



Post-Bipolar World Order: Character, Challenges, and Opportunities for Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT. *The paper studies the post-bipolar world order. It focuses on the key international-political events, which occurred in 1991-2021 to emphasize the changes in the character of the post-bipolar world order. The article compares different theoretical assumptions on the nature of the world order to figure out the most adequate theoretical platform for analysis. The paper uses structural political realism as the most appropriate theoretical instrument. The paper discusses the place of Kazakhstan in the post-bipolar world order and its main moves to be incorporated into it. The study suggests that the post-bipolar world order has passed through a series of transformations during 1991-2021. Moreover, Kazakhstan being not a great power, participated in the global relationship, promoted its national interests rather successfully, used positive angles of the post-bipolar order, and eschewed serious problems.*

KEYWORDS: *World order, Kazakhstan, great power, global politics, post-bipolar.*

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has provoked dramatic changes in many spheres of life. However, along with economic problems, political tension, threat of nuclear clash, it has rather specific symbolism. It can exemplify the collapse of the world order, which was formed after the breakdown of the USSR in 1991. Nonetheless, despite all issues, this process of falling down of a world order by a huge war is rather typical in history. Throughout centuries, world orders or systems of international relations changed each other and the war was served as a mechanism for making radical changes in a short period. That was how the Westphalian order fell in 1792 at the outbreak of Napoleon wars. The Vienna order collapsed in 1914 with the first shot of World War I. Yalta-Potsdam world order originated after World War II is an exception in this list. The disintegration of one of its pillars, the Soviet Union, terminated it. This uniqueness induced difficulties in further orientation of states, new independent nations of ex-communist camp and the entire world community. Therefore, it is substantial to study the question of the post-bipolar world order, its problems and peculiarities.

It is far interesting to focus on Kazakhstan, since the republic is highly involved into regional and global processes and unquestionably is affected by them. Declared and

acknowledged a sovereign nation, Kazakhstan began its involvement in international processes. While it was a small power, it had to follow the rules, which great powers elaborated. However, restored its economic capacity to the mid-2000s, Kazakhstan yet depended upon the system processes of the post-bipolar world order. Indeed, such drastic shifts, which the world is witnessing, generate new challenges that nations have never faced before. Nevertheless, balanced and pragmatic foreign policy of Kazakhstan assists it to eschew extremes, and use the ongoing circumstances in its favor.

The introduction discusses several definitions of the world order concept, compares it to the concept of the system of international relations and studies related concepts, such as poles, great powers, and polarity.

Unquestionably, the terms of orders, power and polarity are usually examined by political realism. It believes that the world order refers to the balance of powers between the strongest nations. Their power is estimated in terms of military force and political capabilities to dominate or, at least, be a great power (Sørensen, 2006). This order is maintained by alliances between great powers, their objective is to retain the balance of power. Political liberalism refers to the world order as the system of multilateral economic cooperation between different nations. The final objective is to keep the balance of interests (Sørensen, 2006). Constructivism believes that the world order is shaped by global values or ideas, which are shared by most of nations and peoples (Sørensen, 2006). The International Political Economy focuses on the problems of production and distribution of goods. In this respect, stable economic and trade exchange creates a platform for the world order (Sørensen, 2006).

Therefore, since the inquiry uses structural realism as a theoretical ground, it refers to the world order as a system of rules elaborates by great powers in their favor to be able to pursue foreign policy with no serious obstacles.

In this regard, the question can be arisen out, what great power is. The paper means the great power as a strong nation-state with such military-political and economic capacities that cannot be equalized to other nation-states and that transcend opportunities of other countries. The USA was unquestionable great power throughout 1990s-early 2000s. In the mid-2000s, China and Russia began to become great powers.

Since the article examines the nature of the post-bipolar world order, it is needed to describe the concept of polarity. A pole is referred to as a concertation of power. Usually, the pole is equalized to the great power. In this respect, unipolar world order characterizes a situation, when one great power concentrates so much force that no one can undermine its domination. Multipolar world order regards to a situation when more than two great powers concentrate power and compete with each other.

Unquestionably, Kazakhstan is not considered as a great power. However, it seems interesting to study its endeavors to protect its *raison d'état* within unipolar and multipolar world order.

The purpose of the paper is as follows:

(a) To examine the evolution of the post-bipolar world order and trace the place of Kazakhstan in it.

The following objectives of the study are sequenced the purpose:

(a) To investigate theoretical perspectives of scholarship to find out key theoretical assumptions of the development of the order;

(b) To analyze the key events of 1991-2022, which describe the character of the post-bipolar world order;

(c) To reveal the place of Kazakhstan in the post-bipolar world order and the way of its evolution that it regards the most appropriate to *raison d'état* of the republic.

