**Non-Western Peacekeeping**

**as a Factor of a Multipolar World:**

**Outlines of Research Program**[[1]](#footnote-1)

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***Abstract.*** *The authors of this paper present the contours of a research program on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, representing the interests of Non-Western countries (the world majority). The article is based on both individual developments of its expert authors in the theory and practice of peacekeeping, international law and development cooperation, as well as on generalized conclusions of eight international workshops on Non-Western peacekeeping, held by the Department of Theory and History of International Relations of the RUDN University in 2020–2021 with the participation of leading Russian and international experts. Particular attention is paid to the current moment in international peacekeeping associated with the “power transit” (from the United States to China, and more broadly, from the West to the Non-West) and the power vacuum observed in a number of regions. Conclusions are drawn about the crisis of humanitarian interventions and the system of liberal peacekeeping in general. At the same time, the remaining instruments of Western structural power in the field of peacekeeping are examined in detail, covering both personnel representation in the UN and the practice of ‘penholding’, as well as the discursive hegemony of the “Collective West”. The article concludes that Non-Western countries have a significant influence on the formation of international norms in the field of peacekeeping (rule-changers), but so far do not act as norm-setting actors in world politics (rule-makers).*

***Keywords:*** *peacekeeping, Non-Western IR, theory of peacekeeping, UN, reforms, post-Western world, new bipolarity, multipolarity, conflicts, peacekeeping operations (PKOs)*

INTRODUCTION

As is well known, the state has a monopoly on violence within its borders, which is exercised on its behalf by the national security structures. In the existing system of international relations, formed after World War II, according to Article 24 of the UN Charter, the Security Council (SC) has “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” by the UN members[[2]](#footnote-2). The UNSC, in turn, authorizes peacekeeping operations, which are designed to eliminate threats to international security.

Peacekeeping does not exist on its own, in a vacuum, but is an instrument of collective supranational power politics, whose objectives are determined by the dominant perceptions of challenges and threats to international security (Paris, 2023). The permanent members of the UN Security Council play an important role in shaping these perceptions, but the resulting vector depends on the specific balance of power on the world stage at a particular moment in time.

The 1990s and 2000s saw the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the erosion of the system of representation of the interests of Non-Western countries in the UN, which make up the world’s majority, and the dismantling of the system of strategic stability agreements. NATO as a structural force of the “Collective West” in the security sphere [Strange 2004: 45–63] acquired a quasi-global character. During the “unipolar moment” [Krauthammer 1990], the “Collective West”, having gained a temporary power advantage, used it to promote its values and perceptions of peacekeeping, distorting its original nature, which led to a "political and legal aberration of international peacekeeping" [Shamarov 2020].

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PEACEKEEPING IN THE PERIOD OF “POWER TRANSIT”

1990–2000s became a period of expansion of liberal interventionism in international peacekeeping and peacebuilding, when entire states and even regions were reformatted according to Western “patterns”. UN peacekeeping budgets and personnel peaked by 2012. No new major peacekeeping operations have been announced since 2014 [Dunton et al. 2023: 217]. As a multipolar world emerged, humanitarian interventions were carried out “with increasing difficulty” each time (the Libyan crisis was an important turning point), until they finally stalled in Syria in the mid-2010s.

In response to the support of the “Collective West” for the anti-Assad coalition, Non-Western countries began to support the government of B. Assad, which led to a proxy war, a phenomenon typical of the Cold War period.

Paradoxically, but within the framework of the Western-centric world, the role of regional organizations of the “Global South” is primarily to restrain the regional hegemon from spreading its influence, including military power, in the region. In addition, in Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, one after another, there are largely conflicting provisions *g* (“non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another”) and *h* (“the right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity”)[[3]](#footnote-3). In the long term, as the “power transit” progresses, it is expected that not only individual countries will move into the orbit of influence of the Non-West, but also a number of regional organizations of the Global South.

