

## THE NOTION AND ORIGINS OF WORLD POLITICS

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### *Abstract*

World politics – how often do we use, read, or hear this expression every day? Do we know what it really means? Do we know since when can we actually talk about world politics? This study seeks to answer these questions from a new point of view in many ways. The central claim, said to be deconstructive by the traditional political theory, is that the concept of world politics – in contrast to a significant part of the modern political register and vocabulary – does not come from the classical Greek political philosophy, but it appeared much later in political thinking.

The study discusses the concept in the context of political theory, history of law and of philosophy.

*Keywords:* world politics – antiquity – Seven Years' war – political balance – history of law – systems of regulation – history of philosophy – 18<sup>th</sup> century – new worldview

### *OUTLINE OF ARTICLE*

- 1) Did the antique world have a concept of world politics?
- 2) Possibilities and limits of defining the concept of world politics.
- 3) Paradoxes describing the concept of world politics.
- 4) Since when can we talk about world politics?
- 5) The prerequisites of the creation of the concept regarding legal and philosophical history.
- 6) The concept of world politics in the new worldview of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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*Facile fertur quod omnibus commune est*

Troubled times encourage the best minds to increased meditation, wrote Raymond Aron<sup>1</sup>. He is most probably right. If it were not so, our history of political theories would be deprived of Plato's *Politeia*, Aristotle's *Politica*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and obviously also Spinoza's *Tractatus*, Montesquieu's, Rousseau's, or even Locke's works. With a slight exaggeration, we could even say that we would be deprived of the most determining political-theoretical works. On the other hand, if there is a connection between the age and the significant works - which, in many cases have been truly influential for centuries – then the previous century and the one that has, in historical terms, only just begun should be overabundant in *classical* political-theoretical works. But we know it is not so. We can say, without too much risk, that in the best case there are maybe a dozen twentieth-century philosophers who are worthy of becoming a part of the canon, which the thinkers above will be influential figures of for many-many years to come. Though, the twentieth century really did not lack riots, revolutions, wars that redefined boundaries, genocides, or genocidal ideologies.

What can the real reason be, then? Evidently, it must be the interplay of several sociological and learning-sociological factors. In connection with our topic, I would only like to point out two of these. One of them is the peculiar imponderability of our politically related notions. By this I mean that our notions in the fields of politics, international politics, and international law have changed much faster than theory, with its wide range of approaches, could have followed without delay. The notions - used by the practisers of the discipline, but rarely examined regarding their historical roots, and, frankly speaking, based on tacit

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<sup>1</sup> Aron, Raymond (1968) *Peace and War*. New York, Washington

agreement in the best case, but basically never reflected on - have developed consequently. One of these is the notion of world politics.

The other reason is that these notions, carrying political or not so political messages, have determinately become parts of our lives in the forms of symbols through the mass media. The schematic globe seen a dozen times daily on television behind the newsreader communicates just as clear a message to us as the politicians do, when they talk about “processes of world politics”. Whether we like it or not, our political mentality is primarily governed by symbols through pictures, colours, and shapes. We identify the colours in the flag of the Islamic revolution just as easily as we recognize the symbols of the UN or the NATO, the American eagle with its extended wings or the female figure holding a burning torch in her raised hand. These political notions, evident from the point of view of both politics and mass communication, seem to block the original meanings of these notions from our sight. This meaning, according to our modern methods at least, can only be found by the means of the political history of ideas. Namely, if very dig them out from under the layers of sediment deposited on them over the centuries.

Does this also hold true for the notion of world politics? Since when can we talk about it? What was meant by it *then*? Is the previous meaning still relevant to us? Below I will try to give a possibly only temporary answer, but hopefully one that can be developed further by others.

According to the Athenian Thucydides<sup>2</sup>, he wrote down the story of the Peloponnesian Wars in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. because he saw even at the very beginning that it will be longer and more brutal than any other war before. He drew this conclusion from the fact that both parties were at the height of their power when the fight broke out, therefore all the other Hellenic city-states joined one or the other immediately. This way the war meant the greatest trauma (*kinésis megisté ... egeneto / κίνησις μεγίστη ... ἐγένετο*) for the Greeks as well as the Barbarians, what is more, even for the larger part of humanity (*epi pleis ton anthrópon / ἐπίπλεῖτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον*)<sup>3</sup>.

