

## **International consolidation in terms of civilizational challenges and threats**

Economy is the spirit's work on the world matter, which the very existence of people in this world depends on.

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The modern era of aggravation of global problems and the state of the world order stimulate significant destructive processes to be described by society as threatening the very existence of humanity. Social problems are escalated, with simultaneous increase in frequency of emerging social upheavals. Society is at the stage of searching for answers to questions in the global reconstruction of the world, with the need for choosing new development strategies.

The economy of the 20th century is a kind of capitalism in economically dominant countries, based solely on principles of consumption. The more it is consumed by society, by a person, the better it affects the economy. Demand, which generates supply, stimulates new rounds of economic development. At present, the global market economy has emerged, which is largely characterized by the pursuit of profit by private companies all over the world. The global economy has increased at least by a hundred times since the beginning of the industrial era. Due to annual growth of world production by 3% on average, the global economy eventually continues doubling approximately every twenty years.

Such significant indicators have practically led to the complete elimination of extreme poverty in the regions where growth of economic development is most significant. For 50 years, modern civilization has consumed as many goods and services (at constant prices) as all previous generations together [1].

The US dollar, acting as an intermediary for the exchange, has become a source of profit. By increasing issuance of the dollar, as well as government securities, the United States lent itself, constantly increasing consumption. Financial dominance in the global community has allowed the United States to emerge as a superpower with enormous military strength, but also with its huge external debt of \$34 trillion, which is about 120% of GDP.

Herewith, in global community, income inequality and class stratification have emerged and rapidly increase. Along with global prosperity, extreme poverty persists,

and the gap between the rich and the poor increases. It is clear that this system can develop only if there are pervasive environmental pollution and ever-increasing amount of absorption of natural resources. Ignoring the obvious means being not just a silent contemplator, but, to some extent, a participant in destructing the world community.

The crisis tendency of the current situation imposes new requirements on the level of awareness of nonlinearity and interconnectedness of processes. Radical constructive changes are possible in case of applying innovative ideas, realizing meanings that can provide new formats for both international relations and domestic political processes of countries' development, under broad international cooperation.

In this regard, emergence of the SCO, the CSTO and the BRICS in the geopolitical space, which have united communities of like-minded states, is quite logical. Formation of the just multipolar world order is one of major tasks of the BRICS. The instrument of consolidation of the member states was initially aimed at developing cooperation, strengthening security, promoting development of all the humanity and taking all possible measures for creating the equal and just world.

The engine of cooperation within the BRICS is economy. And this is UNDERSTANDABLE: by the end of 2022, the combined GDP of the 5 BRICS member states (China, India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa) exceeded the GDP of the so-called "Group of Seven" countries (the G7: USA, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy and Canada). So, the BRICS countries provided 31.5% of global GDP, and the G7 — 30.1%. And this is without considering the richest Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, powerful Iran and the largest African countries to have joined the BRICS this year! And by 2028, the BRICS countries' indicators will achieve 36.6%, while the G7 — 27.8%. But after all in 1992, the situation was radically different: the Group of Seven produced 45.7% of global GDP, while the countries currently in the BRICS — less than 20%. These data were cited by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his Address to the Federal Assembly, stressing that these changes are the objective reality. "There's no getting away from this. It's the objective reality. And so it will be. No matter what happens, including even that in Ukraine" [2].

Despite the clearly positive results and prospects for cooperation between the BRICS countries in economic terms, the ideological component, which should act as the

foundation and goal-setting for the member states' strategic development, is extremely relevant, with determining this component development as a priority task.

The faster the economic development of our countries, the deeper and closer economic and political interaction, the more obvious the issue of forming the common humanitarian space, the cultural exchange. And ultimately, the issue of forming a common axiological matrix distinguishing us from the opposing bloc of the collective West with its overwhelming liberal value system, which is primarily adopted by today's global capitalism. Intensification of this confrontation in any vector is obvious. This is caused by the incitement of armed conflicts in different parts of the world, incessant attempts to break established economic ties and logistics routes, etc. The reason is clear: today, the West cannot win in fair competition, and is not ready for equitable cooperation. Therefore, various hybrid forms of influence come to the fore - from direct military intervention to imposition of their ideological models through a wide range of information and communication, cultural tools. Even the "co-religionists" — the EU and its economy — are ready to be sacrificed. And all this is purposed at preserving the imperialist elites' dominant position at any cost. When achieving their strategic and even tactical goals, the Establishment of "the powers that be" ignores the interests of third countries — from Ukraine to the Middle East, the interests of their peoples.

