

Katechon: On the Political and Theological Foundations of International Justice

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The paper examines the problems of international justice in its relation to one of the most significant concepts of Christian theology — the *katechon*. The main hypothesis of the article is that the *katechon* in international relations manifests itself as a balancing effect of a specific spatial order, expressed in the containment/transgression of forces aimed at the demarcation of “red lines”, and contributes to the displacement of the horizon for catastrophic events. In order to substantiate this hypothesis, a link has been drawn between the concept of “red lines” and the historically established international legal borders separating spheres of influence in world affairs and invariably expressing the idea of a threshold that separates order from chaos, whose transgression is perceived as a collapse of the established equilibrium. The “red lines” are related to the idea of international justice in three ways: as fixed legal boundaries (the *nomos* of the Earth); as a balance of forces and capabilities determined by the parties; and as rules for transgressing boundaries, which lead to the notion of just war. The analysis of the reasons for a just war leads to a *katechonic* threshold that can be crossed in the perspective of the loss of ideas of a “just enemy”, a just cause of war, a just war on both sides and the reduction of a law of war to an act of aggression, to a reactive response to crimes against humanity and the identification of the aggressor as a criminal. This model of just war entails the demonization of the enemy and translates the conflict into the Armageddon paradigm, which makes it possible to establish an essential link between the issues of war, international justice and *katechon*. The *katechon*, studied in the article on the basis of theological interpretations as an Empire (in particular, a Christian empire), righteousness, the power of divine grace, as well as the need to preach the Gospel around the world, appears in the political-theological paradigm as a factor restraining the forces of destruction. The restraint of the pure will to destroy allows us to see that the *katechon* fulfils not only an agonistic but also a liturgical function, the purpose of which is to maintain a continuous link between the content of culture, which is centered on the idea of humanity, and the actions of the actors in international relations. It is the preservation of humanity, based on the highest cultural values, that is the final “red line”, thanks to the inviolability of which international justice is preserved and the coming of the Judgment Day is restrained.

Keywords: political theology, *katechon*, international justice, containment, transgression

***Katechon*: on the History and Semantics of the Concept**

Katechon (from the Greek. ὁ κατέχων — “a restrainer”) is a theological and political concept that has roots in Christian eschatology. Having no unambiguous content, the *katechon* is understood as some actor with a mission to prevent the final triumph of evil in history and the coming of the Antichrist. The origin of the concept goes back to the words of the Apostle Paul in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, where he speaks of the postponement of the Day of Judgment: “He who now restrains it will do so until he

is out of the way” (2 Thess. 2:7). There are a number of interpretations of whom or what should be considered a *katechon*. First, the Empire — the Imperium that is understood not so much as a way of organizing a political union, but primarily as a World Empire — the only one of its kind, a true empire with a mission and the moral power to resist world evil, the Antichrist). Thus, John Chrysostom believed the Roman Empire to be that restrainer who prevented rampant evil through the power of its imperial organization. Different views on the special role of a particular nation or supranational union (e.g., the United Nations) can be traced to this version. Second, sanctity (lat. Sanctitas) — the sanctity of the righteous and the Divine grace are seen as a restrainer that will be taken away from people because of their total resentment and lack of love. Third, there is the interpretation of St. Ephraim the Syrian and St. John of Damascus, which associates the *katechon* with the proclamation of Gospel throughout the world (*Evangelium praedicans per orbem terrarum*) that inevitably precedes the Judgement Day¹.

There are a number of interpretations available for this explanation. In the famous polemic between Carl Schmitt and Eric Peterson, the former broadly interpreted the Empire as a bulwark of order, organization, and a spiritual fortress on the way to chaos, while the latter believed that “what acts as *katechon* is not a political power [potere], but only the Jews’ refusal to convert” (Agamben, 2011: 16). Following Agamben, “for Peterson... the historical events he witnessed — from the World Wars to totalitarianism, from the technological revolution to the atomic bomb — are theologically insignificant. All but one: the extermination of the Jews. If the eschatological advent of the Kingdom will become concrete and real only after the Jews have converted, then the destruction of the Jews cannot be unrelated to the destiny of the Church” (Agamben, 2011: 16). Thus, in contrast to Schmitt who thought of *katechon* in terms of political unions and their leaders, Peterson views it negatively, as an event of conversion that did not happen, thereby delaying the coming of the Last Day.

