UNIVERSIDAD
DE CHILE
Instituto
de Estudios
Internacionales

CUADERNOS DE ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES

Publicación del Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Chile

CUADERNOS DE ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES

Nº 1 - 2026

POLYCRISIS, THE RISE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH, AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, ANALYZED FROM A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE[*]

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[*] Text based on the draft of a paper presented at the 14th China-Latin America High-Level Forum, held at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou (People's Republic of China) on November 24, 2025.

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ISSN 0719-1065

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Abstract

The objective of this analysis is to identify the central elements of the polycrisis that is currently affecting the global capitalist “world system” and, consequently, the international system as a whole. Among a wide range of variables that contribute to exacerbating this multiple crisis, which we do not hesitate to describe as systemic, we highlight six themes that, in our opinion, are key to identifying the risk factors that most strongly strain this power structure. These themes, which certainly do not exhaust the search for new points of fracture or breakdown, would, in our view, be the following: i) a crumbling world order; ii) accelerated changes and realignments in the context of a rapid reconfiguration of alliances; iii) marked imperial decline and the emergence of strong disruptive trends; iv) the emergence of a diffuse multipolarity that is not without contradictions but is nevertheless expanding strongly; v) the “defeat of the West” on different levels (military, economic, and geostrategic) in a world without rules, where the greatest attacks on multilateralism and globalization come from the managers and beneficiaries of the Bretton Woods system of governance; and vi) the prevalence of a “Non-Hegemonic World Order” where there is no superpower capable of imposing, until now, universal and complete hegemony. Or, failing that, a neo-Westphalian agreement that manages to restore minimal areas of sovereignty and autonomy for countries with fewer resources of power, damaged by the overwhelming advance of the “rampant unilateralism” promoted by Donald Trump.

Keywords

Polycrisis - World System – Multilateralism – Unilateralism - Anomie

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this analysis is focused on the search for the keys that order and configure the central elements of the "polycrisis" currently affecting the global capitalist "world-system". And, consequently, the international system as a whole.

The French thinker Edgar Morin states that we are living in the era of complexity, and therefore, of complex thinking, as we are experiencing a moment of accumulation of unusual and unprecedented tensions on overburdened political systems, which gives us the sensation of living on the edge of a volcano about to erupt.

Instability and unpredictability are the common signs expressed and manifested in almost all centers of power of what Wallerstein would call the "capitalist world-system." And, of course, also in some of its "turbulent peripheries" in the Global South, which, whether they want it or not, receive the perverse effects of the spread and dangerous escalation of this phenomenon that, like economic globalization, transcends national borders without anyone having the capacity to control them entirely.

We are thinking, in particular in this aspect, of Donald Trump—who feels he is the most powerful man in the world, with his emperor-like antics, and who has made the chaos and systematic destruction of the multilateral order created at Bretton Woods in 1944, on the eve of the end of World War II, his main political program. A project that includes the resetting or rebooting of the international governance system to try to tilt it —in our opinion, fruitlessly— in favor of his country.

Morin, a former member of the French Resistance against Nazism who is alive and intellectually lucid today at 103, provides an early and valuable lesson that allows us to understand the hidden keys and dynamics that shape and permeate today's world.

With the term polycrisis, he essentially refers to the systemic interconnectedness of multiple crises (geopolitical, economic, environmental, and social) that reinforce each other, creating an unprecedented global challenge of extreme complexity, with vectors that even threaten the survival of the planet. A polycrisis is not, in his opinion, several crises happening at the same time, but a system of interdependent crises where the whole represents more than the simple sum of its parts.

In synthesis, his conceptual approach, theoretically formulated in the 1990s and developed in several texts, was recently recovered by Adam Tooze, and remains completely relevant more than three decades after being enunciated. Tooze rescued this theoretical framework and, in various talks and several books (2024; 2021), argued that the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain crisis, the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, and inflation are not isolated events but manifestations of a single global "polycrisis"[1].

Below, we will attempt to decode and develop, in the form of a series of statements that readers can imagine as successive slides displayed on a screen, six critical nodes or points that are part of this planetary framework today.

[1] The World Economic Forum (WEF) institutionalized the term *polycrisis* when, in its Global Risks Report 2023, it adopted it as an important criterion to be considered, giving it a space in its official documents and on its global action platform.

