

Political Theology and International Justice*

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This issue of Russian Sociological Review is the tenth special issue since 2014, when we began publishing four issues a year, one of which is entirely in English and usually focused on a special topic. The electronic format of the journal allows us to monitor the ups and downs of readership over many years. Last year, interest in the 2014 special issue “Borders: Merging, Emerging, Emergent” grew again, and this year the most frequently addressed issue is 2015 “State of War: Human Condition and Social Orders”. It was in the middle of the last decade that we managed to raise questions that are still urgent today.

The beginning of the process of widespread shifting in what had until recently seemed to be solid state borders, as well as the ensuing military confrontations and the increased danger of a big war, were not merely important as political events that had a significant impact on all spheres of social life. Much more important was their significance as symptoms of profound processes that are still not entirely clear in nature today. Here is what we wrote: “The central concept state of war was chosen very carefully. It appeared for the first time in the middle of the 17th century and in the history of ideas it was permanently associated with the great political thinkers who introduced the concept of war into the very construction of contractually established peace. War is not the absolute beginning of sociality. War is always there, not before, not after the peace, but rather as the dark side of any peace itself. Paradoxically, as it may seem, the wars between political units (i.e. modern states) as well as any others, e.g., partisan or hybrid wars of today, appear less important than this original war (‘Warre’, as Thomas Hobbes called it)” (Editorial, 2015: 10). This reasoning is still relevant today, but only as far as we consider the increased tendency to undermine the state of peace as a precondition of social life in general. However, we should also partially revise our earlier assumptions and acknowledge that the social ontology of war, as seen in those years, is today accompanied by simpler and more traditional considerations. War permeates the entire social fabric of the modern world.

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However, it is often manifested as the familiar conflict between political entities, both classical and contemporary, which are not necessarily limited to states. Various movements, organizations, and armed groups are capable of waging long and full-scale hostilities against each other and against internationally recognized states. Unfortunately, this creates a more familiar picture of the contemporary world than the one influenced by decades of globalization.

Why do we have to modify our assessments? The disintegration of the social fabric has led to the emergence of hotbeds of tension but has not changed the framework conditions of world society, while maintaining a more or less stable world order. However, we are now experiencing a possibly reverse movement. States all over the world are increasingly determined to wage wars among themselves and with other belligerent forces to assert old borders or draw new ones. However, the strengthening of states and the emergence of new state-like political entities does not only involve the reinforcement of military and administrative apparatuses. It also entails the restoration of political communities. While concepts such as world society, global society, and society without borders still hold relevance, they belong to a previous era. The trend has shifted. Among other things, there has been a strengthening of communities based on political boundaries rather than cultural tradition or values in their purest form. One concept that has been suitable and well-known since the 19th century in this regard is the 'Schicksalsgemeinschaft' or 'community of fate'. But fate is primarily an external circumstance, regardless of how one interprets the concept. Solidarity emerges in moments of intense confrontation because politics contributes decisively to the formation of unity.

This perspective, based on the friend/enemy dichotomy, was substantiated by Carl Schmitt. It was initially formulated in the renowned essay *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1927) and has since been widely reprinted and commented upon, including by the author himself. It can be seen as an expression of perilous German revanchism, as Schmitt argues that people gain political status in a state that refuses to remain neutral and determines its own allies and adversaries. This is a political deontology, not a moral one. The people must unite and prepare for war in order to exist as a cohesive entity. Leo Strauss, a profound interpreter and critic of Schmitt, accurately cites *The Concept of the Political*: "But the possibility of war does not merely constitute the political as such; war is not merely 'the most extreme political measure'; war is the dire emergency not merely within an 'autonomous' region—the region of the political—but for man simply, because war has and retains a 'relationship to the real possibility of physical killing' [...]; this orientation, which is constitutive for the political, shows that the political is fundamental and not a 'relatively independent domain' alongside others" (Strauss, 2007: 104). Schmitt's work is often preferred to be read as prescriptive, but it also has an analytical and descriptive content. "Schmitt desires only to know what is" (Strauss, 2007: 108). In the late 20s — early 30s of the 20th century, he emphasizes the connection between military confrontation and the primordial character of politics. This is important: in certain epochs we may want peace and prefer non-political areas of culture, be they economics, science, or sports. But there comes a time when political confrontation makes them subordinate; their importance, contrary to

our desires, may be vanishingly small to the political community of a people. Perhaps that time is near again. However, scholars and philosophers still need and will need to question the political, legal, and discursive framework in which the confrontation occurs.