It seems that the political-theological interpretation of international justice should be related to the idea of the *katechon*, taking into account the meaning given to political theology by Carl Schmitt, who argued that all “significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development... but also because of their systematic structure...” (Schmitt, 2005: 36). In Schmitt’s logic, a katechonic perspective can be seen in the twists and turns of international re-

1. Thus the famous Russian *narodnik*, and later even more famous monarchist and conservative thinker, Lev Tihomirov, summarizes his views on the *katechon* in this way: “... the ground is already sufficiently prepared for the appearance of the Antichrist. But for a certain period of time something “restraining” prevents his appearance... Some considered the Roman state to be this restrainer, and among them was even St. John Chrysostom... The thought of St. John Chrysostom is that a firm state system, based on the ideals of law and order, prevents the revolution that the Antichrist will produce. Some other interpreters believed that the restrainer was divine grace. Still others thought that “God’s predetermination” should be considered as a restrainer, that is, the coming of the Antichrist cannot take place before all that God has planned for the salvation of mankind is fulfilled... In particular, the means by which the Lord restrains the Antichrist can be diverse: among them may be worldly means or the action of divine grace” (Tihomirov, 2012: 627).

lations. And if in Christian theology the katechonic barrier restrains the Antichrist, in political theology it does the same to “his” *predicates*.

It is significant that *katechon* connotes the double meaning of restraint and transgression — the passage that opens a new horizon and a new, long-awaited, righteous world order, the Millennial Kingdom. In this context, the *katechon* is at once a barrier and a boundary, both a border and a “gateway”. It redeems the world from ruin, but it also redeems the perishing world for eternity. The katechonic horizon is predetermined by the theological interpretation of the *katechon* as a simultaneous twofold desire to prevent the coming of the Last Day and, in the meantime, to allow its advent. Jacob Taubes, in his polemic with Carl Schmitt, “discovers an eschatological dimension that acts as a direct revolutionary counterpoint to Schmitt’s counterrevolutionary political theology, which seeks to prevent revolution even as it seeks to stimulate a certain form of legal anarchy — a state of emergency... the sovereign, put in theological terms, plays the *katechon* role... the role of some ‘restraining force’ that prevents the coming of Antichrist, an event that precedes the Apocalypse and the coming of Messiah. Taubes, however, sees this differently. Secular political power is regarded as clearly negligible and futile from an eschatological perspective. It is well known that for St. Paul the coming of the Messiah is accompanied by the fall of the Roman Empire. Pauline messianism is seen by Taubes as a kind of revolutionary state of emergency when the regime of power collapses” (Jarkeev, 2022: 11). If, from the position of restraint, the shift in the perspective of the Judgment Day is viewed as unconditionally positive, then from the perspective of the possibility of the imminent onset of the chiliastic era, the Judgment Day is perceived in the same positive modality. The result of the complex superimposition of “horror without end” and “horrible end” is precisely the displacement of the katechonic horizon as a result of active resistance to the subversive forces of chaos, which postpones the prospect of doomsday into an uncertain future.

If *katechon* restrains the forces of destruction, it is primarily because it preserves the optics of the universal struggle between Good and Evil as the main event taking place in the world. The *katechon* leads back to the source of reality. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, said: “Be not deceived: God is not mocked” (Galat. 6:7) Reality is not negated. *Katechon* restrains the negation of reality. Its main function is not agonal, not even containment or transgression, but liturgy. The “restrainer” does not allow the disintegration of the ontological link between the will to humanness, based on love and mercy, and the reality of human life. *Katechon* opposes pure will, the quintessence of arbitrariness. Everything that cultivates a human, that shapes human culture, has a katechonic dimension. Health, upbringing, education, observance of moral and legal norms, political participation in the name of the common good, spiritual and creative pursuits — all these are elements of culture integrated into established forms that “cultivate” the mind and will of the individual and resist the excessive, the exaggerated, the uncontrollable, the ugly — all of which have disastrous consequences. If *katechon* restrains, it is primarily because it is the sum of human cultivation. It is culture that gives humanity its form. The *katechon* that restrains the coming of the Last Day associated with actions of subversive forces, re-