These proposals for core thematic areas are as follows: i) a crumbling world order; ii) accelerated changes and realignments within the framework of a rapid reconfiguration of alliances; iii) marked imperial decline and intensification of disruptive trends iv) the emergence of a diffuse multipolarity not exempt from contradictions and "birth pangs"; v) “defeat of the West” in a world showing increasing signs of anomie; vi) the prevalence of a “non-hegemonic world order” or one configured under the sign of a fragmented and dispersed hegemony.

POINT 1. A CRUMBLING WORLD ORDER, AND AN ASSOCIATED CRISIS OF DOMINATION

There is a world order that is crumbling and an associated crisis of domination (to use a term utilized by Gramsci). This undoubtedly has a clear incidence on projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, by its english acronym), because in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) regions, pressures from Washington are exponentially increasing —to cite just one current and evident example— for our countries to distance themselves from this proposal.

A logic of blockades, of zero-sum, is imposed. The United States directly challenges Latin American governments, without any subterfuge or euphemism, to refuse to join this Chinese global initiative. Examples abound. And the redoubled pressure is manifested through diplomatic, economic, or military means. Faced with this, the countries of the subregion are confronted with a dilemma that offers barely two options: subordination or resistance.

Today's Argentina would fit squarely into the first definition (let us recall the recent agreement for a swap or "financial bridge" between Donald Trump and Javier Milei, prior to crucial elections, intermediated by Scott Bessent, who stated openly that the U.S. would "recover Latin America by economic means and that bullets would not be necessary"[2]. Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, and Cuba, with different modulations and strategies, would, in contrast, embody the option of seeking to curb, within their limited possibilities, Trumpism and its rampant unilateralism.

So far, except with Argentina, where he has obtained positive responses to virtually everything Trump demanded due to Milei's "dogmatic occidentalism"[3] and his unreserved submission[4], and with Venezuela, where he carries out acts of open "gunboat diplomacy," shielded by a presumed war against drug trafficking, the head of the White House has limited himself, for the moment, to a policy that consists of issuing constant threats, seeking to achieve a rigid alignment with Washington through intimidation.

We should recall, in turn, that Trump himself boasted that, when the recent trade war initiated by his country in April 2025, he had a line of heads of state from around the world waiting to, apologies for the blatant vulgarity, kiss a certain part of his anatomy.

[2] "Scott Bessent says U.S. 'is recovering Latin America' without bullets, only with money." Agencia Zero, Argentina. Segment available on YouTube from an interview granted by the Treasury Secretary to the NBC network.
[3] The definition is by Luciano Anzelini (2025).
[4] Paraguay could also join Argentina without problems on this list of "pro-US" Latin American countries, as, for example, in the last UN vote (October 2025), which condemned the embargo on Cuba, Buenos Aires and Asunción voted against the resolution, while Ecuador and Costa Rica abstained.

POINT 2. “CHANGES UNSEEN IN A CENTURY”

In this regard, it is worth noting the language used by Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin on March 22, 2023, as they concluded their meetings. At that moment, as they said goodbye in front of the cameras (in a comment caught by open microphones, not in a formal speech), the Chinese President, who was making his first state visit to Russia after being re-elected for a third term, told his Russian counterpart, in Mandarin: “现在是一百年来未有之大变局... 咱们两个共同推动的”[5]. This could be translated into English as: “We are seeing changes that haven’t been seen in a century, and we are the ones driving these changes together.” To which Putin replied: “I agree” (in Russian: “Согласен”).

The dialogue leaked on that occasion was widely reported in international media and went viral because it was clearly heard in the recordings. The two leaders toasted, before saying goodbye in an affectionate and cordial tone, to “the development of Russian-Chinese relations and the strategic partnership in the new era.” This reaffirmed a “no-limits” friendship between the two nations, which is a significant factor in the current global context, as it constitutes both a warning and a reaffirmation of common intentions.

The paradigm expressed in this story, which might seem like a simple anecdote destined at most to be a footnote in human history, is very clear: there are rapid and accelerated changes and realignments at the geopolitical and geostrategic levels that deserve to be properly acknowledged.

[5] This phrase is part of a recurring concept in Chinese diplomacy under Xi Jinping's leadership, known as “Great changes unseen in a century” (百年未有之大变局), which President Xi has used since 2017-2018 to refer to the global geopolitical transformation (relative decline of the West, rise of China and other emerging countries, etc.)