The paper hypothesizes that:

(a) H1 – the post-bipolar world order was mostly unipolar and nowadays, it is about to collapse;

(b) H2 – despite the geopolitical turbulence, Kazakhstan takes an excellent chance to progress in its economic and political development.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative. It follows the key thesis of the structural realism of anarchical nature of international relations and a particular place, which great powers have there (Waltz, 1979). These nations are able to shape the anarchy with rules, which they adopt. Military power and force are regarded the key instruments of retaining the status of great power and reshaping the anarchical order if necessary. The paper utilizes comparative approach to juxtapose politics of great powers throughout last 31 years. The inquiry compares the policy of the USA and Russia in the international system with respect to their impact on varied events and bipartisan reaction of them towards shifts in the status quo. Moreover, comparative approach is served as a basis for defining the place of Kazakhstan in the anarchical world. The paper compares Kazakhstan's foreign political stance towards activity of the USA and Russia as the great powers regarding regional and global political events and aims to explain the difference of Kazakhstani position in varied cases. Alongside these approaches, the article practices the event-analysis at two levels, the system and the state, since it aims to focus on problems and prospects for Kazakhstan, which originate in the final period of the post-bipolar world order.

INQUIRY OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The amount of scientific research on the issue of the post-bipolar world order is rather broad. In 1991, when the bipolar world order collapsed, the scholarship began to make forecasts on potential changes and development of the post-bipolar world order or the new world order. Undoubtedly, the paper should focus on predominantly neo-realist scholars, since the issue of polarity is regarded to the realist paradigm.

Ch. Krauthammer in his article “The Unipolar Moment: America and the World” (1990) pointed out that the post-bipolar or new world order would be unipolar under the hegemony of the USA. He claimed that there were no competitors to the USA in any sphere. Russia faced the profound system crisis. China did not rise in economic, financial or political fields. European nations passed through the “velvet revolutions”, issues of

unification and collapse of the communist regimes in East European countries. The UN failed to establish the full-scale global platform for political cooperation, which could outweigh the polar structure of the Globe. Therefore, the USA remained the hegemony. However, Ch. Krauthammer (1990) tended to think that in future the US hegemony could be questioned and attacked by other nations. That is why, his paper was called “The unipolar moment”. He believed that the new world order could be multipolar like it was prior to WWI.

H. Kissinger (2014) claimed that the multipolar world order could be the most appropriate for governing. He believed that the bipolar world order collapsed because of radical shift in the balance of power. H. Kissinger (2014) pointed out that the new world order could be characterized by accelerated growth of China, which could lead to competition with the USA and the Cold War 2.0. The scholar focused on the system problems or imperfections of the new world order. First, the Westphalian nature of the post-bipolar world order in terms of its state-centric character would be doubted by supranational institutions, such as the EU or non-state actors like NGOs, social media or large businesses. Second, he emphasized the contradictions between the political and economic systems of the world. After the break down of the bipolar world order, the globalization in economy occurred. However, in political sphere, nation-states dominated over the globalization tendencies. Third, H. Kissinger (2014) reiterated on of the key ideas of structural realism on international anarchy. He believed that effective mechanism was lacked, which could provide for consultations of the great powers, despite the plenty of multilateral institutions and forums. Finally, H. Kissinger (2014) claimed that the USA as the global hegemon should bear responsibility for the stability of the new world order. He believed that the US leadership should find out what goal should be achieved with or with no support of allies, what it should and should not protected by all means. Therefore, H. Kissinger (2014) de facto acknowledged that the post-bipolar world order was unipolar. Nevertheless, the hegemony should be responsible to retain the stability of the order. Moreover, gradually different factors could question the US hegemony.

American political commentator R. Haass (2008) elaborated specific understanding of polarity. He claimed that the post-bipolar world order could be organized as a non-polar world. R. Haass (2008) believed that in the post-Westphalian globalized world, nation-states were not the only actors, which possessed power and ability to use it. Non-state actors, such as NGOs, large businesses, terrorist groups, media outlets could cut a piece of power from nation-states in economy, military, information or politics. Therefore, the power was dispersed between various centers or poles, and it could hardly be seen the concentration of it in the hands of one or several nation-states. According to R. Haass (2008), no any great power would be able to suppress the non-state actors or undermine their power.