A few decades earlier another historian, Herodotus, searching for the mythical origins of the Greek-Persian conflict, in spite of his storyteller attitude and his vivid imagination came to the cool conclusion that Greece’s relationship with Asia was ruined for once and for all when, after Helen was abducted, the Greeks led a military attack against Troy<sup>4</sup>. He claims, therefore, that the final and earliest cause of the much later Persian Wars, fought in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC., was the concentration of power among the Greek tribes and their ambitions to expand their authority. The much more pessimistic and therefore, from a political point of view, more realistic Thucydides, while reflecting on the Greek prehistory, supports this assumption in many ways.<sup>5</sup> The literary chronicler of the conflict, Aeschylus does not fail to note that this is no simple war, but a struggle of the size in which, with the leadership of their kings, “all the strong sons of Asia”<sup>6</sup> participated.

Concluding the major statements from above, an almost perfectly complete conceptual system is outlined before our eyes. It is very tempting to regard this conceptual system as a coherent *theory*. If we do so, we will immediately feel that the viewpoint that the ancient Greeks themselves were the first theoreticians of the notion of world politics is supportable. Another viewpoint, however, encourages us to reconsider this opinion thoroughly.

We must take into consideration the consensus, quietly forming after a long and barren dispute, according to which in the works of the Greek historians, including even the realist Thucydides, we cannot find political or even ethical theory in the philosophical sense at all.<sup>7</sup> Naturally, the author’s own values are outlined behind the narrated story, but these do not combine into a unified theory, or if they do, only to the extent where the notion of the Greek *historia* (*ἱστορίη*) includes theoretical implications. In other words, even the most daring interpretation can only talk about a kind of implicit theory.<sup>8</sup> Accepting this view alone does not solve all our problems. A further, let’s admit, disturbing fact still requires explanation. How is it possible that, regardless of theory, the situation described by the two historians reminds us, in many ways, of the phenomena called *world political* by the media without further restrictions, sometimes several times a day and with reference to different parts of the world?

Therefore, to understand the history of our own usage of political-theoretical notions we must reckon with the nature and limitations of the antique view that lacks theory. The next part of this inquiry will also reveal

<sup>2</sup> See Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Chapter I, 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Chapter I, 1.2.

<sup>4</sup> See Herodotus *Histories* Chapter I, 4.

<sup>5</sup> See Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Chapter I, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Aeschylus *Agamemnon*??

<sup>7</sup> See Jebb, R. C. (1907). *Speeches of Thucydides. In Essays and Addresses* (pp. 409). Cambridge

<sup>8</sup> See Shorey, P. (1893). *On Implicit Ethics and Psychology of Thucydides*. Transactions of the American Philological Association 24, 66.

– at least regarding the notion of world politics – what distinguishes our modern usage and thinking from that of our ancient ancestors.

The first and maybe most important question is the question of geographical, or rather *geopolitical self-identification*. It is a cliché even for schoolchildren that the sciences of geography and astronomy were quite developed in the ancient Hellenistic world.<sup>9</sup> It is not so well known, though, that notable fault lines ran behind this seemingly unified body of knowledge. For example, Eratosthenes, a universal talent, who lived at the turn of the third and second centuries B.C., had drawn a very intriguing world map. This map was much later, in the first century B.C. enthusiastically defended by Strabo against Hipparchus's charges. These old, and seemingly (at least to a political thinker) uninteresting cultural-historical debates are only important for us when we look at Strabo's map. One of the edges lies on today's Iberian Peninsula. In the south and the east it contains a part of Northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The other edge is (according to the Ninth Book) somewhere in India. Looking at it another way, it shows the lands from Persia to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Red Sea to Northern Africa, including Egypt, Libya, Carthage, Ethiopia, Numidia, and Cyrene. Eratosthenes did not believe it contained *everything*, as he calculated the size of the Earth with surprising accuracy. Probably Strabo did not believe that either, but this is a question of the history of sciences, therefore it does not belong to our topic.

The only important fact for us, looking at Strabo's map, is that the Greek archipelago lay, though not with mathematic accuracy, at the *centre* of all of the known world regarding the contrast, much emphasized by Herodotus<sup>10</sup>, between the Hellenistic and barbarian cultural regions that was so important for the Greek people. Therefore it played a significant role in the political self-determination of the Greeks that they saw themselves as a kind of geopolitical centre. From this it logically follows that they saw the military conflicts between themselves and the Persians (Herodotus), and between the Greek city-states as conflicts of universal proportions and significance. Though they were undoubtedly mistaken in judging their own importance, their method somewhat resembles what we generally call world political connections.