POINT 3. ACCENTUATED IMPERIAL DECLINE, SYSTEMIC CHAOS, AND THE EMERGENCE OF DISRUPTIVE DYNAMICS

Half a century after the oil shock (October 1973) and the defeat in the Vietnam War (sealed by the Paris Accords in January 1973 and the subsequent withdrawal of the last U.S. troops from Saigon in April 1975), the hegemon of the global capitalist world-system, the United States, is resorting to the same playbook it used in the past, seeking to reaffirm its control and supremacy in the American hemispheric space through a re-edition of the old "gunboat diplomacy," as previously mentioned.

However, it is now facing constraints it did not have in the past. These stem, first and foremost, from the widening and deepening of a large-scale structural crisis whose first signs were detected in the late 20th century by Immanuel Wallerstein (1999)[6], and developed in parallel, from a theoretical point of view, by two other political scientists, Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly Silver[7].

In these moments of historical rupture, the normal mechanisms for the system's reproduction fail, variables lose their capacity for entropy (understood as the tolerable margin of disorder and imbalance that a given subsystem can withstand), and a generalized chaos emerges that is expressed across various levels: economic, political, geopolitical, geoeconomic, and social. In these critical instances, uncertainty and unpredictability increase, space opens for historical bifurcations, and collective "free will" gains potential margins of action against the usual structural determinism.

The linearity of the established order is threatened, and disruptive dynamics surface. In our current situation, with a United States in sustained decline, these dynamics are often driven from the very core or central axis of that crisis-ridden subsystem of domination. This was clearly demonstrated, to cite the most obvious example, in the case of the failed Trump 2.0 Trade War.

But now, for the Latin America and the Caribbean subregion, there is a risk that the U.S. withdrawal from certain traditional geopolitical spaces —presumably to concentrate on what some call "the China threat"— will turn into us once again becoming the sacrificial victims of a possible "compensatory strategy." This strategy would aim to soothe the wounded pride following its military failures in Ukraine (via proxies or directly), Afghanistan, Iraq, and other regions of West Asia.

In doing so, the United States seeks to revalidate and reconfirm its control over a hemispheric space that has been considered crucial and non-negotiable for its geopolitical interests as a great power since Nicholas Spykman, with his Rimland theory, and other advocates of "manifest destiny" each developed their imperial proposals in turn.

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[6] Wallerstein conceptualizes and elaborates on this specific point in works such as The End of the World as We Know It (1999), World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction (2004), and numerous subsequent articles and lectures (e.g., "Chaos as an Everyday Thing," 2015).

[7] In a seminal text, Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System, also from 1999, Arrighi and Silver explicitly discuss systemic chaos as a feature that appears and manifests in different ways during processes of hegemonic transition, such as the one we are currently experiencing.

If we add to the geopolitical and military setbacks in different theaters of war the internal economic difficulties (rising public debt, productive and logistical delays, extreme financialization, loss of confidence in the dollar, etc.), we see that the U.S. is in serious trouble. The announcement of Trump's 2.0 Trade War, via the proclaimed “Liberation Day” (April 2, 2025), has also failed to provide a positive answer to the structural and critical problems facing the “American Leviathan”.

The tariff war has not helped to alleviate the disconcerting sense of decline that prevails in American academia, including, incidentally, those closest to the heart of the country's establishment[8].

[8] Here are some titles from recent publications in the IR popular literature that exemplify our point: The US’s Self-Destructive Strategy Toward China (L. Brainard, 10/11/2025); The Year Trump Lived Dangerously (P. Beaver, 12/11/2025), both in Foreign Affairs; How to Ruin a Country (S. Walt, 7/4/2025); Trump Has No Idea How to Do Diplomacy (S. Walt, 19/8/2025), both by the same author in Foreign Policy; and Why China Is Winningthe Trade War, no author data, in The Economist (24/10/2025).

POINT 4. HOW THE COLLAPSE IS PERCEIVED FROM THE PERIPHERY AND SEMI-PERIPHERY, AND HOW MULTIPOLARITY IS EMERGING STRONGLY

Next, we propose to broaden the scope and focus of our analysis, shifting it from the center —currently immersed in a profound crisis of hegemony— to the periphery and semi-periphery of the expanded international system as a whole, with its dynamic of permanent redistribution and reconfiguration of balances, big bangs, fractures, and balances of power.

This brings us back to a crucial choice or dilemma: how to understand and decipher the rising multipolarity, which, like any new phenomenon associated with a decisive breaking point —and even a true watershed— in a trajectory of transitional evolution, emerges amidst relentless "labor pains," so to speak, of apocalyptic predictions, and of harsh, sharp contradictions sometimes expressed through repeated threats and open or semi-secret, hybrid wars.