lies on the human in man, connects with him. This is the lasting significance of *katechon* as the political and theological foundation of international justice that is brought about by humanness. The essence of world order, which has *katechonic* significance, is the human ability to distinguish a false inhuman reality from a reality that supports humanness. If this “red line” is crossed, nothing will restrain the coming of doomsday.

Drawing the “Red Lines”

The basic semantic interpretations of *katechon* lead us to the question of how it can be visibly manifested in the interaction between individuals, peoples, states and civilizations, directly affecting international justice. It is obvious that the concept of “red lines”, behind which the language of the ultimatum is clearly visible, i.e. of the ultimate (*ultimus* in Latin) — the “final” demands, firmly established in the space of political *polemos* — can fulfill this function.

Note that the “red lines”, perceived primarily as a metaphor, have a long-standing background. In the writings of Carl Schmitt, one of the key concepts is that of the “*nomos*”, a law embodied in a visible concrete spatial order dating back to the “land-appropriation”: “*Nomos* comes from *nemein* — a [Greek] word that means both ‘to divide’ and ‘to pasture’. Thus, *nomos* is the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible — the initial measure and division of pastureland...” (Schmitt, 2006: 70). Similarly, Hannah Arendt notes that the prototypes of law in the ancient world were “*horoi*, the boundaries between one estate and another, divine”, defended by “Zeus Herkeios, the protector of border lines” (Arendt, 1998: 30). The very concept of law is rooted in the specific spatial order of land-division after the land is initially appropriated. Boundary stones — the “petrified” law — “restrain” the balance and warn against its transgression. James Scott seems to base his concept of a “grain state” (Scott, 2018) on Schmitt’s considerations, demonstrating how the appropriation of alluvial land in Mesopotamia becomes a springboard for the emergence of proto-states that fix the established spatial order. The lines on the ground mark the boundaries that separate order from hostile chaos.

“Red lines” have been entangling the Earth for a long time. For the first time, global distributive lines divided the world in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean according to the Spanish-Portuguese Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. In 1526, the Treaty of Saragossa created the *Raya*, a line that crossed the Pacific Ocean and divided the spheres of influence between Spain and Portugal. Then, initiated by the Spanish-French Treaty of 1559, the *amity lines* appeared. Amity lines separated the space in which the accepted fair interstate legal order operated from “no man’s land”, where international law did not apply. And finally, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 marked the line separating the Western Hemisphere from the Eastern Hemisphere. This line was primarily political, not geographic. In the Monroe Doctrine, the Western Hemisphere was considered the security space of the United States. The line dividing the Western and Eastern Hemispheres is the line of the elect, given the fact that the New World presented itself as true Europe, as opposed to historical Europe. In this respect, this barrier had the value of a protective trench and *cordon*

sanitaire. Over time, the Monroe Doctrine shifted from isolationism to interventionism, and the Western Hemisphere line was transformed from a cordon into a virtual mobile frontier.

There is another important political meaning behind the “red lines”. These lines are complementary to the spatial demarcation of “friend” and “enemy”, which, according to Schmitt’s logic, is actually a political act. Schmitt emphasizes that the “distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation... The political enemy... is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible” (Schmitt, 2007: 26). The friend/enemy distinction constitutes the realm of the political. Being the highest degree of association/dissociation, this distinction is a form of differentiation. The “red lines” may or may not be associated with it. Although the genealogy of the concept of “red line” doesn’t directly refer to enmity or friendship, denoting the line beyond which someone’s behavior becomes unacceptable, we can witness the coincidence between red lines and the distinction between friend and enemy in case of territorial borders (especially when it comes to military invasion or some other kind of intervention in internal affairs). In this sense, the distinction between friend and enemy is related to the theme of red lines. However, not every boundary is a red line. Many lines and boundaries are transparent and crossing or violating them does not entail dramatic consequences.