Russia's scholarship, in turn, supported the idea of multipolar world order. For instance, E. Primakov believed that, despite initial unipolar tendencies, the multipolar world order should be established (*Mir bez sverhderzhav*, n.d.). According to E. Primakov, Russia should enthusiastically participate in its constructing. It could be achieved by increasing

its power and institutionalizing the pole through improvement of cooperation with China and India, and involving them to mutual organizations (Mir bez sverhderzhav, n.d.). He claimed that Russia should orientate its foreign political direction to the East. In this regard, China and India could be considered as the great powers, which could create their poles themselves. According to E. Primakov, initially to change the unipolar world order, these three nations should unite into the geopolitical triangle – RIC, that is, Russia, India and China (Mir bez sverhderzhav, n.d.). Later, this triangle could be disintegrated. However, it had the positive system effect and could be served as the platform for multipolar world order.

Other Russia's political commentator, A. Bogaturov (2017), offered different understanding of polarity. He called his viewpoint "pluralist unipolar". A. Bogaturov (2017) claimed that the nations of G8 could concentrate all types of power in their hands and create a collective pole. Using the organization of G8, they could control each other and resist the hegemony of one. Moreover, each member of G8 had some power though insufficient for acting as world leader or pole. Some members were influential in economy (Japan, the USA, the UK, Germany), other – in politics (the US, Germany, the UK), other – in military (the US). Nonetheless, according to A. Bogaturov (2017), none of them had domination in all spheres. The USA, for instance, faced problems with finances and huge national debt. Japan and Germany had scarce power in military sphere. Italy, Canada lacked political power. Russia, being a member, had poor resources in all spheres of power, especially, in the late 1990s-early 2000s.

Concluding the section, it is unquestionable that the US and Russia's scholarship had different view on the post-bipolar world order. Naturally, viewpoint reflected the understanding of commentators of the place their nation should get in the new world order. Obviously, each of the aforementioned scholars had interesting ideas, which were proved by the development of events 1991-2022. For instance, the assumption of Ch. Krauthammer on the moment of the unipolar world for the USA, competition between state and non-state actors for power as R. Haass claimed or the idea of E. Primakov on improvement of relations between Russia, India and China.

Overall, the paper regards the approach of Ch. Krauthammer as the most adequate to the research and bears it in mind, while analyzing the key international events of 1991-2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the key international events, which characterize the post-bipolar world order and demonstrate its nature. Moreover, it focuses on the place of Kazakhstan in the post-bipolar world order.

Overview of international-political events in the period of 1991-1999.

First, in, 1991, prior to the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the US initiated a military campaign in Iraq known as "the Desert storm" operation (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.). It was sanctioned by the UNSC and the USSR voted in favor (Resolution 678, n.d.). On the one hand, this event could exhibit that the USA demonstrated its military power and political influence by intervening to the distant region of the Middle East

and establishing its order at the regional level there. The campaign could demonstrate another great power, if any, that whether the USSR disintegrated, the USA would lead the order. On the other hand, since the UNSC sanctioned the operation, it could be taken as an attempt of the UNO to become a full-fledged institution, which was able to regulate efficiently the problems of war, peace and security worldwide. It seemed to be a historic chance to the UNO. Nowadays, it is obvious that the UN failed.

Second, in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was concluded and it founded the European Union (Maastricht Treaty, n.d.). In terms of structural realism, it could be regarded as origination of another state actor, which could compete for leadership. In the mid-1990s, the European Union positioned itself as a new collective actor, which could stand as an independent economic and financial center of power.

Third, in 1993, the doctrine of democracy promotion was adopted in the USA (Mohammad A. Mousavi, 2011). Following the democratic peace thesis by Francis Fukuyama (1992), it announced that democracy and capitalism should be established in ex-Soviet and ex-communist nations of CIS and Eastern Europe. This doctrine was used in the US foreign policy throughout 1990s and later. In terms of structural realism, it could emphasize the dominant place of the USA in the post-bipolar order, since it had power and necessary resources to impose its will on potential opponents and the rest of the world.

Fourth, the practicing humanitarian intervention occurred in the late 1990s. It was an idea that if a government was unable to retain security and protection of its entire citizenry or a part of it, international community should intervene the situation and restore peace, protect vulnerable groups of the nation (Kardaş, 2003). Later, this concept was the platform for the Responsibility to protect doctrine adopted in 2005. However, in the mid-1990s, it was unclear whether the UN should regulate humanitarian interventions somehow by the involvement of resolutions of the UNSC (United Nations, n.d.). It could be rather long-term process, as the consensus of the five permanent members (the P5) of the UNSC was needed. Since the USA was a hegemon that time, it was able to impose its will on the world community insisting on ignoring the UNSC and its non-involvement. This stance overlapped the doctrine of democracy promotion and the theoretical assumptions of F. Fukuyama (1992) on democratic peace thesis. Moreover, the other opinion existed that Westphalian sovereignty should be revised and the post-Westphalian sovereignty concept should be put into effect (Kegley & Raymond, 2001). The idea of the universal character of human rights originated instead of the inviolability of state sovereignty. Therefore, humanitarian interventions practiced most in Africa in 1990s. Nonetheless, in Europe Yugoslavia's problem of tense relations between Kosovo and Serbia was used in practicing humanitarian intervention done by NATO air forces (NATO Madrid Summit - Press Info, n.d.). The specific of this operation was that it was not sanctioned by the UNSC.