In other words, and from the point of view of practical and functional politics, how to make the spirit of Bandung plausible again. This could (hypothetically) be a collective and possible way out of this critical juncture for nations with fewer power attributes that have been, as is easy to deduce, the most direct and defenseless victims of this process of genuine demolition of "really existing" multilateralism undertaken by Donald Trump, but which was already underway under previous U.S. administrations.

Regarding this, the German analyst of Indian origin, Ramesh Jaura, states in a recent article:

> *"(…) The global order is fraying. Trust is evaporating. Crises are multiplying faster than cooperation can contain them. Institutions that once promised stability are now questioned at their core. And yet, amidst the debris of the old order, an idea born seventy years ago in Bandung, Indonesia, still holds relevance. In 1955, newly independent nations from Asia and Africa met—not to create another power axis, but to imagine a world governed by sovereignty, solidarity, and equality" (Ramesh, 2025).*

And so, the idea of the relevance and contemporaneity of the Ten Principles agreed upon at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 resurfaces powerfully. This was a summit meeting of Asian and African states, most of which had recently gained independence.

Organized by Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Jawaharlal Nehru (India), and Sukarno (Indonesia), it was attended by Zhou Enlai, who was both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the PRC. At that meeting, he unveiled China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Wǔ xiàng gòngchǔ yuánzé), which would become the pillars and foundations of his country's foreign policy. Zhou Enlai had a decisive intervention at the conference by positing the working criterion of "seeking common ground while reserving differences," which undoubtedly contributed to the success of the meeting.

The Ten Principles of Bandung emerged from it, emphasizing, among other aspects, the self-determination and sovereignty of peoples, the promotion of mutual interests and cooperation, non-intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country,

abstention from the use of force to resolve potential conflicts and disputes, and, in general, respect for fundamental human rights and the purposes enunciated in the foundational charter of the United Nations[9].

Official representatives from 29 countries attended Bandung —twenty-three Asian and six African nations. The declared objective of the conference was to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation, in opposition to colonialism and neocolonialism fostered by the former metropolises and by the United States. The foundations of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) were also laid there, which did not prevent subsequent internal discrepancies and contradictions regarding this matter.

A question arises here: Will Bandung be a relevant option when considering new forms of governance and exploring new paths in search of a fairer redistribution of power within the framework of an international order in crisis, where the multilateralism expressed in the UN system is under permanent and persistent attack from one of its main creators, the U.S., now aligned under the figure of Trump?

For Jaura, there are well-founded reasons for hope that this can happen, because, in his judgment, "The Global South is no longer asking to be included. It is already central." And he immediately notes that we are witnessing what he calls a "fractured multilateralism," explaining the scope of this concept:

> The "rules-based international order" is often invoked, but it is increasingly less believed in, especially by those who have long been excluded from making those rules. Southern nations point to its selective application:
>
> - International law is defended in Ukraine but ignored in Gaza.
> - Climate promises are made but not kept.
> - Debt relief is promised but indefinitely delayed.

In any case, and even assuming that the "Global South" identity is still diffuse and vague one, which undoubtedly needs to be the subject of new and more refined debates that allow its contours to be precisely delineated and defined, in light of its contradictions and also its potential, it is quite clear that a re-emergence of the "spirit of Bandung" is an encouraging and feasible alternative for attempting to rebalance the chessboard from the perspective of countries with fewer resources and attributes of power. And that there is a great deal of latent energy subsumed within it.

[9] See the official text of the Final Declaration of Bandung, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in 1955, and UN archives of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that reproduce this foundational document. In texts based on non-official sources (including Wikipedia), some authors speak of Twelve Principles, but it is empirically proven that there are Ten, as reaffirmed by Wright, McTurnan Kahin, and Acharya in their research and studies on the subject.

POINT 5. THE "DEFEAT OF THE WEST" IN AN ANOMIC AND DEMOLISHING WORLD

The international system, Jaura explains in turn, is "fraying" and amid a noticeable collapse. "Europe preached universality, but now it confronts its own partiality," he adds.

The German historian Andreas Rödder expresses it bluntly: "Europe's biggest illusion has been to mistake its history for that of the world." Global history has no center; it is a choreography of perspectives. Europe's problem is not a lack of values, but inconsistency in their application:

- It defends human rights but exports weapons.
- It promotes democracy but ignores occupations and genocide in Gaza.
- It advocates for the ecological transition but externalizes emissions.