So the red lines separate the “insider” from the “alien” who should be treated with suspicion. At the same time, in her analysis of the problems of the “alien” (who, of course, is more an enemy than a friend), Svetlana Ban’kovskaya notes: “An alien is interesting as someone who performs a special kind of function in a group... The key criterion for determining an alien... is the ‘unity of proximity and distance’ in relation to a group. At first, this criterion is interpreted as purely spatial, but ... it turns out that a temporal criterion is also assumed here. An alien is someone who was not there ‘at the beginning’, who comes later... In a graphic representation, this is perhaps similar to a vector whose starting point is a group and whose direction is indeterminate” (Ban’kovskaya, 2023: 71-75). In this situation, red lines cease to be barriers. If the “alien” is identified as a friend rather than an enemy, then there is a possibility of changing attitudes toward him, which opens up the prospect of red lines becoming transparent. Understanding an “alien” means being able to neutralize the idea of the unacceptability of contact with him, creating conditions under which the red lines allow their transgression.

The Peace of Westphalia, the Congress of Vienna, the Treaty of Versailles, and the Yalta Conference are historical events that determined the configuration of the “red lines” that were often drawn over the previous ones. In terms of red lines, the world is a palimpsest. Over time, the sphere of “red lines” has become less visible to the eye. The lines have been drawn through water, air, and space. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is meant to deter a nuclear war. And this is one of the most “red” lines — the line of the “red button”, to use a common dysphemism. Right in front of our very eyes, Elon Musk has launched a public plebiscite on the restrictions that should be placed

on artificial intelligence systems. The commercial launch of ChatGPT has prompted a call for “digital red lines” in virtual space. All these lines define both the visible spatial order of safe coexistence between states as well as other possibilities for the existence of humanity. The “red lines” problem is ultimately related to a situation of danger, of existential risks, which in the political and theological dimension has a katechonic horizon of reflection.

As a result, the connection between the red lines and international justice is threefold. First, the world, understood as an *orbis* (i.e., a circle), has had natural or specially created artificial boundaries since the time of the ancient history of proto-states and states in the proper sense of the word. These could be seas, oceans, mountain ranges, or things like the Midgard Serpent, the Pillars of Hercules, or the Great Wall: “The purpose of such boundaries was to separate a pacified order from a quarrelsome disorder, a cosmos from a chaos, a house from a non-house, an enclosure from the wilderness. Boundaries constituted a division in terms of international law...” (Schmitt, 2006: 52). The presence of certain boundaries — of “red lines” drawn on the ground and in the mind — meant “mutual recognition, above all of the fact that neighboring soil beyond the border was sovereign territory” (Schmitt, 2006: 52).

Thus, the red lines delineate the boundaries of the oecumene, the populated universe, in which a certain recognized, specific spatial order operates, which is judged to be just, i.e., which establishes the concept of justice in relation to land ownership, and which contains demands for retribution for the violation of established boundaries. It follows, second, that red lines should be seen as an expression of the principle of balance, the balance of forces, capabilities, rights, and obligations in relation to the other party. Justice and balance are complementary if we consider the genesis of the concepts. In this way, justice can be thought of as equity, the right state of things (*aequitas*); as a measure that defines “to each his own”; as equivalence (from lat. *aequalis* — being of the same value and *valentis* — valid), which allows Ulpian to consider law (lat. *jus*) as “the art of goodness and equivalence” (*ius est ars boni et aequi*). Obviously, both justice and equilibrium (*aequilibrium*, from the combination of *aequus* — equal — and *libra*, meaning weigh-scales that define the balance between the parties) go back to the metaphor of measures and weights, the exact calculation of what is due to the parties when something is divided. The red lines are a spatial equilibrium of the owners of the earth on either side of them, although the observance of the equilibrium in itself is considered the spatial embodiment of justice. The most important thing for understanding the connection between red lines and international justice is, of course, the issue of imbalance, which requires resolution by conventionally established means that allow both to return to equilibrium and restore violated justice.