On the other hand, a thorough investigation of the second problem will convince us that – no matter how they saw themselves – not even their boldest theory can be regarded as world political in the modern sense of the word, since their idea of *state* (*Πολιτεία*) contradicts this. The much later independent Greek kingdom and later republic was, in the ancient times, divided into a number of city-states or poleis which exercised different forms of government and had different standards of living. The political and theoretical consequence of this is that in its golden age (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.), not even in his most daring utopia of political theory did Plato go any further than creating the ideal *polis* (*πόλις*). The polis, as a form of settlement, naturally influenced political theory with its limited size. Its determining element was the community of inhabitants (*koinónia /κοινωνία*). This alone does not mean that there is no difference between a "large household" and a "small state"<sup>11</sup>, said Aristotle. But it does mean that for him the main distinction between states was not, in priority, between an empire, representing a larger unit, and the smaller polis, but between the different forms of government exercised by the certain *poleis*. This is, from the other side, supported by the fact that for Aristotle humans were by definition *dzoón politikon* (*ζῷον πολιτικόν*) or beings qualified for life in a state<sup>12</sup> and as such cannot avoid living in a kind of governmental community.

From this it follows that the ancient Greek political philosophical thinking was bound to its form of governmental or administrative system, the *polis* in the first place. For a long time, but at least until the age of stoicism, they could not and probably did not mean to surpass this philosophy. This peculiar polis-centred attitude of their thinking makes the creation of any kind of world political theory impossible. This did not, however, keep them from playing an important world political role at the time in the form of alliances made up of their unique political units, the *polis*.

The third factor that prevents us from finding the beginnings of world political thinking in the antiquity is connected with their concepts of law. This is probably the point where, in spite of our generally positive attitude towards the Greek heritage, our thinking differs mostly from that of our antique ancestors. It is a frequently mentioned but dusty cliché that the Greeks attached a great significance to the law. The fact that sometimes we cannot see all the nuances of this connection is due to two historical theoretical factors. The first is that our modern European legal thinking was, if not exclusively, but predominantly influenced by not the Greek, but the Roman legal system, more specifically the civil law. The other factor is that the ancient Greek concept of law was very different from ours. The deeply law-abiding attitude of the Greek people was

<sup>9</sup> See Neugebauer, O. (1983). *Astronomy and History* (pp. 273-381) Springer

<sup>10</sup> See Herodotus *Histories* Chapter I, 213.

<sup>11</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Part 1.

<sup>12</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Part 2.

based on a distinctive sacrality very difficult to grasp for our modern European thinking even from a historical approach. If we open Plutarch's biographies, it is clear that the mythical legislators, the founders of legal systems drew the legitimacy of their laws upon a divine source in one way or another. Likewise the laws of the Spartan Lycurgus came from Apollo<sup>13</sup>; Theseus, the lawgiver of Athens was, in fact, related to one of the half-gods<sup>14</sup>; just like the Cretan Minos, famous for his wisdom, who was directly connected to the world of the gods through Zeus himself.

This, however, was not only mythology, etiological legend for the Greeks. A much later speech of Demosthenes's is very clear on this: "The whole life of men, whether they dwell in a large state or a small one, is governed by the nature and by the laws (*phūsei, kai nomoi dioikeitai / φύσει, καὶ νόμοις διοικεῖται*). Of these nature is something irregular (*atakton / ἄτακτον*) and incalculable, and peculiar (*kat'andra idion ekhontos / κατ' ἄνδρα ἴδιον ἔχοντος*) to each individual; but the laws (*nomoi / νόμοι*) are something universal (*koinon / κοινόν*), definite (*tetagmenon / τεταγμένον*), and the same for all (*tauto pasin / τοῦτο πᾶσιν*)."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, simply following the nature begets wrong, while following the laws obviously begets right.<sup>15</sup> This should, logically be enough that the people would follow not the urges of nature, but the advice of the law. The speaker, on the other hand, says more than one argument appealing to common sense. He adds, that if not for this, than the people should follow the laws because they are the invention (*heurēma tōn theōn / εὑρημα τῶν θεῶν*) and gift (*dōron / δῶρον*) of the gods [i.e. for the people].<sup>16</sup>