More harshly and with fewer reservations when issuing sweeping definitions, Emmanuel Todd —a French sociologist widely respected after having anticipated the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1976, fifteen years before its realization[10]— speaks of "The Defeat of the West," the title of his book published in France by Gallimard in January 2024. Todd's central thesis, in tight synthesis, is as follows:

- The West is not being defeated by Russia or China but is self-destructing from within. The Ukraine war (a trigger factor for already ongoing trends, not the cause, but the "acid" developing liquid that exposes and brings to light the terminal crisis of the Western bloc (U.S. + Europe + Israel + regional allies)), while Putin's Russia —no longer communist but nationalist and reclaiming its wounded national pride— emerges stabilized, and the "Rest of the World" (i.e., India, Brazil, Africa, important sectors of the Islamic world, and the so-called Third World...) definitively move away from the until-yesterday hegemonic pole.

- The collapse of the USSR in 1991 created a planetary power vacuum that absorbed, as if it were a dizzying "black hole," an already decadent West (since the mid-1970s, via the oil shock and defeat in Vietnam), paving the way for the brief "unipolar moment" of the United States, as qualified by Charles Krauthammer in a 1990/1991 Foreign Affairs article. Thus, instead of trying to consolidate its dominance over vast sectors and zones of the planet, the "Collective West" began a paradoxical process of imperial expansion, with wars in Iraq, Libya, and the enlargement of NATO, seeking to encircle Moscow and then Beijing, while its essential core and the drivers and foundations that sustained its power began to suffer an irreversible process of corrosion[11].

[10] At only 25, Todd analyzed demographic indicators (especially the extremely high infant mortality rate in the USSR, which the regime concealed) and concluded that the Soviet system was already a "decomposing corpse" and that its collapse was inevitable and imminent. He predicted that the USSR would disappear within 10 to 20 years, and his forecast proved correct, in turn outperforming Western intelligence services that failed to foresee this abrupt fall.

[11] According to Todd, the four main drivers or deep causes of the Western collapse are: i) the disappearance of Protestantism and religious practice, in general, as a civilizational driver, adhesive, and support for classic Western capitalism; ii) liberal and oligarchic nihilism leading to extreme individualism and an elite that no longer

Along with this —and this is our own observation, not Todd's— a maneuver of “co-optation” and attempted seduction of China was promoted, with its inclusion into the WTO in 2001. The expectation (erroneous, as we have seen) of important pillars of the US establishment was that the liberalization of Chinese productive forces carried out by Deng Xiaoping since 1978 with the Reform and Opening-Up process —where “the animal spirits of the market” were unleashed, to use the Keynesian metaphor, but completely controlled by the State and the Chinese Communist Party— would lead the country's political system to transform into an unprecedented and sophisticated variant of, at most, a “State Monopoly Capitalism.” Or a similar, assimilable model, ultimately akin to Western-style capitalism.

As is known, this prediction was never fulfilled, as Beijing persists diligently and with firm will (until further notice) in the task of developing a “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”.

believes in anything except maintaining its privileges; iii) stagnation of the educational system and the dissolution of shared value systems associated with the first factor mentioned; iv) deindustrialization and the end of real productivity and industry at the hands of the financialization of the economy and the excessive pursuit of profit. In contrast, Russia, a “conservative nation-state” with a powerful war industry, in his view, can resist the coordinated onslaughts of this world in open decline.

POINT 6. THE ERA OF A NON-HEGEMONIC WORLD ORDER OR A FRAGMENTED AND FRAGILE HEGEMONY

For the development of this conceptualization, we have relied on the idea defined by the Argentine author Juan Gabriel Tokatlian that we are operating within the framework of what he calls a "non-hegemonic world order." That is, an expanded international system in which no State, country, or coalition of countries can currently exercise or develop "a capacity for full and universal hegemony." Instead, we are embedded within the framing of a fragmented and fragile global hegemony, with precarious balances and a state of permanent reconfiguration.

In summary, what are his postulates?

- Neither the United States retains the capacity, willingness, or disposition to exercise an extended global hegemony like in the post-Cold War era.

- Nor does China (or any other emerging power) yet have the capacity or the intention to assume a full and universal hegemony.