Through the lens of structural realism, these aforesaid events demonstrated the unipolar character of the world order, in which the hegemon existed (the USA) that elaborated

rules and laid them down to regulate anarchy (Waltz, 1979). See all events mentioned in this part of the section in the Table 1.

Overview of international-political events in 2000-2022.

The 9\11 terrorist attack should be mentioned in this respect. It provoked series of drastic changes in the sphere of global security and the post-bipolar world order as well. This attack brought to the front of the global policy a new actor of the world order – transnational terrorism, which promoted itself as one of the key non-state actors that was managed to jeopardize the security the security of the hegemon (O’Connell, 2005). The terrorist attack led to several shifts in global order. It provoked the US-led operation in Afghanistan initiated in October 2001 (Global War on Terror, n.d.). The announced cause was that Taliban ruling regime in Afghanistan gave a safe haven to Osama bin Laden who was the leader of Al-Qaeda (Global War on Terror, n.d.). This terrorist organization declared itself responsible for the 9\11 attacks. The USA used the Chapter V of the Charter of NATO and involved the alliance to the operation (NATO, n.d.). Moreover, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was organized as a key alliance for non-NATO nations (NATO, n.d.). Some scholarship believed that the USA took a chance to form global anti-terrorist movement of state actors and lead it successfully. It could consolidate the US hegemony and insert the other institutional form (“The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden’s Death,” 2015). However, the USA lost momentum, since the operation in Afghanistan deferred and became to be costly enough to the involved parties.

The article discusses the US-led military operation in Iraq in 2003. This event emphasizes the unipolar nature of the world order, since the objections of France, Germany, China and Russia against this operation and the fact that it was not sanctioned by the UN Security Council (the UNSC), was not taken consideration by the USA (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). The USA had several ideological and legal platforms for this campaign. The doctrine of regime change was outspoken, as the regime of Saddam Hussein was regarded autocratic and jeopardizing regional and global security (Jervis, 2016). It was declared that this authoritarian government welcomed Al-Qaeda terrorists and developed the weapon of mass destruction (WMD). Therefore, it was announced that Iraqi government could pass the WMD to terrorists. However, it was pointed out that democracies could not give safe haven to terrorists and produce the WMD. Colin Powell’s address to the meeting of the UNSC was served as the legitimate basis to justify the operation with no sanction of the UNSC (Secretary Powell at the UN: Iraq’s Failure to Disarm, n.d.). Therefore, the early 2000s demonstrated obvious US leadership, even hegemony in the post-bipolar world order.

The paper discusses the so-called “colored revolutions”, which occurred in 2003-2005 in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. Scholarship and politicians have not elaborated the umbrella understanding of these events. The US-led academia believes that it was a wave of natural democratization of autocratic governments (Lane, 2009). It was stated that people were tired of corruption and violations of their rights, and began to get rid of the government by choosing radical way of revolutions. Russia’s and

China's scholarship tended to think that these events were sponsored and controlled by the USA, particularly foreign NGOs (Kazantsev, 2012). Russia's leadership took it nervously, since it was declared as interference to its sphere of vital foreign interests (Naumov & Naumov, 2016). China's government reacted negatively, as China itself was proclaimed authoritarian by the USA, and it could lead to practicing regime change in China (Layne, 2020). The so-called "colored revolutions" had the effect on the world order. On the one hand, the USA aimed to enlarge its involvement into distant regions of the world and reinforce its hegemony. Moreover, it believed that potential competitors as China or Russia should be eliminated in their influence in the regions of Central Asia and the Middle East. On the other hand, such clear and rhetorically active reaction came from Russia and China demonstrated the rise of their wish to question the US hegemony, especially in very close geographical distance. These events of so-called "colored revolutions" as well as the so-called "Arab spring" in 2010-2012 could indicate the confrontation of two *modi vivendi*, that is, democratic-liberal versus conservative-authoritarian.