The Justice of War

Of course, red lines, even if they take the form of “impenetrable” constructions, are not eternal. Neighbors may have territorial disputes, which, as justice demands, should have

their own rules. The “land-appropriation” must be fair, so, thirdly, the red lines can only be changed as a result of a “just war”. Ultimately, in a world permeated by borders, “all significant questions of an order based on international law ultimately coalesce in a concept of just war” (Schmitt, 2006: 120). A just war, in turn, requires both the determination of the attitude toward the enemy and the observance of a certain order of commencing, continuing, and ending hostilities. Hence the need to recognize the enemy’s status as a “just enemy” (*justus hostis*). It is the “ability to recognize a *justus hostis* [just enemy] is the beginning of all international law” (Schmitt, 2006: 51-52). Then “*Justum bellum* is war between *justi hostes*; ‘just’ in the sense of ‘just war’ means the same as ‘impeccable’ or ‘perfect’ in the sense of ‘formal justice’... The non-discriminatory concept of war based on parity — the *bellum utrimque justum* [just war on both sides] — was developed with even greater clarity out of the concept of a just enemy recognized by both sides” (Schmitt, 2006: 153). In the concrete historical period of the *jus publicum europaeum* established after the Peace of Westphalia, which defined the red lines of borders, confessions and peoples in seventeenth-century Europe, “all wars on European soil between the militarily organized armies of states recognized by European international law were pursued according to the European laws of war” (Schmitt 2006, 143). In a just war, legitimate and equal enemies (*justi et aequales hostes*), represented by sovereign states with a just cause for declaring war (*justa causa belli*), fight each other beyond the context of mutual demonization and discrimination: “The justice of war no longer is based on conformity with the content of theological, moral, or juridical norms, but on the institutional and structural quality of political forms. States pursued war against each other on one and the same level, and each side viewed the other not as traitors and criminals, but as *justi hostes*” (Schmitt, 2006: 142-143). Martin Van Creveld, who calls such a “classical” war “trinitarian”, notes that “it only emerged after the Peace of Westphalia” (1991: 57). This war is based “on the idea of the state and on the distinction between government, army, and people” (Van Creveld, 1991: 57). Over time it “led to war being redefined as the province of the former two to the exclusion of the latter” (Van Creveld, 1991: 193). However, over time, where “armed force is directed by social entities that are not states, against social organizations that are not armies, and people who are not soldiers in our sense of the term, trinitarian concepts break down” (Van Creveld, 1991:72). War, as a culturally determined form of human activity, is undergoing a transformation. This transformation reveals for us an extremely important connection between international justice and war in its catastrophic consequences — the katechonic dimension. Having left aside the extremely curious aspect of the involvement of partisans, rebels and non-combatants, which leads to the transformation of the war into a non-trinitarian, irregular or low-intensity conflict (Martin Van Creveld); into a mutiny-war (Evgeniy Messner); into a civil war (Giorgio Agamben) and even into a global civil war (Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt), we will touch upon the aspect of demonizing the enemy, depriving him of the *justus hostis* status.

This transformation of war into the identification of the aggressor as a criminal (or outlaw) similar to a rebel and a pirate, is in itself based on the idea that “the injustice of aggression and the aggressor lies not in any substantive or material establishment of guilt