The policy of the countries of the collective West, its hypocrisy, was very clearly highlighted by the President of the Republic of Belarus A.G. Lukashenko during his speech in Dubai, at the World Summit on Combating Climate Change. In his speech at the forum, the Belarusian Head of State stressed that it was about the future of our common home — the planet Earth: "We have never had and will never have another home." Speaking about climate change and scientists' gloomy forecasts, A.G. Lukashenko first and foremost drew attention to the actions of those who provoke and ignite hotbeds of war in various parts of the world. According to the President of Belarus, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the Middle East amount to trillions of dollars, not to mention irretrievably ruined human lives. It is these funds that should be used to solve problems of the humanity. And another vital issue was touched upon by the Head of Belarus in his speech: significance of the just world as a necessary basis for solving global problems. "It's time to admit: the green agenda is meaningless in the face

of confrontation. It requires respecting for the sovereignty of countries and unconditional justice” [3].

Will the collective West, and most importantly, the current planetary hegemon, listen to this conviction, by the way, shared by the absolute majority of humanity? Unfortunately, it is hard to hope for a positive answer to this question today. Therefore, the confrontation along the lines: the collective West – Russia, the collective West – China, the collective West — the global South is a long-term trend, considering which we must be ready to jointly defend our positions in all areas. And here the field of confrontation is not only the security sector and the economic one as a basis, but also creation of our own cultural and value paradigm, which is not even a superstructure, but a necessary condition for survival in the global confrontation.

Entering into civilizational confrontation with clear awareness of urgency of the panhuman problems to have arisen, such as overpopulation of the planet, environmental pollution, lack of natural resources, we must distinctly understand that accepting the game rules imposed on us is the way to nowhere. Cultivating the “economic man,” a consumer attitude towards civilizational development and, as a result, the “golden billion,” child-free, eating insects, etc., — up to cannibalism — is something to be horrified, condemned, but simultaneously part of the process and its components, possible to solve panhuman global problems. This process will be accompanied by the exculpatory, for many a sympathetic and acceptable phrase that destroys all moral obstacles, “Nothing personal. Just business.” It’s not about military confrontation, they say. But what is this but a war of minds, the ideology of life and the ideology of the future?!

For building the axiological model common to the BRICS countries, the conceptual change in goal-setting approaches is necessary, in accordance with our historically established perception of the world, which allows us to exist as a civilization. At present, the dominant goal-setting in social development is that the future continues the past, it is formed in the past. Our spiritual, moral, and religious concepts postulate that the future is more defined than the past, the future exists to a greater extent than the past, the present, and our historical past is more unexplored and incomprehensible, because their true meaning, which is predetermined by the future, is hidden.

It is important to understand that those who lose concepts of the future do not know, or use completely different algorithms explaining the current state, analyze the situation in the format that fails to provide clear answers to major questions of modernity to be set by humanity. The chaos and misunderstanding of development prospects is due to the lack of axiological models, ideology, and meanings capable of ensuring development of society. We need to return to the origins, appropriately assess and analyze the existing situation in terms of the eternal question: what is primary - spiritual or material, being or consciousness. The concepts of happiness, comfort and more mundane categories, such as level, life quality, etc., have variants in their achievement and their very interpretation. Not comprehending this means silently accepting alien models and principles of development.

The globalist model that currently dominates presupposes its unconditionality and unambiguity. As a result, society strives for getting and having the material means to live, but it is lost in determining what to live for. Not to mention spirituality or moral categories.

Substituting goals with means is a characteristic feature of the process of the dominant ideology of modern life. The economic, technological, and material component, of course, should be attributed to the means, not the goals of life. Goals of human life and means to be used to achieve them have a gap between them and may often be unrelated. The modern dominant ideology, in which cause generates effect, is, in fact, abnormal, a kind of destruction in social development.

American economist W.W. Hines describes this situation as follows, “The problem of the West is that, having learned to find a solution to most of our problems through economic activity, using natural resources to meet physical needs, we’ve turned into slaves of labor for centuries for the sake of living. Having got used to solving all our problems with money, we are tired. We “buy” our friends (even wives) with lavish parties and expensive cars. We achieve political power by investing money in the “right” parties, in the favor of voters, even bribery... We’re tired. But this is usually not noticed. Despite all the wealth of the United States, despite the environment of the middle class’ existence, the majority of people are dissatisfied with their lives. The national income grows, but the life satisfaction curve slides down” [4].