The paper continues with the analysis of the 2007 V. Putin's address to the Munich Security Conference (Russian Perspective, 2015). This speech differentiated from other similar statements with the following points:

- a) The efficacy of the unipolar world order was doubted;
- b) The USA was accused in imposing its values and political-economic models on states and governments, which were not prepared for that;
- c) It was stated that the UN Charter should be used for the source of international law and orientation in implementation of security initiatives of the global character;
- d) The USA was accused in NATO's enlargement though it was promised to eschew doing it.

This address was not welcomed by the USA and the EU. The system effect was more rhetorical than practical. However, it was rather outstanding, since for the first time in 16 years, the US-led world order was questioned with respect to security, predictability and economic stability. Contradictions between the hegemon and its opponents aggravated.

The article discusses the 2008 Russo-Georgian war (Syawfi & Cahyadi, 2021). This event is distinguished from other similar cases by the following points:

- a) Russia's leadership used the rhetoric of the US political establishment of late 1990s on humanitarian intervention. Russia's government justified the conflict by the speaking out the idea that Georgia's government made genocide against Abkhazians and Ossetians. Rather similar rhetoric was practiced by the US leadership in Yugoslavia campaign;
- b) The USA used Russia's accusation on regime change, which the USA pursued in Iraq and so-called "colored revolutions". The US political elite declared that Russia aimed to change the ruling regime of M. Saakashvili, which had strong anti-Russian orientation. This situation looks rather interesting in terms of rhetoric, which is used for justification of moves of the great powers in foreign policy.

c) Georgia's rhetoric looked rather usual for such cases. Its leadership declared Abkhazia and South Ossetia separatist regions (Evans, 2018).

This event stimulated the shift in world order. On the one hand, two opposite poles started composing in practice: the US-led liberal-democratic versus Russia-led conservative-autocratic supported by China and other authoritarian governments though unofficially. On the other hand, the unipolar world order was attacked by "dissident powers", which accumulated resources enough to doubt the character of the order not rhetorically but practically. It should be emphasized that the 2008 Caucasus campaign was the initial stage of collapse of the unipolar world order led by the USA as the hegemon.

Nevertheless, further events demonstrated that neither the USA nor Russia were prepared for direct and complicated confrontation. In 2009, the "reset" in American-Russia's relations occurred (Zygar, 2016). Both parties aimed to retain allegedly friendly relations in the frameworks of visible changes in the world order. Moreover, both parties were interested in each other. The USA was in need in Russia's assistance in its withdrawing from Afghanistan, continuation of mutual control over bilateral nuclear arsenals, support of anti-Iran sanctions by Russia as well. In turn, Russia was interested in the USA in terms of avoiding political isolation after the 2008 conflict in Caucasus, stabilizing its economy after the world economic and financial crisis of 2008-2009. This political move of the reset could seem as a shift to a different world order from the unipolar system. However, it turned out that the USA aimed to retain its hegemony or, at least, domination. Russia aimed to retain questioning and attacking the unipolar world order.

The paper continues with the discussion of so-called "Arab spring" of 2011 and Russia's military operation in Syria of 2015. Regarding the so-called "Arab spring", the reactions of the USA and Russia were rather similar to alike conflicts of early 2000s. The USA reiterated the rhetoric on spread of democracy and liberal values in one of the most conservative regions of the world. Russia announced that it was another attempt of the USA to practice regime change tactics in a very important region of the world (Dannreuther, 2014).

The so-called "Arab spring" exacerbated the problem of terrorism. It had not been combatted efficiently prior to the chain of revolutions in the Middle East. The vacuum of security originated in the region during and after the so-called "Arab spring" provoked rise of terrorist and radical extremist militias there (Vysotsky, 2014). The unipolar world order became less manageable and sustainable. Both state and non-state actors began to attack it. Simultaneously, the USA began to lose its power, at least, in economic field.

The 2015 Russia-led military operation in Syria imposed several effects on the world order:

- (a) Russia demonstrated its ability to protect its vital interests in important regions. Moreover, it was a political signal to the USA that Russia would compete with the US domination, at least, in military sphere;

- (b) The operation in Syria formed a new regional balance of power involved Saudi Arabia and Turkey. It started redistribution of regional power among the most ambitious regional actors;
- (c) China and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) continued supporting Russia's moves.

The article discusses the 2014 Crimea case (Clarke, 2019). It provoked drastic changes in relations between Russia and the rest of the world and had huge effect on the unipolar world. Even in scientific discourse, this event is called differently – annexation in the US discourse and accession in Russia's discourse.

This event stimulated the following shift in the unipolar world order:

- (a) Russia continued promoting its status as a self-standing dissident actor, which does not wish to tolerate the US hegemony or domination;
- (b) The event could be regarded as a response to the US support of Kosovo separation from Serbia in 2008;
- (c) Most of international community reacted to the event negatively, since it established the precedent for alike moves in future.