in war, in the sense of determining the cause of war, but rather in the *crime de l'attaque*, in aggression as such" (Schmitt, 2006: 122). This means that the "present theory of just war aims to discriminate against the opponent who wages unjust war" (Schmitt, 2006: 122). In such a paradigm, crimes against humanity are inevitably attributed to the aggressor; he becomes *hostis generis humani* — the enemy of the human race — which enables the repulsion of the aggressor to be modeled in the metric of Armageddon, clearly referring to the problem of *katechon*. Crimes against humanity now include widespread killing, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against civilians before or during war, as well as systematic persecution on political, racial or religious grounds. Crimes against humanity are now considered in isolation from warfare. The list of inhumane acts has been expanded to include unjustified mass detention, torture, rape, and apartheid. Such crimes will be taken into account regardless of whether or not there is provision for them in the domestic law of the country where the crime was committed. The context for crimes against humanity is the crossing of the threshold of widespread criminal practices (Schabas, 2005: 209–216). The exposure (as well as the fabrication) of crimes against humanity committed by an enemy criminal entitles the opposing side to the status of waging a just war. Crusade mode is activated under the labarum of international justice (Erdmann, 1978).

The prerequisite for the return of the moral evaluation of the enemy's essence was related to the Enlightenment philosophy of absolute humanism of the XVIII century, when the concept of *Unmensch* (inhuman or monster) appeared for the first time. Paradoxically, this ethically charged concept contributes to the destruction of the post-Westphalian model of just war and creates the conditions for an Armageddon-type war with unpredictable consequences. Schmitt is ironic about pacifism, which seeks to free humanity from the unhuman representatives of the human race: "If pacifist hostility toward war were so strong as to drive pacifists into a war against non-pacifists, in a war against war... The war is then considered to constitute the absolute last war of humanity. Such a war is necessarily unusually intense and inhuman because, by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed. In other words, he is an enemy who no longer must be compelled to retreat into his borders only" (2007: 36).

Thus, the abandonment of the conventional *jus publicum europaeum* concept of a just war in favor of the idea of the last and greatest just war raises the specter of Armageddon, when those who are "righteous" will fight the hordes of Gog and Magog in the name of humanity's final triumph. All this is directly related to the problems of the *katechon*. Speculative humanism allows us to see the possibility of a *katechon* retreat, the coming of doomsday caused by the violation of red lines in the act of *crime de l'attaque* without taking into account *justa causa belli* — this cornerstone of a just war of the *jus publicum europaeum's* classical period.

Moving on from the problem of the correlation between "red lines", international justice and the possible catastrophic consequences of their violation, the most important

of the *katechon's* “restraining” attributes — containment, must be mentioned, i.e. a factor that prevents the destruction of the existing balance. In any case, the game of *katechon*, as a kind of gamble with fateful decisions in the course of reassembling the international relations by their influential actors has the prospect of both implementing catastrophic scenarios for humanity and of preventing them. This is another version of balancing the coordinates of containment/transgression in the context of changing the basic parameters of human civilization as it evolves.

Containment and Transgression: a Technical Tool-Kit for International Relations

Katechon is historically associated with the idea of threat containment. Containment in the political and philosophical tradition is considered as an attribute of the state in the same way as the threat of chaos, correlative to theological inferno. A “thin red line”, balancing deterrence and innovation, permeates the *katechonic* perspective upon “reassembling the social”. It seems that neither petrification in some frozen form nor continuous slipping across the border is feasible. The values of moderate conservatism, for example, are related to this. On this occasion Alexander Filippov noted: “On the one hand, *katechon* restrains the given and asserts the value of what is... That which is... should be preserved because it has a dignity beyond mere facticity... But... there can also be a ‘restrainer’ that wants a radical renewal, but without a disaster” (Filippov, 2012: 249). A very interesting version of the delicate balance between containment and transgression is offered by Hans Freyer. For him, whenever “interests collide with counter-interests, pressure begins, and if resistance does not yield, a struggle ensues...Equilibrium positions are a momentary configuration. The blow is only slowed down by a counterblow. The social struggle may calm down, but it will not stop. If it ceases as an open action, it will continue as a regrouping of forces...” (Freyer, 2008: 21-22).