There is a crisis in the concept of personal success, the meaning of life, based on the priority of achieving a certain level of material prosperity, financial and economic criteria. The alternative to this approach postulated by liberal globalism should be the idea of the primacy of the spiritual, moral principle in civilizational development. It is this concept that should be laid at the foundation of the BRICS member states' axiological matrix.

In geopolitical terms, the old concept of the capitalist world order and liberal strategies turned in reality into the dictatorship of one part of the world over another. This is not a reasonable scheme of life and arrangement of society, but only an opportunity for accumulating wealth by a certain group of people. Behind this scheme, which is fundamental to Western thinking, there is a clearly defined psychology, ideology, and philosophy of building social relations.

However, denying existence of ideological concepts, values that determine the way of life in the interests of the currently dominant elites, does not correspond to reality. Having paid attention to the strategy for the European integration development, we can see it was initially ideological in its nature with clearly defined value guidelines. The Lisbon Treaty, which today is actually a conceptual document of the European Union, postulates the ideology of European values, defining them as binding for all EU members. So, Article 2 "Values of the Union" states, "The Union is based on values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities. These values are common to the totality of the Member States to be characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men" [5].

According to I.T. Frolov, at the present stage, it becomes increasingly obvious, "the need for the new synthesis of science and humanism, formation of a new type of science, in which research approaches would not be separated from value, from their socio-ethical grounds, and the outcomes of the research and their very areas still received "human dimension" [6]. V.S. Stepin emphasizes that the way out of the crisis of technogenic civilization "does not consist in abandoning scientific and technical development, but in giving it a humanistic dimension, which, in turn, poses the problem of a new type of scientific rationality, which explicitly includes humanistic guidelines and values" [7]. Increasing the role of humanistic values in implementing information

and scientific-technological processes is recognized as one of major challenges to the modern world development.

Today, the BRICS is the platform of the unique international dialogue format of countries representing Eurasian, Indian, Islamic, Chinese, Latin American and African civilizations. Each of them has its own unique path of historical, political and cultural development.

In framework of the BRICS, transcultural communication has been actively developed since the mid-2010s. Today, it is organized on the basis of a conceptually new approach to interacting in the field of culture. If traditionally all unions were united according to the territorial or substantive principle, now there is an association of countries with their unique cultures, located in different parts of the world.

In August 2023, at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, Russian President Vladimir Putin called in his online speech for preservation and enhancement of this unique cultural heritage and the active and serious dialogue in this area. “Cultural and civilizational diversity is one of supporting pillars of the new multipolar world order, which implies creation of the integral free space for cultural exchange, art, and creativity. There is an overdue serious conversation with the BRICS partners — by the way, with SCO partners and other countries too — about the future of culture in the world, about saving and multiplying the world cultural heritage,” he noted [8].

What should this value matrix be, what grounds is it built on? If we mean an alternative to the ideology of global liberalism, global capital, then perhaps we should keep in mind the world order, the state and social organization based on principles of social justice, with a large share of the socialist component. For, if we are still based on capitalism, we must clearly realize that the center of capital is there, in the West, at the hegemon's. Guided by its interests, capital will strive there, and its managing center is there. Everything else is subordinate territories, peripheries with different levels of autonomy and standard of living, but not sovereign actors of the world process, independently managing their own destiny.

In 2021, speaking at the plenary session of the Valdai Discussion Club, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the existing model of capitalism has exhausted itself. According to him, uneven distribution of wealth leads to aggravation of inequality. In framework of this model, “there is no longer a way out of the tangle of increasingly

confusing contradictions. Everywhere, even in the richest countries and regions, uneven distribution of material goods leads to worsening inequality, primarily inequality of opportunities both within the societies and at the international level” [9].

