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A NOTE ON THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF THE «POST-POST-COLD WAR»<sup>1</sup>

I found the very interesting and topical reports on Russia in global politics of the post-post-Cold War age presented by Professors Alexei Miller and Fyodor Lukyanov both intellectually rich and rewarding and extremely thought-provoking<sup>2</sup>.

As I study and teach Contemporary History and Global History, however, my professional interest – so to say – has been chiefly attracted by the picture of the present world-historical trend in international affairs within which they discuss Russia's predicament in the twenty first century.

According to them, after the bipolarism of the Cold War, and after the hegemonic universalism pursued by the United States and the West during the quarter of a century following the demise of the Soviet Union, we've just entered – in the last decade or so – in a transitional age whose main distinguishing feature is the emergence or the reemergence of a pluralist world-system of sovereign States.

In this new epoch the chance to reach a stable world order and some sort of international government of such global issues as international migrations, environmental problems etc., will mainly depend, once again, on the establishment of a constantly shifting balance among a group of Great Powers and the full operativity of a «Concert» between them.

This approach presents a number of implications such as, for example, a decisive shift towards a more realist paradigm in the treatment of international affairs and the renunciation to more idealist notions of a viable world order (such as those centered on

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution to the International Seminar *Russia in the Global Politics of the 21st Century: Between Europe and Asia*, held by Professors Alexei Miller and Fyodor Lukyanov at the Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche of the University of Naples Federico II on June 16, 2017 (see also <https://www.iris.unina.it/handle/11588/694614>).

<sup>2</sup> *Detachment Instead of Confrontation: Post-European Russia in Search of Self-Sufficiency*, 2016 ([http://www.kreisky-forum.org/dataall/Report\\_Post-EuropeanRussia.pdf](http://www.kreisky-forum.org/dataall/Report_Post-EuropeanRussia.pdf)), *Restraint Instead of Assertiveness: Russia and a New Era in World Politics*, 2017 ([http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/miller\\_lukyanov\\_report\\_2017.pdf](http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/miller_lukyanov_report_2017.pdf)).

international organizations, which maintain a strong appeal in large sectors of Italian political culture among whose ranks I number myself).

In a sense, however, the diagnosis advanced by Professors Miller and Lukyanov could be regarded as an optimistic one because, if we accept their premises, we may be on the verge of a prolonged «Time of troubles» (Arnold J. Toynbee borrowed this expression from Russian history to indicate the stage following the «breakdown» of a civilization and preceding the advent of a «universal state»), instead of the restoration on a global scale of a post-Westphalian or neo-Rankean order.

To be sure, Professors Miller and Lukyanov are very far from neglecting the risks inherent in the present drive towards disintegration and international anarchy. Their second report, in particular, shows signs of a growing anxiety, which bring them – it seems to me – to adopt a more constructivist stance and to recover even the notion of a «common good» in world affair which could and should discipline the behaviour of the international actors (including Russia) in their mutual dealings.

So the obvious question arises: how to conceive this «common good»? In a merely negative and realistic sense – as the function, for example, of the threat of a global catastrophe, like in so many disaster movies? Or in a positive and idealistic sense too – as the function, for example, of a cultural convergence of world societies made possible by the intensification of global interactions among them?