The idea is not, as it seems typical by the ancient Greeks, without controversy. It is based on the tacit logical presupposition that any law that comes from the gods is necessarily just. The tragedians, especially Sophocles' bitter chorus songs reveal to us that the Greeks themselves were aware of this inner contradiction. Xenophon implies the same idea in his own naïve way, when he holds Socrates up as an example of a law-abiding *and* just person in his *Memorabilia*.<sup>17</sup> All of this, however, does not change the fact that the Greeks laid a great emphasis on the divine origins of the law. For them, the main problem of legal theory was that laws of divine origin can only be made general, at least until the appearance of Christianity, within the narrow bounds of a particular community. World political relations, on the other hand, cannot be settled free of conflict on the basis of particular legal systems, as Kant's plan about the everlasting peace will try to convince us centuries later.

A further, fourth important factor that prevented the ancient Greeks from conceiving the theory of world politics was the peculiar political relation their citizens had to their state. This leads to two further factors: the relationships of the free citizens and that of those without rights with their state. It is well known that the Greek city-states were not built on the basis of equal rights. Nevertheless, in the social classes that were characterized by equality before the law, the rights were exercised without differentiation. For example, free citizens, that is, equal members of the community could vote and be voted for many different kinds of offices except for a few posts requiring special expertise. In other words, the duties of citizens were not restricted to paying tax and performing the obligatory religious sacrifices but inevitably brought with them an obligation to participate actively in public life. Therefore, a citizen with full rights was not only a judge, member of the governing body, but also a soldier when necessary. The idea of representational democracy was never formulated, and was absolutely foreign and dubious to the whole of their political culture.

When we take into consideration, that office-holders were chosen for a limited amount of time, it is immediately clear why only a few families held the major offices in those famous and ever-mentioned fifty years that we call the golden age of the Athenian democracy. The state did not only regulate public life but also the life of its free citizens beyond public life to some extent. The way Aristotle formulates this is unmistakable "the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state."<sup>18</sup> A supplement to this says that justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice is the principle of order in political society.<sup>19</sup> This may even sound repelling regarding the values of modern representational democracy. However we must not forget that the structure of the state – in the

<sup>13</sup> See Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, Chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> See Plutarch, *Theseus*, Chapter 7.

<sup>15</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton* 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton* 16.

<sup>17</sup> Arendt, H. (2005) *The Promise of Politics*, New York, 5-40.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Part 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

case of free citizens at least – served not the oppression, but rather a kind of fulfilment of the individual within a community.

The polis was, in terms of structure, politics and social makeup, a political unit designed for autarky, which could mobilize its population necessary for protecting itself. Therefore, a polis community was arranged for self-support and not for achieving world political goals. This holds true, even if Crete or especially Sparta looked much more like a military than an agricultural state to the outsider. If it was so, then those economical urges, that caused conquest and consequently the creation of the complicated network of world politics by more modern state formations, must have been mostly unknown to the Greek city-states. The matters of market, trade, and business were, in terms of politics and law, completely uninteresting to them. One of Plato's paragraphs is very informative on the matter, in which to Socrates's question whether it is necessary to regulate the business deals made on the market and the collection of taxes in an ideal state, even Adeimantus, who otherwise represented radical views in most cases, gave a negative answer. He referred to the fact that honest and decent people should be able to deal with such matters among themselves without any legal interference.<sup>20</sup>

All of this confronts us with a peculiar, paradoxical situation. On the one hand it makes it clear why we cannot talk about world politics, not even in the colloquial sense of the word, in the Greek antiquity. On the other hand, it does not lessen the significance of their actions that reached beyond the boundaries of their restricted political world. Simplifying the matters somewhat, we could say that what the Greek historians describe to us as world-shaking events are, in reality, a broadening of the particular Greek worldview from their particular situation. This in itself, however, only tells us where not to look for the origins of world politics; but it gives us no clues as to the determination of the concept.