It is noticeable that Schmitt's interpretations of his own position changed after World War II, particularly in the 1963 edition of *The Concept of the Political* (Schmitt, 1963), that has been less well-received internationally than earlier versions of the text. Schmitt insisted that his writing was intended for experts in the history of international law and those familiar with the traditional European definition of state. This is a significant point, as it highlights how researchers' fundamental intuitions can shift, even if they claim to remain loyal to traditional concepts. The historical epoch influences our constructions, even the most abstract ones. For several decades, our situation has differed greatly from those of both great wars and also from the expectations of war in the first half of the 20th century. While we may not currently face such an existential confrontation of enemies as was the case in the first half of the last century, it is possible that we are now closer to the 1930s than to the 1960s. The legal framework of growing conflicts is a current topic, and the potential for forming political communities within state borders and other political entities must be discussed in a new discursive field. A century ago, some countries had high hopes for the League of Nations, while others did not recognize its legitimacy. Today, the legitimacy of the UN is rarely questioned, but its effectiveness is increasingly scrutinized. For conflicts to not only erupt but also end in treaties, a legitimate treaty framework must exist. This framework should be ethically and legally recognized to provide a context for the agreement. The current violations of treaties suggest that such a recognized context does not exist, and humanity may be at the beginning of a new journey.

We have tried to take a few steps in this field by combining, according to a well-established tradition, the problems of law and justice with political theology. This issue is based on the proceedings of a conference that our journal held on May 19-20, 2023, in cooperation with the Center for Fundamental Sociology of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. Researchers engaged in theoretical and historical sociology, international relations and international law, political philosophy, theology, and the history of ideas and intellectual history took part in the discussion.

Political theology today is a rapidly growing field of social science. It has long gone beyond the original project outlined by Carl Schmitt a century ago and continued in his later works. Modern scholars have largely diverged from Schmitt, both in their interpretation of specific issues and in their formulation of general problems. This does not prevent us from seeing political theology as a highly productive and instructive way of thinking. What is remarkable for sociologists, philosophers, and legal theorists is that it allows us to connect the work of political theology with questions of constitutional and international law, that is, with the study of the foundations of domestic social and political order along with the conditions of possibility of that order in foreign policy.

We are aware that this is as yet unfamiliar specifically to sociology. Classical sociology appears in the golden age of international law, when, after the Franco-Prussian War, peace

was established in Europe for almost half a century, and the desire for cooperation among civilized peoples is reinforced by the creation of numerous international institutions. The First World War shatters not all illusions. Although the great sociologists become militant nationalists: Max Weber advocates the strengthening of Germany's position as a world power, Georg Simmel points to the need for a "spiritual solution" during the war, and Emile Durkheim exposes the aggressive role of German imperialism. The idea that the order established after the defeat of Germany and its allies in the war is not only forcibly guaranteed, but also just, is not only alien to the defeated — it is not even discussed by the victors.

However, if the state order of the defeated country, within which its social life takes place, is simply an order imposed from outside, it cannot be based on a law higher than the laws of this country itself. And if the international order is not recognized as such by all countries, the victors cannot convincingly justify the justice of this order, the justice of the very law they declare as "international", i.e., binding on all polities. But the justice or injustice of the supreme legal order is no longer a sociological or even a legal question. It is a question that transcends the purely immanent and historically concrete realities of military or foreign policy practice. Here we all find ourselves in a field of tension between the ultimate meanings of the religious-metaphysical type and the political-legal narratives familiar to modernity. Their adequate interpretation is precisely what is possible in the field of political theology.

Today it does not take much effort to notice the widespread use of theological rhetoric and symbolism in public communication, in the speeches of representatives of the hostile parties. The classical understanding of the enemy as someone who just as an enemy has his legitimate claims is not to be accepted or even considered at all. An enemy would be declared not as a legitimate party to a foreign policy conflict (with their own interests, albeit pursued by unacceptable means), but as an absolute evil in the theological or even religious sense. As a result of certain discursive manipulations, the conflict ceases to be usual for relations between modern states, it turns out to be the last phase of the struggle between good and evil, God and the Devil.

For social scientists around the world, this puts on the agenda the task of renewing political-theological studies in the field of international legal description and analysis, not so much of wars themselves, but of the future world order that always comes after the cessation of hostilities.