Containment serves the core for the balance of power theory. Historically, this theory manifested itself in *jus publicum europaeum*, in the seven anti-French (and anti-Napoleonic) coalitions (1792-1815), in the anti-Hitler coalition of the Allies against the Axis countries. Geopolitics has absorbed the ideas of fragile equilibrium, balance and containment. German geopolitics began with the prioritization of land-appropriation (*Lebensraum*) within the context of achieving parity with a potential adversary. Halford Mackinder was looking for the keys to unlock the resource potential and unique transcontinental logistics of the Heartland. Nicholas Spykeman justified the importance of Rimland for the same reason. Weighing the pros and cons of thalassocracies and tellurocracies, Alfred Mahan and Carl Schmitt pointed to the peculiarities of maritime law in the context of the priorities of maritime powers. Pretty soon, geopolitical rivalry began to be talked about as playing on the “grand chessboard”. On the eve of the First World War, Alexey Edrihin (Vandam) wrote about geostrategists: “The surface of the earth, dotted with oceans, continents and islands, is for them a kind of chessboard, and the peoples, carefully studied in their basic characteristics and in the

mental qualities of their rulers, are living pieces and pawns which they move in such a way that their opponent, who sees in each pawn facing him an independent enemy, is finally lost in perplexity as to how and when he made the fatal move that led to the loss of the game” (Vandam, 2002: 43-44). Challenge and response (Arnold Toynbee), “War is simply the continuation of *political intercourse* with the addition of other means” (Carl von Clausewitz), and “politics is the continuation of war by other means” (Erich Ludendorff) — containment and transgression are at the center of the geopolitical worldview. The reliance on containment launched the Cold War. George F. Kennan’s “Long Telegram” of February 22, 1946, set the paradigm for the Soviets’ containment. Kennan wrote about the organic expansionism of the Soviet leadership and proposed as a response the peaceful “containment” of the USSR by demonstrating a willingness to use force. Kennan’s telegram was followed by Winston Churchill’s Fulton Speech on March 5, 1946, which marked the beginning of the Cold War. The coalition of Allies had collapsed. The “Truman Doctrine”, announced in an address to Congress on March 12, 1947, consolidated a new paradigm.

The complex relationship between containment and transgression within the katechonic perspective of confronting destructive tendencies and constructing a new order based on overcoming the failures of the previous stage can be understood as an overlapping between the border and the cordon. It results in the shifting of the latter and the construction of a new border configuration in relation to the newly emerging cordon. In this context, the unity of deterrence and transgression in a katechonic perspective is covered by the concept of horizon. The *katechon* appears as an elusive horizon, but only as a consequence of a new prospective power balance, the outcome of the struggle between the counterparties, which restrains the unfolding of a catastrophic scenario thanks to the efforts made and the emergence of mutual constraining factors that neutralize each side’s unconditional advantage. A katechonic elusive horizon can mean in a local sense peace, a ceasefire or the freezing of conflict, while in a global sense it can mean the temporary overcoming of an existential threat to human existence.

The impending threat forces you to jump on the running board of a departing train — this is a necessary condition for the katechonic horizon to slip away. Passing the threshold, making the transition, crossing the line is a necessary condition for avoiding a “terrible end”.

Conclusion

Carl Schmitt, in the Spanish version of his article “The Unity of the World” (Schmitt, 1951), links the katechon to the Christian vision of history, in which the Christian empire suppresses the power of evil and the Antichrist, thus delaying the arrival of the final disaster. In this respect, Carl Schmitt is a follower of Juan Donoso Cortez, who believed that the main content of human history is Jesus Christ and the truth of Christian doctrine, which triumphs over the errors of the mind. In the katechonic context of history, according to Donoso Cortez, the “forces of aggression” meet the “forces of resistance” inflicted

by divine mercy, whose triumph presupposes the Christ's victory on Earth. The Christian vision of human history is the axial point for the philosophical and historical doctrine of Donoso Cortez. He understands the history of humanity as the history of the Mystical Body of Christ: "This divine teacher... is the universal Ruler who serves as the center of everything... Seen at once as God and as man, he proves to be the center in which the creative essence and created substances unite" (Cortez, 2006: 70).