Therefore, the unipolar world order was attacked more and more intensively. Russia, China, other regional powers by both rhetorically and practically attacked the US-led domination in the world order.

The section ends with the discussion of the 2021 withdrawal of the US armed forces from Afghanistan (Pew Research Center, 2022). This event demonstrated that the USA, at least, in military-political terms lost its leadership in this region. It reflected the inability of the USA to establish and retain its domination in the distant region of the world.

The paper eschews analyzing the 2021 Russia-Ukraine conflict, since the situation is developing. However, it is unquestionable that the conflict finishes the post-bipolar system of international relations or the unipolar world order.

Drawing the preliminary conclusion, it should be mentioned that in the mid-late 1990s, the world order was unipolar under the hegemony of the USA. Nevertheless, in the mid-2000s, it began to be questioned by other powers, which increased their influence, and leadership of them was ambitious enough to compete the US hegemony. Initially, this rivalry reflected merely in rhetoric. Later, it penetrated to other spheres of life. Russia attacked the US hegemony in military-political field. China aspired to do it in economic, financial and technological spheres. Russia's moves were very direct and active. China's attacks were rather silent and indirect though considerable. As a result of these attacks, the US lost its hegemony and remained one of the dominant actors of the world order, that it, a great power. Obviously, from the mid-2010s, the competition with the USA intensified, since two opposing powers, China and Russia, improved their influence. To 2022, the world order became the least predictable and controllable than ever before. See all events mentioned in this part of the section in the Table 2.

The section continues with the case study of Kazakhstan's stance and place of the republic in the unipolar world. Here, it takes the period of 1990s. When Kazakhstan merely was acknowledged as a sovereign nation, it declared the multi-vector foreign policy aimed to balance between all stakeholders, which could have interests in Central Asia and find diversified sources of different sort of assistance, which the republic needed that time – financial, economic, political assistance. In the early-late 1990s, the USA was one of the key donors to Kazakhstan economy, energy and financial sectors (Omuraliev, 2020). The USA financed the withdrawal of ex-Soviet nuclear weapons deployed in Kazakhstan by Nunn-Lugar program and Lisbon Protocol to 1991 START (The Lisbon Protocol at a Glance | Arms Control Association, n.d.). Despite that, Kazakhstan offered to improve CIS integration by founding the Eurasian Economic Community. Kazakhstan leadership spoke out this idea in 1994 (Times, 2014). Nevertheless, in 1994, Kazakhstan joined NATO's program Partnership for peace (Krylov, 2017). The US-led and sponsored foundations, associations and other NGOs began to work in Kazakhstan. For instance, Kazakhstan-Soros foundation was created in 1995 (Kainazarova, n.d.). The official objective for this foundation and similar organizations was to promote democratic values and induce the development of vibrant civil society in Kazakhstan.

Used the idea of multi-vector policy, in 2000s, Kazakhstan continued balancing between the key powers, which had interests in Central Asia. However, the chief direction became rather clear. The leadership of Kazakhstan aimed to reinforce the cooperation within the CIS. In 1994 address, then-President of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev, emphasized the necessity to intensify economic, infrastructural and political cooperation among CIS members (Pomfret, 2021). In 1992, the Collective security treaty was signed (Collective Security Treaty, Dated May 15, 1992, n.d.). In 1996, the "Shanghai 5" created the platform for security cooperation with the involvement of China (The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2024). In the early 2000s, these initiatives became institutionalized; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) originated in 2001, Collective Security Treaty Organization emerged in 2002, Eurasian Economic Community was established in 2001 (EvrAzJeS, n.d.). Regarding the structural realism, Kazakhstan tried to incorporate itself into the new world order. Being not a great power, Kazakhstan aimed to protect its inviolability, economic growth and retain security through the mechanisms of regional integration with closest neighbors along with bilateral, perhaps, less binding, cooperation with distant powers, especially the USA.

Concerning the key events, the paper has mentioned above, which changed the world order, Kazakhstan had varied stance. After the 9\11 terrorist attack, Kazakhstan did not join the US-led antiterrorist coalition though it gave a permission for using its airspace for transition of military cargos of the coalition (Il'icheva, 2015). When the US leadership asked for deployment of American military base in the territory of Kazakhstan to use it for transit and delivery of cargos, Kazakhstan's government refused (Il'icheva, 2015). It was allowed for the US military air forces to land either in Almaty airport or Shymkent or Lygovaya "in extraordinary cases, such as severe technical problems" (Il'icheva, 2015). However, the US air forces did not use this opportunity. Along with these rather careful moves, Kazakhstan's leadership rhetorically demonstrated a full-scale support

to the US-led coalition and its efforts in Afghanistan, condemning the 9/11 attack and expressing condolences to American nation (Il'icheva, 2015).

