a liberal world order much freer and wider than the United States, limited by the UN Security Council and the nuclear missile capabilities of Russia and China. Whereas the United States continued to operate under formal rigid constraints, Europe did not face any such limiters at all. It acted entirely within the limits of moral considerations, which occasionally clashed with the natural desire of the leading EU states to achieve their selfish national priorities.

PROSPECTS FOR A NEW EUROPEAN BALANCE

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe proclaimed the principles of an ideal international order, which at the end of the Cold War were more realistic than ever before. Moreover, the international order that embodied these principles also came closest to the optimal state from the point of view of the liberal theory of international relations, and at the global level even took into account the balance of power necessary for stability, which realism insists on. At the same time, this did not become an obstacle to the inherently selfish behavior of states and the anarchy of the international environment leading to the gradual destruction of the liberal world order from the inside and outside.

The European states, perhaps, to the greatest extent were able to take advantage of the conditions provided by the liberal world order for achieving their selfish interests. But, as we can see from the current position of the European Union in world affairs, this is where the available opportunities were exhausted. Within the framework of the liberal world order there emerged the main material reason for its disappearance—China's boom and the ensuing structural changes. This inevitably transferred the discussion about the future distribution of influence in the world to the global level, with a special emphasis on the eastern part of Eurasia and regions in the basins of the Pacific and Indian oceans. If, in the future, international politics gets more orderly, the norms and rules it will rest upon will be able to reflect the European experience only partially. And they will certainly not pursue the aim of establishing order in Europe, contrary to all previous cases. Even if Russia sets a goal of rejoining in the European balance of power once again, the conflict that will follow as a result of such behavior will not be of central importance to the fate of the world. The European era of international politics is over.

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