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VESTIGES OF LIBERAL PEACEKEEPING

Despite the decline of its influence in the global economy, less obviously, in world politics, the “Collective West” still retains the key levers for managing international peacekeeping. At first glance, this is not so obvious, since from a formal point of view, for example, the number of citizens of the Russian Federation and a number of other Non-Western countries among UN officials is more than sufficient (the Russian Federation is traditionally among the countries that are “over-represented” in the UN).

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HOW TO RETURN PEACEKEEPING TO ITS ORIGINAL MEANING?

The systematic violation of the basic principles and norms of the UN Charter and of peacekeeping, the tendency towards military solutions to the problems of mass violence, and the decline in the effectiveness of conflict resolution suggest that UN peacekeeping is experiencing an existential crisis, losing its direction and true meaning, and is at a crossroads.

Ubuntu assumes that a person exists only in relation to others. During the Russian President's meeting with African leaders in July 2023, V.V. Putin cited an African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”[[4]](#footnote-4).

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At the stage of “power transit” (the transition of world political and economic influence from the West to the Non-West), there is a crisis of the Western-centric model of international peacekeeping, despite the fact that the countries of the “Collective West” still possess a whole arsenal of instruments of influence in the UN system, as well as discursive hegemony. In this context, it is increasingly important to conceptualize Non-Western approaches to peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the context of building a multipolar world. Based on the cultural, political, and linguistic differences between states and regions, it is necessary to further elaborate the terminology of peacekeeping, based on international principles and norms enshrined in the UN Charter.

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**Незападное миротворчество**

**как фактор многополярного мира:**

**контуры исследовательской программы**[[5]](#footnote-5)

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***Аннотация:*** *Авторами представлены контуры исследовательской программы по миротворчеству и миростроительству, представляющей интересы незападных стран (мирового большинства). В основу статьи легли как отдельные наработки ее авторов - экспертов в области теории и практики миротворчества, международного права и международной помощи, так и обобщенные выводы восьми научных семинаров по незападному миротворчеству, проведенные кафедрой теории и истории международных отношений РУДН в 2020–2021 гг. с участием российских и ведущих международных экспертов. Особое внимание в работе уделяется текущему моменту в международном миротворчестве, связанному с «властным транзитом» (от США к КНР, и шире - от Запада к не-Западу) и силовым вакуумом, который наблюдается в ряде регионов мира. Делаются выводы о кризисе гуманитарных интервенций и системы «либерального миротворчества» в целом. Вместе с тем подробно рассматриваются сохраняющиеся инструменты западной структурной власти в области миротворчества, охватывающие как кадровое представительство в ООН и практику «кураторства» (penholding), так и дискурсивную гегемонию «коллективного Запада». Исследуются основные направления развития незападного академического дискурса в сфере миротворчества и миростроительства в контексте построения многополярного мира. Сделан акцент на проблематике региональных систем прав человека в контексте защиты гражданского населения и постконфликтного миростроительства. Авторы приходят к выводу, что незападные страны сегодня существенно влияют на формирование международных норм в сфере миротворчества (rule-changers), но пока не выступают в роли нормоустанавливающих акторов мировой политики (rule-makers).*

***Ключевые слова:*** *миротворчество, незападные ТМО, теория миротворчества, ООН, реформы, постзападный мир, новая биполярность, многополярность, конфликты, операции по поддержанию мира, ОПМ*

1. The article was prepared as part of the activities of RUDN Center for Applied Analysis of International Transformations within the framework of the RUDN University Grant Support Program 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. United Nations Charter (full text), 1945. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text (accessed 21.08.2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000. https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact\_en.pdf (accessed 21.08.2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Putin characterized his vision of developing relations with Africa with an African proverb. *ТАSS*, 27.07.2023. (In Russ.). https://tass.ru/politika/18386701?ysclid=llsb2ur0cv430400808 (accessed 27.08.2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cтатья была подготовлена Центром прикладного анализа международных трансформаций РУДН в рамках Программы грантовой поддержки РУДН 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)