The current crisis of the system of international relations has acutely raised the question of cognitive resources for conceptualizing both the causes of the outlined disintegration of the existing world order and the prospects for its reassembly on new, more equitable principles. In the conditions of ideological and value disorientation of many subjects, interpreters and theorists of foreign policy, classical approaches and developments of the previous generations of political thinkers, who formed the very language of interpretation of international events, gain new significance. In this sense, the heuristic potential inherent in the works of the classics of political theology, recently erroneously considered exhausted, is now again proving to be an invaluable intellectual experience in a situation of global semantic uncertainty.

There are several key aspects in our issue around which the articles naturally cluster. However, they all echo each other, and we decided not to make thematic sections in it.

Evidently, for a number of authors in this issue, the most important political and theological resources are the post-war writings of Carl Schmitt and, above all, his important notion of *katechon*. The issue opens with Dmitry Popov's article "Katechon: on the political and theological foundations of international justice". The article's main hypothesis is that in international relations, the *katechon* functions as a balancing force for a particular spatial order. This order is expressed through the containment or transgression of forces that aim to demarcate 'red lines', which ultimately shifts the horizon for catastrophic events.

The topic of *katechon* is continued in the article by Yevgeny Uchaev "The Concept of Katechon in the Thought of Carl Schmitt: Towards a Different Universalism?". This article argues that the *katechon* might offer a non-liberal and non-revolutionary universalist political project, with Carl Schmitt as an unlikely ally. Contrary to dominant interpretations, Schmitt's notion of the *katechon* does not legitimize either sovereign state power or international plurality. Rather, it embodies an underappreciated universalist strand in Schmitt's thought that is in tension with the confrontational and pluralist logic of his concept of the political or the idea of the *Grossraum* (large space).

Irina Borshch compares in her article Carl Schmitt and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. Both were prominent lawyers in Weimar Germany, but their paths diverged dramatically in 1933. They shared the belief that the modern state should act as a deterrent to war. Additionally, they both emphasized the importance of the church in maintaining stability within the new international order of the Westphalian era. This approach to international justice was based on the concept of religious pluralism, which allowed for a variety of sovereign states.

A critical approach to Schmitt's ideas is developed by Marina Marren in her paper "The Power of Political Theology: Analysis of Carl Schmitt's Sovereign Dictatorship and Friend-Enemy Distinction through Friedrich J. W. Schelling and Sigmund Freud". To explain why it would be inappropriate to take Schmitt's insights into political theology as prescriptive, the author turns to Friedrich W. J. Schelling's 1809 *Freiheitsschrift* and argues that Schmitt's theologized sovereign dictator is a force of evil. The author then discusses Sigmund Freud's 1929 *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* to shed light on the psychological underpinnings of the friend-enemy distinction as it manifests in real life.

A completely different approach to the problem of international justice is presented in the article by Dmitry Balashov "Thomas Nagel's Theory of Justice". Competing conceptions have emerged, which can be presented as three broad lines of argumentation: 'moral cosmopolitanism', 'political cosmopolitanism', and 'statism'. Thomas Nagel's Theory of Justice is one of the most influential 'statist' theories among liberal theories of global justice. Nagel's Hobbesian conception of global justice is based on the key points of Hobbes' theory, but he significantly modified the original ideas. The author argues that the modifications allowed him to invoke the principles of egalitarian justice at the state level and assert that international relations are not devoid of morality.

Another section consists of articles by Timofey Bordachev and Vladimir Petrunin. Both of them are dedicated to Russia and Russian Orthodoxy. Timofei Bordachev in the article “Rus’ — The New Israel: The Medium and The Message of the Medieval Russian Political Philosophy” explores the question of the influence of the religious and political concept of “Rus’ — New Israel” on the public consciousness of Russia and its foreign policy culture. Throughout several centuries of Russian history, the concept of identifying the Russian land with ancient Israel played a significant role in comprehending and conceptualizing major political events in Russian chronicles and religious literature. This suggests that during the early stages of the development of the Russian state, this religious-political construct was the most important way of self-identification in the surrounding world.

In his extensive review, Vladimir Petrunin examines the social doctrines of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the social-political provisions of the documents adopted by the Council of Crete in 2016, in relation to international justice. According to social doctrines, achieving international justice is impossible due to the sinful depravity of human nature. This sinfulness results in various forms of global discrimination, not only against individuals or social groups, but also against peoples and states. In social doctrines, war is considered an unacceptable means of solving global issues. Orthodox churches advocate for fair international relations based on Christian values and criticize the current world order, which they believe is based on the ideology of liberal globalism and secularism.

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