It seems that to define the notion of world politics, we should first logically define the notion of world. However, this question, although it seems evident, would divert us from the concept we are looking for; it would lead us into the fields of philosophy or even cosmology instead of political theory. I do not deny, on the contrary, I would like to prove later on that there is a close connection between our concepts about the world and our ideas about world politics. As for now, though, we should accept Q. Wright's simplest and classical concept, as the most general definition, as a starting point. According to him, world politics is the ever transforming unity of conditions, values, theories and attitudes, which non-stop transformation impacts the life of individuals, organizations and peoples.<sup>21</sup> Of course, when we ask the question to what degree or in what way is this field or relevance determined by nations, customs, ethics, public and sometimes private opinions; the limitations of this definition become clear immediately.

It is beyond doubt that the so defined concept of world politics may be influenced by individuals, human cultures, man-made organizations and gatherings; what is more, by human customs, motivations, instincts, values, and attitudes. Nor can we question that the factors above – we may only take values and attitudes – are much determined by the given culture; and because these, according to any serious ethnological study or experience, are extremely varied; no theory of "general human nature" can be founded on them. In other words, Wright's first appealing definition must be specified further.

This definition, however, has an undeniably invaluable advantage: its formalism. It does not set limits when we want to determine the circle of the subjects of world politics. Accepting the definition above, we may reckon among them single individuals as well as economical, authoritative, and political collective units. As a consequence, however, we apparently lose our grip on the philosophical definition of a subject of world politics. On the other hand, there are, according to my interpretation, some peculiar paradox-systems that complement one another and therefore define at least the major parameters of the area that we may identify as the realm of world politics. The fact that we experience the existence of these subjects every day in the news, so difficult to grasp using the tools of philosophy, can be regarded as the first such paradox. Though these subjects of world politics may change their appearance every second, they never even try to make us believe they do not exist.

It follows firstly that we must seek to find their true nature, not philosophically, but regarding their basic characteristics, in the mutual dependence of the real or potential, facts, expandable at will, that make them up. This peculiar interdependence does not only mean the philosophical indefinability of the concept of world politics, but it also describes the second paradox, namely the connection that any subject of world politics may always appear as an object, and, likewise, its object can always take the shape of the subject.

From all this a third paradox, determining the workings of world politics, also follows. Regarding their operation, the factors of world politics, regardless of whether we take individual or collective units, they

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<sup>20</sup> Plato, *Politeia* Part IV.

<sup>21</sup> Qui. Wright, *The International Relations*, New York, 1955, 491 sk.

meet the requirements of both receptivity and activity in every second of their existence. It is obvious that the ratification of this duality, namely the amount of freedom of world political individuality manifested in actual situations, is influenced by a number of external, especially geopolitical factors. From this the seemingly evident consequence follows, constantly emphasized by the mass media, that the main subjects of world politics are the world powers. As soon as we take a closer look on this notion, though, we find ourselves on shaky grounds in spite of its seeming clarity. Being a world power is not only a question of power potential, but it depends on whether this potential is recognized by others. From this we may draw two conclusions. Firstly, the concept, number, and nature of world political individualities is a subject to constant change. The second conclusion, connected with but deeper than the first, is that the world of world politics can be described by definition as a pluriverse shaped by a number of factors at the same time. The members of this pluriverse, according to what has been said, are in constant interaction. In other words, the essence of their operation is that they may get into associative or dissociative relations with one another at any time. However, this latter claim must be further specified.

This system of relations, though it undoubtedly includes, but cannot be narrowed down to the dichotomy of the world political actors' associative and dissociative relations. In addition to this duality, we must take into consideration that world politics is bound up with a number of other universal factors, most of them determined by its actors. One of these factors is the concept of global economy. It is probably not far from the truth to say that even some sanctions of international law, what more, the whole of international law is a universal factor determined by world political individualities.

All of this is only a reduced description, narrowed down to merely the most typical characteristics. It only gives a partial answer to the question how world politics actually works. If we regard the concept as an interaction between world political individualities, it seems self-evident to regard world politics itself as a kind of self-regulatory governing system based on constant feedback and self-correction. This cybernetic approach of the concept, popular from the 1960's, has been proved, by the since passed decades, difficult to justify in at least one aspect. After all, the cybernetic approach assumes that the director of the process, the *kybernētēs* has clearly defined goals regarding the result of the process, and completes the corrections on the basis of the feedback in order to reach these goals. However, the world political events of the last circa half century have proven this optimistic theory wrong.