In the context of the US-led operation in Iraq in 2003, Kazakhstan adopted a cautious and multifaceted position. Initially, it emphasized the importance of adhering to international law by all countries, including Iraq (Kazakhstan Today, n.d.). Following the operation's conclusion, Kazakhstan contributed to the peacekeeping efforts and the reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure (Mirotvorcheskie sily Kazakhstana v Irake, n.d.). However, Kazakhstan also faced its own set of challenges, maintaining a governance style that was more centralized and having a foreign policy that was closely aligned with Russia, as highlighted by the declaration of 2003 as the Russia's Year in Kazakhstan. Moreover, unofficially, media and some scholarship of Kazakhstan declared that the real cause of the US operation in Iraq was its oil stocks, not weapon of mass destruction (WMD) or sponsorship of terrorists (Al-Qaeda) (Irakskaya vojna dlya Kazakhstana: mezh dvuh ognj, 2003). Therefore, Kazakhstan tried to protect its security through maneuvering and rhetoric, which could be welcomed in the US political establishment.

Concerning the so-called "colored revolutions" occurred in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine in 2003-2005, Kazakhstan had ambiguous stance as well. On the one hand, in respect of Georgia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan did not express clear and non-ambivalent viewpoint about the "revolutions". On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan could not be ignored as the closest neighbor, both geographically and mentally. Therefore, rhetorically, Kazakhstan did not welcome the "colored revolution" there. However, aftermath, it sent humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan (Luzyanin, 2005). The cause for such stance was rather unequivocal: Kazakhstan's leadership realized that the country had a potential "chance" to be affected by the "revolution" because of interests of foreign actors, such as the USA, and domestic problems with political opposition, freedom of speech and democratic representation, which the republic had.

In the context of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, Kazakhstan maintained a foreign policy that appeared nuanced, showing a balanced approach in its public stance. On the one hand, in the frameworks of the CSTO and SCO, Kazakhstan supported the moves of Russia and condemned Georgian leadership. Moreover, in the conversation between then-President of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbayev and then-Prime-minister of Russia, V. Putin, it was outspoken that Georgia provoked the conflict (Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus Corridor in the Wake of the Georgia-Russia War – EUCAM, n.d.). On the other hand, Kazakhstan did not acknowledge the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Kazakhstan and the South Caucasus Corridor in the Wake of the Georgia-Russia War – EUCAM, n.d.), relied on the Westphalian principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity of sovereign nations. The reason for such cautious approach was rather clear: Kazakhstan aimed to retain friendly relations with Russia and demonstrate its loyalty to international law as the only source of order in international anarchy.

In light of the "Arab Spring," Kazakhstan adopted a clearer stance, recognizing the potential for these events to directly impact the nation's internal security. Kazakhstan's leadership emphasized that religious extremism and terrorism originated aftermath the

“Spring” could spread to Central Asia and Kazakhstan (Central Asia and the Caucasus, n.d.). Local radicals could get financial and moral support from their counterparts from the Middle East. Kazakhstani authorities did not consider these events as a wave of democratization and increase of liberal ideas’ dissemination.

Relating to the 2014 Crimea case, Kazakhstan had the same stance of balancing between the friendly relations with Russia and international law. On the one hand, it declared that the word “annexation” was too tough for description of the Crimea case. On the other hand, it spoke out that Crimea could not be acknowledged as a part of Russia (Tokaev ob'yasn'il pozitsiyu Kazakhstana po voprosu prisoedineniya Kryma, 2019).

Regarding the 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan naturally could not welcome Taliban’s taking office in the country. However, the lesser evil for Kazakhstan was to establish contacts with Afghanistan though unofficially. Kazakhstan’s leadership declared that Afghanistan was in need of humanitarian assistance in food, infrastructure and other spheres (Tumanov, 2022). Kazakhstan announced that in improvement of the security situation, the republics of the region should support Afghanistan in its peaceful way of development. Moreover, Kazakhstan ignored mentioning the USA and its place in changing world order in this respect.

Finally, tracing all above mentioned events, it can be noticed that throughout the post-bipolar world order, Kazakhstan was following its multi-vector and pragmatic foreign policy, which was announced from the very beginning of sovereign existence. It tried to balance between the interests of the key great powers, which had aims in the republic and the region of Central Asia. It should be emphasized that Kazakhstan did that successfully. Moreover, Kazakhstan institutionalized its relations with the closest neighbors, which could be potential great powers, that is, China and Russia, through regional organization of economic and security directions. At the same time, it tried to retain good though distant relations with the USA in order to provide for domestic security and protect itself from extreme intervention from external environment.