The great medieval emperors saw the historical essence of their imperial dignity in the fact that, as "*katechons*", they fought the Antichrist and his allies thereby restraining the coming of Judgment Day. Schmitt, however, sees a katechonic perspective not so much in the bravery of kings and empires as in the specific joint of unique historical events that can only be understood from the standpoint of a Christian view of history. A deviation from the religious and theological understanding of the central events of Christian history from the standpoint of a rationalist philosophy or a unified technocratic vision puts the time out of joint and violates the true basis for the unity of the world. Schmitt emphasizes that it was the connection between the divine and the human that made possible both the idea of History and the historical existence of humanity.

In the context of this understanding, our study has revealed a link between the foundations of international justice and the *katechon*, understood in political and theological terms as a balancing force of containment/transgression that allows for restraining the catastrophic consequences of international communications. The "red lines" served as an intermediary between the *katechon* and international justice. They were interpreted in the context of ideas about a certain spatial order or the "*nomos* of the Earth" as a properly established and recognized configuration of borders; the fixed equilibrium, a balance of forces and capabilities; recognized rules of border contestations arranging the conflict on terms understandable to its parties. Within this interpretation, the *katechon*, which regulates the agonistic aspect of international relations, has a more significant liturgical function, providing a link between the culturally determined concept of humanity and international justice.

The ideas proposed in the article can be developed, as it seems, in a number of different directions. Of particular interest is the study of the "*katechon* dispute", i.e. the analysis of the interpretations that assess models of international justice which were proposed by influential international relations actors both historically and in present-day realities. In addition, it is possible to problematize the "*katechon* game" as a gamble with fateful decisions that superpowers are trying to play by granting themselves a particularly significant role within the world system.

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Катехон: к вопросу о политико-теологических основаниях международной справедливости

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В статье исследуется проблематика международной справедливости в ее отношении к одному из значимых понятий христианской теологии — катехону. Основной гипотезой

статьи является то, что катехон в международных отношениях проявляет себя как эффект баланса конкретного пространственного порядка, выражающийся в сдерживании/трангрессии сил, нацеленных на демаркацию «красных линий», что способствует смещению горизонта наступления катастрофических событий. Для обоснования гипотезы установлена связь между понятием «красные линии» и исторически зафиксированными в международном праве границами, разделяющими сферы влияния акторов международной политики, инвариантно выражающими идею порога, отделяющего порядок от хаоса, трангрессия через который воспринимается как крах сложившегося справедливого равновесия. «Красные линии» творящим образом связаны с идеей международной справедливости: как зафиксированные законные границы (номос земли); как определенный сторонами баланс сил и возможностей; как правила трангрессии границ, что ведет к концептуализации справедливой войны. Анализ оснований справедливой войны приводит к катехоническому порогу, преодоление которого возможно в перспективе утраты представлений о «законном враге», справедливом поводе для начала войны, законной с обеих сторон войне и сведению справедливости в войне к акту агрессии, реактивному ответу на преступления против человечности и отождествлению агрессора с уголовным преступником. Эта модель справедливой войны влечет демонизацию противников и переводит конфликт в парадигму Армагеддона, что позволяет по существу увязать между собой проблематику войны, международной справедливости и катехона. Катехон, рассматриваемый в статье на основании богословских интерпретаций в качестве Империи (в частности, христианской империи), праведности, силы благодати Святого Духа, а также необходимости проповеди Евангелия по всему миру, в политико-теологической парадигме предстает как фактор, сдерживающий силы разрушения. Сдерживание чистой воли к разрушению позволяет усмотреть выполнение катехоном не только агональной, но и литургической функции, основным содержанием которой является поддержание непрерывной связи между содержанием культуры, сосредотачивающим в себе представление о человечности, и действиями акторов международных отношений. Именно сохранение человечности, фундированной высшими культурными ценностями, является финальной «красной линией», благодаря неприкосновенности которой сохраняется международная справедливость и отсрочивается наступление «последних времен».

Ключевые слова: политическая теология, катехон, международная справедливость, сдерживание, трангрессия