On the other hand, the real case is that the actors of world politics assert their national interests through foreign policy while cooperating more or less with one another. This cooperation can naturally be multi-layered and its loosest form is technical cooperation. The limits of this cooperation are in every case determined by the international situation and the major circumstances in which it takes place.

If we want to trace the beginnings of the so defined concept of world politics, it becomes clear immediately that we are facing a historical-philosophical question ranging beyond the immediate scope of politics. It is the much debated question of the expansion of civilizations. As we have seen, the ancient Greek concept of politics, that has laid the foundations of our political vocabulary and philosophy, can by no means meet the expectations of the world political concept. Much the same can be stated about the great empires of antiquity, ranging over large territories, such as the Empire of Alexander the Great or even the Roman Empire. Yet it is undeniable that between the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 A.D.) and the discovery of America (1492) the western civilization had slowly but very persistently sought to expand its authority to the north and the west. A frequently mentioned and truly impressive example was Julius Caesar's military campaign against the Galls. From the other direction, the Eastern culture had no less pulling influence on the West, at least until the 4th century. Constantine's gesture of founding the capital city of the Eastern Empire was a nice symbolic example of this. Shortly, in the first few decades A.D. the most determining power of the time, the Roman Empire was living under a double pull. Of the two pulling powers, partly as a consequence of the East-West Schism the western-northern orientation became more and more influential, at least in the western part of Europe.

From a historical point of view it seems that the accumulation of this orientation undoubtedly took place as a consequence of the discovery of America which expanded the known world to an earlier unimaginable size. There is a plausible example, often supported by a clear and moderate argumentation, to regard this act as the beginning of the modern world politics. A consistent reconsideration, however, may tell us otherwise. The first problem with this periodic division is that it is based on an inverse prerequisite, usually faithfully admitted by its representatives.

The followers of this hypothesis start out from the fact that the geographical discoveries had a great impact on the whole of European culture, including politics, therefore world politics necessarily evolved at the same time. However, this "if-so" logic must be further specified. It would naturally be nonsensical to deny the importance of this influence. Yet its significance lies not in creating the concept of world politics,

but it creating the conceptual prerequisite of world politics: namely, the picture of a larger, much more spacious, a more graspable or even conquerable world. We must see that there have been diplomatic attempts to create a certain kind of world political space much earlier already. We need only think of the number of messengers sent out in the 13th and 14th centuries. Pope Innocent IV in 1243 sent Piano Carpini, while King Louis IX sent William of Rubruquis to the Tartars, and Abbot John of Montecorvino even became archbishop of Peking. From another direction, the activity of the explorers also helped the expansion of the scope of world politics, long before the discovery of America. The most famous of them, the Muslim Ibn Battuta, who had covered about 75000 miles in Asia and India in the 14th century, has left behind detailed recordings of his experiences among foreign nations and political cultures. We could naturally reckon Marco Polo here, who, as early as 1271, delivered realistic news to Europe about India, China and Persia that were only known from tales and myths before. His popular work, *The Travels of John Mandeville*, later translated into Latin and English, which appeared under a pseudonym between 1357 and 1371, is a very interesting example in cultural history. On the one hand it repeats some of the statements of his sources, but it also includes authentic descriptions about the world of the Middle-East.

All the same, the significance of the discovery of America must self-evidently be included in the process of the development of the world politics concept. It had, however, much more influence, in my view, on the economy, than on world politics directly. The discovery opened up markets of unimaginable size for Europe. The majority of European trade that had been taking place on the Mediterranean Sea was moved, slowly but unavoidably to the ocean. The traditional “thalistical change”, the shift of the focus of trade to oceanic trade resulted in a trade revolution.

All of this – and here we must correct those who exclusively regard the discovery of America as the beginning of world politics yet again – was also experienced in the other direction, towards the East. The Turkey or Levant Company and the Anglo-Moroccan alliance were established in 1581, the British East India Company in 1585, the Dutch East India Company in 1602, and with a considerable delay, the French also reformed their commercial activity towards the East in 1628. These are not, in spite of all appearance, merely bare fact of economic history. On the one hand, they show that a need for economical and, as a consequence, political cooperation, one of the traits that we attributed above to world politics, existed not only in connection with the American territories, but also the traditional trade routes. On these bases we may say without exaggeration that birth of the world politics concept took place under the influences of two opposing economic trends, the western markets newly opened by the discovery of America and the traditional eastern trade.

