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## **THE ISSUES IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Introduction.** The Westphalian system is considered to start after the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Many authors declare that it is a global system based on the principles of international law in which each state has sovereignty over its territory, to the exclusion of all external powers, with non-interference in another country's domestic affairs. The researcher, H. Kissinger, wrote: *"The Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality, not a unique moral insight. It relied on a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other's domestic affairs and checking each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power"* [1: 3].

**Objectives of the paper** are to define the difference between the old Westphalian and current international systems and to offer an analysis of both systems to demonstrate the changes of world order from 1648 to 2000.

**Results.** A series of pacts make up the Peace of Westphalia at the beginning of the modern international system, in which external powers should avoid interfering in another country's domestic policies. The ratification of the Münster Treaty as part of the Peace of Westphalia ended the war. On that matter, Henry Kissinger wrote: *"The Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality, not a unique moral insight. It relied on a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other's domestic affairs and checking each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power. No single claim to truth or universal rule had prevailed in Europe's contests. Instead, each state was assigned the attribute of sovereign power over its territory. Each would acknowledge the domestic structures and religious vocations of its fellow states and refrain from challenging their existence"* [1: 47]. Some authors argued that the Westphalian treaties had little to do with the principles which they are often associated with: sovereignty, non-intervention, and the legal equality of states. For example, a theologian Andreas

Osiander writes: “<...> *the treaties confirm neither French or Swedish 'sovereignty' nor anybody else's; least of all do they contain anything about sovereignty as a principle*” [2].

The countries became the primary institutional agents in an interstate system of relations. The Peace of Westphalia started a trend to lesser any attempts from one “Holy Roman Emperor” to impose his supranational authority on European states. The “Westphalian” doctrine of states as independent agents was actualized much later: with the 19th-century’s rise of nation-states. The “Westphalian system” reached its peak in the late 19th century (after the Vienna Congress dismantled Napoleon’s First French Empire but did not reconstitute the old Holy Roman Imperial order that dominated Medieval Europe). Although practical considerations still led powerful states to seek to influence the affairs of others, forcible intervention by one country in the domestic affairs of another was less frequent between 1850 and 1900 than in most previous and subsequent periods.

After the end of the Cold War, the United States and the countries of Western Europe began talking of a post-Westphalian order, in which countries could intervene against human rights abuses in other countries. With the U.S. now seen as *de-facto*, if not *de-jure*, sole leading superpower hegemony, anti-Western sentiment expanded all over the world. Accusing the West of “neo-colonialism” with their “humanitarian interventions”, resurgent remnants of the “Socialist order”, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, established their military contingents and controlled regimes in neighboring countries, all the while blocking Western intervention in the UN Security Council, accusing of global military expansion.

Thus, after the end of the Cold War, one can discuss the current post-bipolar system. A prominent historian of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis, wrote at the dawn of the post-Cold War era that the characteristics of this new system are not yet certain but it will certainly be very different from the Cold War one, and it means that a turning point of global historical significance took place: “*The new world of the post-Cold War era is likely to have few, if any, of these [Cold War] characteristics: that is an indication of how much things have already changed since the Cold War ended. We are at one of those rare points of 'punctuation' in history at which old patterns of stability have broken up and new ones have not yet emerged to take their place*” [3: 235].

When the Soviet Union fell, there was a question about the United States position of a unipolar superpower. Eventually, William Wohlforth answered the question with an elegantly brief equation: “*The absence of a balancing rival to the United States marked the shift from a bipolar world to a unipolar one*” [4]. The debate shifted to the unipolar theory. Monteiro suggests that there are three fundamental aspects of a unipolar system: “*unipolarity is an interstate system... unipolarity is anarchical... unipolar systems possess only one great power, which enjoys a preponderance of power and faces no competition.*” Unipolarity remains anarchical since states remain autonomous. The lack of total external control of the unipolar limits its power [5: 8]. Wohlforth writes, “*balance-of-power theory has been at the center of the debate but absent so far is a clear distinction between*

peacefulness and durability. Less often noted is the fact that if the system remains unipolar, balance-of-power theory predicts peace” [4]. Brooks and Wohlforth grapple with the balance of *the threat theory*. Conceived by Stephen M. Walt, the balance of threat theory posits that, rather than checking the power of the hegemony-type power or, an aspiring hegemony, states will balance against perceived threats, leading to soft-balancing to undermine the perceived threat’s ambitions [5: 11].

**Conclusion.** The exact status of the international system depends on solving many problems and the researchers have not reached an agreement yet. These issues are: 1) different interpretations of Münster and Osnabrück treaties of the Westphalian peace; 2) debates on whether to apply “Westphalian principles” to modern international relations; 3) different historiography view on the end of the Cold War; 4) realist and liberal interpretations of unipolarity; 5) disagreements among the scientific pro- and anti-Western community. The promising ground for mutual understanding can be the interpretation of the current international relations system as a capitalist unipolar world with a “new liberal world order” [6].

**Recommendations** include setting up further inter-researcher cooperation on the matter of solving these issues and formulating reasonable definitions that can be largely agreed upon. It can take the form of international scientific conferences, research projects, additional writing by both political scientists and historians on the topics. Solving “unimportant” disagreements can be, in fact, a useful initiative and, possibly, prevent a larger conflict [7].

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