As a middle power, Kazakhstan is more prone to support multipolar world order, since it supposed to have opportunities for diversified development of contacts with different nations and other actors. Nonetheless, in unipolar world order, Kazakhstan endeavors to be included to global cooperation effectively. It aims to protect *raison d'état* with no provoking serious challenges and problems from the environment.

CONCLUSION

The research suggests that the post-bipolar world order was predominantly unipolar. Initially, throughout 1990s, it had undisputable unipolar nature under the hegemony of the USA. Other nations could not compete the US dominance in any sphere. The US established its hegemony, as it did not need advocates for its politics throughout the Globe. The UN lost momentum to serve as an efficient legitimate platform for elaborating workable rules to play, which could be accepted by the entire international community. Therefore, since the paper uses the structural political realism as a theoretical platform

of analysis, it eschews discussing globalization or other tendencies and events, which can be regarded as liberalist.

After the terrorist attack of 9/11, the USA took a chance to be in charge of the global counter-terrorism campaign. It could lead to de-jure legitimation and institutionalization of the US hegemony. However, the 2003 Iraq campaign demonstrated that the US missed its chance to do that. This campaign provoked discontent among the US allies and its opponents. The 2003 military operation could be regarded as the initial period of vanishing of the US hegemony and decreasing its status to the world leader, and, later to a great power. The difference is that the hegemon does not need followers but the leader or great power should have them to maintain its superiority. During the so-called “colored revolutions” of 2003-2005 in CIS area, the hegemon endeavored to confirm its global domination through getting pro-liberal governments in Russia and China sphere of interest. Since 2007-2008, the rest of the rising great powers, such as China and Russia, mostly the latter, began to speak out their claims on regional and sometimes global leadership. Russia’s government did that openly through official declarations of its leadership. China acted more smoothly using its traditional style of symbols and allegories. The world economic and financial crisis of 2008-2009, the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, the Crimea case of 2014, Russia’s military operation in Syria in 2015 demonstrated that a) Russia accumulated military-political resources to question the US global domination and using the tactics of offensive realism, it endeavored to decrease the status of the USA from the hegemon to great power; b) China successfully coped with the 2008-2009 crisis, it did it more efficiently than the USA and the EU. It gave the opportunity to China to use its economic power to decrease the US hegemony though China acted less actively and, say, in compliance with offensive realism.

In 2022, it seems obvious that the post-bipolar world order is about to be over. The Russia-Ukraine conflict shifted drastically many serious platforms for cooperation between adversaries, from ideology to economy.

Unquestionably, both unipolar and multipolar world order can bring challenges to Kazakhstan. In the case of unipolar, it has to adjust to the hegemony to find the most appropriate ways of cooperation, especially, if Kazakhstan has its objectives at the regional level, which can contradict objectives of the hegemony in the region. The multipolar world order can stimulate Kazakhstan maneuvering among the poles to pursue its foreign policy efficiently. However, tactics and strategy in multipolar seems to be rather close to traditional diplomacy of 18th-19th centuries. Moreover, the multipolar world order brings more opportunities for Kazakhstan to cooperate with different actors, such as nation-states, various non-state actors, etc.

The hypothesis 2 is proved along with the hypothesis 1. Despite the global geopolitical turbulence, Kazakhstan manages to cooperate with different actors, which have rather tense or even conflict relations. It successfully contacts with the USA, the EU. Russia, China, Turkey, the powers of the Middle East. Therefore, Kazakhstan has a good chance to improve its status as responsible partner and predictable nation with potential aspiration to regional leadership.

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Table 1. *The international-political events of 1991-1999*

Dates	The name of the event
1991	The US-led military operation in Iraq "Desert storm"
1992	The Maastricht Treaty on establishment of the European Union
1993	The doctrine of democracy promotion of the USA
Mid-1990s	The humanitarian intervention concept origination and its practice in Yugoslavia in 1999

Table 2. *The international-political events of 2000-2021*

Dates	The name of the event
2001	The 9\11 terrorist attack and the US-led military operation in Afghanistan
2003	The US-led military operation in Iraq
2003-2005	The "colored revolutions" in CIS (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine)
2007	V. Putin's address to the Munich Security Conference
2008	The Russo-Georgian war
2009	The "Russian reset" in the US-Russian relations
2011	The "Arab spring"
2014	The Crimea case
2015	The Russia-led military operation in Syria
2021	The US withdrawal from Afghanistan

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