However, it is important to understand that the cultural and value alternative should extend not only to the system of moral values, preservation of traditional cultural codes, but also to construction of a political model alternative to the Western one, both in its very essence and in terms of the tools used. So, both liberalism and conservatism are Western paradigms within the global capitalist system. The same can be said about the models of political parties and the main electoral systems. An alternative to these systems in the BRICS framework is represented by China with its unique political tradition, which has incorporated both elements of the socialist way of life and millennial canons of national philosophy and culture into its development system. The Islamic monarchies of the Persian Gulf and Iran with their own special Islamic democracy and legal system are also declared in the line of alternative development ideas.

The other BRICS countries also seem to move along the path of sovereignization, turning to national traditions and experience in the very foundations of state and social construction. Such progress will be the key to strengthening our positions in the global world, since it is much easier and more effective to defend our positions in global competition on the solid basis of our own identity and civilizational self-sufficiency.

But who will carry out this work, develop and promote this value matrix, introducing it into public consciousness and principles of public administration and interaction? Obviously, this should be done by the elites of the member states of the association.

As for the today definition of the elite itself, it has been revised since the 1990s. This was explicitly stated by the President of the Russian Federation in his Address to the Federal Assembly. “You know that the word “elite” has discredited itself in many ways. Those who, having no merit to society, consider themselves some kind of caste with special rights and privileges, especially those who in previous years filled their pockets at the expense of all sorts of processes in the economy of the 1990s, they are definitely not the elite. The true elite are all those who serve Russia: hard workers and warriors, reliable, experienced, worthy people, who proved their loyalty to Russia” [10].

In this activity of the elites, we believe that the following aspects are important.

The first point. Interaction of three social segments — the government, the people, and the elite.

In the first model of the state's socio-political organization, the elite is together with the people against the government (this model of social relations is a harbinger of a revolutionary situation);

In the second model, the elite, together with the government, are against the “dark popular majority” (the elite-reformist or oligarchic model, with controversial approaches to formation and provision of social justice. But herewith, with the biggest prerequisites for effective social development in the case of mandatory compliance with high moral and spiritual requirements).

And in the third variant, the government together with the people against the elite (the fundamentalist model aimed at the concept of social justice, but with lost potential for vigorous development based on capacities of the best representatives of society — the elites).

However, none of the models provides a 100% guarantee of positive development; the second model is the most efficient if the most successful, brightest, most active part of society, represented as the elite, is endowed with appropriate moral and spiritual potential. At the same time, no matter which model the country's political system is based on, the elites' role in development and implementation of axiological paradigms will be decisive.

The second point. If our goal is developing the common axiological model for the interstate association, which the BRICS is, then general comprehension of values is extremely important here, both by the elites headlining this process and by the whole society. More simply, in this sense, it is necessary for everyone to speak the same language and to have the common and clear understanding of “what is good and what is bad,” both among the elites and the society of the member states of the association and cooperating with it.

Bright evidence of cognitive dissonance in social processes can be the results of the work of Belarusian researchers and the direct sociological survey conducted in the education system of Belarus, according to which 42% of respondents that are parents understand key value categories differently than the categories are translated to their children in the educational institutions.

Thus, today the agenda includes tasks of forming the consolidated policy in the field of cultural diplomacy, interpenetration of cultures, development of common approaches with access to the value plane, development of common value guidelines to ensure their comprehension by both political elites and civil society of the member states of the association.

For changing something for the better, it is necessary to understand fundamental processes of the world history, their philosophical meaning. Without this, efforts will be useless, because getting knowledge requires serious work.

The ideological justification of the world dictate is rooted in Western liberalism. This ideology is based on the belief in complete superiority of the Western liberal-capitalist civilization and its all-encompassing nature. According to liberal concepts, liberal democracy and capitalism should be prescribed to the whole world, and traditional values, national sovereignty, religion, culture and ethical systems should be rejected. The Anglo-Saxon countries, which are pioneers of this ideology, naturally claim a dominant position. Anyone who resists these ideas is subject to aggression.

For achieving their goals, liberals use various ideologies to their advantage, including Nazism, Salafi Islamism, etc., which makes it easier to solve local problems and strengthen their positions. However, despite these strategies, our main goal is to defeat liberalism, which is the more dangerous ideological movement than any other.

In this concept, diversity of civilizations is the objective reality. As an international platform, the BRICS association will contribute to debunking the mythical theory of West-centrism, and constructing the multipolar world order. It is important to consolidate confidence in one's own civilization, to present the example of cultural partnership between world powers, to create the constellation of world civilizations united on the grounds of true value categories that ensure harmonious development of the human community and ecosystem.

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