Obviously, this is only a general statement setting only the historical guidelines of the beginnings. The concept of world politics can only truly exist for us, when experience its first clear manifestation. The method for this in the field of political history is to define it by a *conflict* that meets the requirements set by the above described paradoxes.

This date, according to my interpretation is the time of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). The conflict that Churchill called, not without good reason, the first global war, had extended to the entire world except for Austria and its size required a cooperation of the world political actors never seen before. On land the war achieved little; Prussia, though after much struggle, could retain the rich Silesia that they had won in the War of Austrian Succession. The maritime effects of the war proved to be much more significant in the long term. The British Empire practically liquidated all the French colonies in America and the British also gained a leading role in the colonization of India through the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The most important consequence in this case was the development of a political balance that secured England leading role and lifted Prussia, thanks to Frederick II among others, among the great European powers.

If I were to connect the first manifestation of world politics to a historical event, I would much rather connect it to the Seven Years' War than to either the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the French Revolution, or even the entry of the United States into World War I.<sup>22</sup> I refer to the argument already emphasized by C. Frantz<sup>23</sup>, which says this was the very first war in the history of the modern Europe that ended in a common consent of the great powers, creating a completely new *status quo* in terms of world politics. In other words, it created *world* politics in the most literal sense.

This is of course a merely historical interpretation of the problem, but there is also a possible more abstract, more philosophical approach, through which we can find what other special factors may support our claim that the development of world politics should be placed around the time of the Seven Years' War. This approach can be explained in the terms of philosophy, history of sciences, or even more the history of law.

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<sup>22</sup> Barraclough, G. (1964). *An Introduction in the Contemporary History*. London, England.

<sup>23</sup> Frantz, C. (1859). *Untersuchungen über europäischen Gleichgewicht*. Berlin. 83 sk.

As the starting point we need only accept the fact, that the broadening horizons following the discovery of America walked hand in hand with another, just as complex process, the radical change of the way people saw the world. The history of sciences aspect of this process is well known from Copernicus to Galileo Galilei.

Another, a scarcely known aspect of this is revealed to us by the European comparative history of law. It is interesting that in the early medieval Europe the commercial law had a peculiarly insignificant role compared to the often informal feudal law of the landlords, usually based on customary law only. At the time of the fall of the Western Roman Empire, commercial law, though existed, had a much more limited system of ways than other branches of the feudal law did.<sup>24</sup> The driving force of the development of law was the unique situation that the fall of the Roman Empire did not in the least eliminate trade among the far points of the former empire. Not only the goods and the markets existed, but some, mainly the former Roman seaports enjoyed a relative prosperity. It is true, that the Frankish Kingdom did not, in contrast to Rome, have a large navy, but it was able to channel trade from the directions of Northern Europe, Arabia, and the Slavic regions as H. Pirenne says in his above mentioned work<sup>25</sup>. A further boost to the development of commercial law was the fact that agriculture went through a remarkably fast improvement in the 11th and 12th centuries. This latter process lead, naturally, to the strengthening of the merchant class and as a counter effect caused the differentiation of the urban law. Regarding its last consequence in the history of law, the legal development that helped the evolution of the world political approach can be traced back to the migration of the 11th-12th centuries into the city and the consequent strengthening of the merchant class and the development of the commercial law.

This process of legal history could have never taken place if not for the rediscovery of the Roman law that regulates commercial rights so minutely in the medieval European universities. True, it could not have taken place either if the Italian glossators strictly insisted on the principles laid down by the old Roman jurists. It is beyond doubt that neither the Roman civil law in general, nor the so called *ius gentium* was fit to regulate the 13th century trade, especially not the trade between different nations in its original form. Therefore the jurists of the time took the already existing *corpus* of Roman law and created an entirely new system of commercial law from it, just as they had done with the civil law as well. This legal development on the other side was also helped by practice. The merchants, organized into different guilds and other organisations protecting their interests, created their “own” practice-based law in the meantime.

This process has an aspect, important also with regard to the development of the world politics concept, which we can briefly describe as an extension of agreements/ pacts signed in certain situations. A well-documented example of this was drawn up on the island of Oléron at the Atlantic coasts of France in the mid-12th century, an agreement concerning the rules of shipping accepted not only by the Atlantic seaports, but also those lying on the coasts of the North Sea, including England. A new legal order, one equally applying to different nations was forming.