- Instead, there are fragmented, partial, localized, and thematic hegemonies (for example, the U.S. may be dominant in certain adjacent —or culturally/historically close—geographical regions or in specific topics like financial technology and semiconductors, while China is dominant in supply chains for highly specialized goods (e.g., in the electric vehicle sector, and in the specific area of robotization, Artificial Intelligence, and other cutting-edge technologies), or in geographically proximate areas like Eurasia or East Asia (in both cases, not entirely) and certain areas of the Asia-Pacific macro-region[12].

- The result is a more complex international system, overburdened with disagreements, frictions, vulnerabilities, dangers, and contradictions (and, therefore, more exposed to short circuits and localized "fires"), with a greater dispersal and fragmentation of power, and without the apparent existence —at least so far— of a clear and determining central "ordering" vector.

According to Tokatlian's viewpoint, within this non-hegemonic world order, hegemonies would be divided into two main blocs or fields of action: Thematic Hegemonies and Localized or Regional Hegemonies. He provides examples that we will briefly mention.

[12] Although the official Chinese narrative denies any hegemonic intention on its part and at most admits that it aims to achieve a kind of regional leadership or preponderance in Asia as its maximum objective for the coming times, this "gentle prevalence" (to call it something) would not mean imposing a kind of "vassalage" or discriminatory subordination on the other countries in its proximate space, in the classic Western style. In this sense, it would be much more consistent with its history and millennial tradition in foreign policy to seek for its neighbors to merely recognize the gravitational force exerted by the rejuvenated "Empire of the Center"—which is no longer an Empire, of course—and which would thus reproduce, in an "updated" form and with new, more balanced and fairer logics, the tributary system characteristic of the ancient dynasties.

Thematic Global Hegemonies

- United States in Financial Technology and the Monetary System. The U.S. maintains almost absolute control over exchanges with the dollar as the global reserve currency, the SWIFT system (dominant so far in monetary transfers), and financial sanctions, which allows it to "suffocate" entire economies without firing a single shot (a clear example: sanctions against Russia or Iran).

- United States and Western Allies in Partial Digital Governance and Norms. Dominance in the predominant and most widely used standards on the global internet (although China is advancing rapidly in this field with its "Great Firewall" or technological wall, and alternatives like WeChat or TikTok —modern platforms that expand beyond its national borders and could expand under different modalities).

- China in Global Supply Chains and Manufacturing. It controls the production of rare earths and other strategic minerals, electric vehicles, long-life batteries, solar panels, and a large part of mass consumer electronics. "The world depends on China to manufacture, but China depends on the world to sell." This illustrates the evident interdependence that, until now, prevents a comprehensive decoupling between the Chinese economy and those of Western powers.

- China in Global Infrastructure and the Fight Against Climate Change. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China leads the construction of ports, railways, and 5G/6G networks in dozens of countries. That is, it is at the forefront of physical and digital infrastructure. It has also made great efforts to reduce its footprint regarding the emission of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases (GHGs), the main cause of global warming and climate change, by developing renewable, clean, and "green" energy.

Localized or Regional Hegemonies

- United States in the Western Hemisphere. It maintains overwhelming influence in Latin America and the Caribbean (although eroded in some countries like Cuba, Venezuela, or Nicaragua, and often questioned by Brazil, in its role as a rising middle power and regional leader in the South American space).

- China in the Indo-Pacific and East Asia. Economic and increasingly military dominance in the South China Sea, with artificial islands, the development of an emerging naval power, and control of key maritime routes[13].

[13] The String of Pearls Strategy (in Chinese 珍珠链战略) is the name that geopolitical analysts (mainly American and Indian) give to the set of port facilities and bases that China has been developing or financing since the late 1990s in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The objective, according to this interpretation, is to create a chain of "pearls" (ports and support points) that allow the Chinese Navy to: i) protect its maritime energy and trade routes (80–85% of Chinese oil passes through the Strait of Malacca); ii) project naval power far from its shores; and iii) in case of open conflict, be able to control and safeguard the maritime routes of its rivals (especially India and the U.S.).

In short, for Tokatlian, the world no longer has a “universal hegemonic power,” neither one as defined as the United States in the post-1991 era (the date of the Soviet Union's self-dissolution) nor a relatively clear and defined bipolarity like that which existed during much of the Cold War. Instead, there are multiple overlapping and contradictory hegemonies that generate constant friction, greater unpredictability, and a high risk of localized or thematic conflicts (cyberattacks, trade wars, hybrid wars, disputes over critical resources, etc.).