This new order, working simultaneously with and sometimes even contradicting the one created by jurists, but certainly supported by practice, also laid the foundations of a new world order in some senses. It did so mainly at the points where it overruled the traditional feudal legal system that often appeared to be completely incidental depending on the location. The most important new feature was the requirement of objectivity. This did not necessarily refer to the objectivity of the terms and conditions, for example that the contract was written down, but rather the demand that the authorities acting in commercial matters would proceed according to the beforehand determined and written rules irrespective of nationality.

A legal document showing this effort, the first English commercial code of law existed 150 years before the Seven Years' War, in 1622 already. It was the *Lex Mercatoria*, or the *Consuetudo vel Lex Mercatoria*, or the *Ancient Law Merchant*. Its author, Gerard Malynes clearly stated in it that the regulation of commercial matters is not the kings' or emperors' right, but the will of the nations pursuing commercial activity. Blackstone, in the mid-1700's, is even clearer on this, when he writes that trade must be regulated according to its own laws, laws based on the mutual agreement of each of the parties concerned.<sup>26</sup>

Looking at it this way, the world political attitude, mainly through commercial law, appears in European common knowledge much earlier than the concept of world politics does in the real political sense. We could even say that international trade and the development of markets reached a stage of recognizing the significance of world political, or at least supranational connections and also taking advantage of

<sup>24</sup> Pirenne, H. (1937). *Economic and Social History of Western Europe*. New York.

In general, see: Lopez, R.S. (1971). *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Age 950-1530*. New Jersey, Engelwood Cliffs. (especially Chapter 3)

<sup>25</sup> Pirenne, H. (1937). 48 sk.

<sup>26</sup> Blackstone, W. (1807). *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Vol I.(pp. 273), Portland.

possibilities in them. Starting from this point, the breakout of the Seven Years' War seems no more than a mere historical accident. The process preceding the development of the concept of world politics, namely the concentration of power at the sides of each of the combatting parties, is infinitely more important. The first war of world political significance is fought not by city-states, not by poleis, but by empires.

We must not forget another circumstance that is often pushed into the background. It is the complex social process, called supranationalization for lack of a better word, which started in the area of commerce and lead to the appearance of world politics supported by a number of changes in the history of science. Here, I mean mainly the change in the ways and efficiency in the transfer of knowledge. The world became comprehensible, describable, and conquerable commercially and politically, but also by ways of science.

The difference in time is striking. While an approach surpassing national particularity in the evolution of European civil law is demonstrated in the fields of trade and sometimes politics as early as the 13th century, such unity/ harmony of knowledge in natural and social sciences does not appear until the 17th century. This period was undoubtedly revolutionary age of the metamorphosis of knowledge transfer or, if you like, a kind of globalization of science.

This was when the earlier isolated scholars, rated and acknowledged only according to their individual achievements, started, mostly in the fields of natural sciences, a fervent cooperation knocking down the boundaries separating them, so to say. Looking at it this way it is not at all surprising that this period was the golden age of scientific schools. The earliest of these was the *Accademia del Cimento* founded in 1657 in Florence, sponsored by the Medici family and organized by Toricelli and Viviani. The *Royal Society of England* held meetings from 1645, but it was only acknowledged officially by Charles II in a decree issued in 1662. The French Academy of Sciences was formally founded by Louis XIV in 1666 at Charles Perrault's recommendation, but the scientific discussions preceding the laying the intellectual foundations for establishment of the Academy had begun much earlier here as well. By and large, the situation was also similar in Germany, though the Prussian Academy of Sciences (in Berlin) was established somewhat later, in 1700.

The fast and outstandingly efficient development of the institutional background enabled scholars to exchange their scientific results directly. As a consequence, a new world view containing the whole world was taking shape. Not only politics, but science, more specifically experimental natural science, not much preferred by the universities of the time and therefore restrained to the stages of scientific societies, learned to take possession of the world in its own ways.

Pericles' speech praising the *polis* of Athens was succeeded by a philosophy of power politics, of world politics; a way of thinking that sees the *whole* of the world as a possible theatre of politics. To this we are – *mutatis mutandis* – still subjects to in this part of Europe.

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Thank you for your kind collaboration. *Editor-in-Chief*.