This is the definitive and determining feature, in his analytical view, of the current chaotic (dis)order international, amidst a unstructured landscape lacking minimal rules or ordering patterns[14].

[14] The irrelevance of the United Nations, including the Security Council, which was created to act as a kind of multinational “fire brigade” that ensured international peace and security by developing spaces for convergence and consensus “among different” and even rivals, however reduced these have been lately, is the most patent expression of the decline of the UN system as a mechanism for control, appeasement, and conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

What do we propose on our part? From a Latin American perspective, and given the fact that, while the minute hands of the clock of history do not allow countdowns, it is possible to take as virtuous reference models certain examples of political articulation and coordination that, in the past, and regardless of their concrete results or fruits, elevated the capacity for leverage, influence, and incidence of their member countries within a determined historical conjuncture.

Amidst a context of acute Cold War and with an active decolonization process underway that redesigned the geopolitical map of the globe, especially after the independence of India (1947) and the emergence of "New China" led by Mao Zedong (1949) —to which tectonic changes of all kinds in the former European colonies of Africa are added— the Bandung Conference in Indonesia gave a more potent voice to sectors traditionally excluded from the agreements that laid the foundations of the "post-Yalta" world, which broadly posited a rigidly bipolar scenario, ordered under the axis of the East-West struggle.

The LAC subregion —always within that framework, and to follow somewhat literally Wallerstein's conceptualization of the "world-system," which serves as the theoretical framework for this work— played an ambivalent and ambiguous role within the overall landscape of the global arena. Indeed, on the one hand, on the geopolitical and military level, it was inserted without exception into the hemispheric security scheme dominated by the United States[15], and, on the other hand, on the economic level, it could be situated in oscillating positions within the periphery and semi-periphery of the axial division of labor on a global scale[16].

It was therefore neither easy nor admissible, in that contextual framework, to attend a meeting convened by Nasser, Sukarno, Nehru, and Zhou Enlai. But today it seems not only plausible but also urgent and necessary to return to the "spirit of Bandung," as is proposed today from different angles and theoretical developments that are gaining space within the debate of International Relations as a discipline, to address new and enormous challenges. In this sense, it suffices to mention the theses of Acharya (2014) regarding a "Multiplex World," and those of Fortín, Heine, and Ominami (2020, 2021) concerning "Active Non-Alignment"[17], to account for the existence of currents of thought that invite reflection on a matter of pressing timeliness. From different approaches, and amidst a discussion that is growing and expanding toward new visions, we are exhorted, first, to discover the structural flaws and failures of the global governance system that rules us today.

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[15] The clearest demonstration of this assertion is the signing of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR, by its Spanish acronym), also known as the Rio Pact, signed in Rio de Janeiro on September 2, 1947.

[16] Countries like Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, with relatively strong industrial sectors already in the process of consolidation, were certainly not the same, from the point of view of their economic and productive structure, as Haiti or other Central American and Caribbean nations that at that time were practically condemned to the monoculture of certain primary products.

[17] Amitav Acharya set the conceptual framework for his "Multiplex World" theory in The End of American World Order, published in 2014. The term multiplex refers to a cinema with multiple screens; a metaphor he uses to reject other habitual labels such as a multipolar world. Fortín, Heine, and Ominami wrote a text titled "Latin America: Non-Alignment and the Second Cold War" (published in mid-2020 in Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica). A year later, they consolidated their ideas in a book, Active Non-Alignment and Latin America: A Doctrine for the New Century (2021).

And, from there, an intellectual and programmatic provocation emerges that challenges us and encourages us to consider the possibility of rebuilding, in the absence of new options or alternatives, a classic multilateral system that could be built —since nothing is ruled out in advance— on the same broad foundations as the neo-Westphalian system established at Bretton Woods in 1944.

That is, with a minimal but authentic dose of respect and sovereignty for all nations involved, be they large or small, central or peripheral, developed and underdeveloped, and regardless of their position or status on the scale of world power distribution.

All of this with the objective of drastically and definitively eliminating the logic of the "law of the jungle" currently prevailing, where a single actor, the United States, feels entitled to impose its rules on the entire world, guided by a misunderstood Hobbesian spirit, since it would be —as Barack Obama once said, paraphrasing former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright—"an indispensable nation"[18] and, consequently, exceptional.

[18] Speech before the West Point Military Academy by then-US President Barack Obama, on May 28, 2014.

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