

V.A. Chereshev¹,
V.N. Rastorguev²

MODERNITY AND THE CHOICE OF THE FUTURE IN TERMS OF POLITICS AND FORECASTS

Dmitry Likhachov kept returning to the topic of forecasts and future choices, understanding the discussion element of this problem and the position of skeptics, in which he saw its internal logic. For instance, in his famous piece “The Future of Literature as A Subject”, he wrote: “Having read the title of this article, my readers are likely to think: “A fashionable topic! Don’t we have enough of futurology, predictions and forecasts draped in scientific research garb? Creativity cannot be foreseen, the appearance of that or other genius work of fiction or a scientific discovery cannot be predicted”. Regarding fashion, I can say that fashion, when it is reasonable, should be welcome. Reasonable fashion – is one of the few, however modest, testimonies of unity of the humankind, its tastes and moods... In science fashion promotes collective focusing of attention on certain topics and approaches to such topics”³.

Recognizing the significance of “fashionable” topics in scientific discourse, mass consciousness and public policy, we cannot avoid seeing that the “fashion for the future” may fade for a while only to return later since we all need to look beyond what we call modernity. It is in this process that we run into a number of paradoxes, and the first of these is the ambiguity of this term. The problem is that each of us has the right to choose *our own modernity*; our own teachers of life and masters of thought from any period of history. Some are interested in Aristotle, others live in the Enlightenment era (and they have every right to), yet others copy the behaviors of mass consumer culture, and still others get fully immersed into the virtual world. People of our time have a broad range of opportunities to *choose their contemporaries* according to their spirit or ability. This choice belongs not only to the personal sphere but the national culture as well, as Dmitry Likhachov had said on numerous occasions. The choice of modernity can easily transcend all temporary and spatial borders.

The right to search for this choice is one of human being’s natural and inalienable rights. Separate individuals, social or professional groups, separate ethnicity groups or civilian nations that consist of several such groups – all of them have this right. So the issue of what society we are building and what future we choose depends in large measure on which modernity we choose to live in and what we consider as modern – a number of achievements that make our life comfortable or eternally modern traditions that combine generations into a holistic common. For this reason alone, the heritage of Dmitry Likhachov, who had always emphasized national culture as the central element, will remain important and topical forever.

But let us go back to the main topic, the choice of the future. Any person, regardless of his or her age or social status, level of culture or education, profession or values, tries to imagine a near future in which he or she takes up a certain niche and a distant future that belongs not to him or her, but to generations to come. What is behind this desire? Is it healthy inquisitiveness, the desire to privatize at least a part of the world of tomorrow, or is it fear to be robbed of the future, the sense of responsibility for own actions, where the outcomes, both positive or negative are expecting us in the future which is yet to come? Everyone has his

¹ Director of the Institute for Immunology and Physiology (the Urals Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Academician of the RAS, Dr. Med., Professor. Author of a number of scientific discoveries and inventions, more than 700 scholarly publications, including 34 monographs, 14 books: “Immunophysiology”, “Alpha Fetoprotein”, “Immunologic and Genetic Factors of Reproduction Function Disturbance”, “Biological Laws and Human Viability. Method of Multi-Functional Regeneration Biotherapy”, “Physiological and Hygienic Concept of Speleo- and Co-Treatment”, “Social and Demographic Safety of Russia”, “Demographic Policy of the Country and Health of the Nation” and others; 2 manuals for studying combined radiation damages and clinical immunology; 6 textbooks; 11 manuals for higher educational establishments. President of the Russian Academic Society of Immunologists. Chief editor of the “Russian Journal of Immunology”, “Bulletin of Ural Medical Academic Science”, Bulletin of Ural Branch of RAS “Science. Society. Man”, “Immunology of Urals”. He is decorated with the Order of Friendship, the Order for Services to the Fatherland of the 3rd and 4th degree. He is a Laureate of the Government Award of the Russian Federation in science and technology and the award of the Government of the Russian Federation in the field of education. Honorary Doctor of SPbUHSS.

² Professor of the Chair of Philosophy of Politics and Law at Lomonosov Moscow University, Dr. Sc. (Philosophy), Honorary Higher Education Lecturer of the Russian Federation. Class 3 State Advisor. Author of more than 400 scholarly publications, including 26 monographs and textbooks: The Nature of Self-Identification: Russian Culture, Slavonic World and Strategy of Continuing Education; The World’s Wells: Russia’s Environmental Doctrine: from Plans to Pilot Projects; Philosophy and Methodology of Political Planning; “The Civilizational Heritage of the Slavic World”, “Smart Politics and the Culture of Planning” and some others. Deputy Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences for the study and preservation of cultural and natural heritage. V. N. Rastorguev is recipient of the UN Avicenna Award and Unity Award. He was awarded the Russian Federation Governmental Prize in science and technology.

³ Likhachov D.S. Future of Literature as Subject for Study (Notes and Thoughts) // Novyi Mir. 1969. No. 9. P. 167.

or her motives that depend on many factors: the type of personality and the age, moral and professional qualities of the human being, the plans we make and implement without knowing for sure where lies the border between the real goal and a utopia.

All of the above could be said of the society, the state and the people, unions of states and the humankind as a whole. The reason for the “humane” face of the society which develops according to their own laws, different from those as defined by personal socialization, lies not only in that important decisions are made not by social institutions but by real people with their peculiarities and motivations. In addition to personal goals of separate individuals, functional goals of systems must also be considered. These may not agree with private goals, and at times even go beyond human cognition. The teleological approach to understanding the nature of collective knowledge, including specialized knowledge opens hidden goals for us. Among these, a special role is played by the search for existing regularities; this is what makes science what it is. Other foci are saving of natural and human resources. These are the functional goals of politics that transform it from fighting for power or participating in sharing power into an important way of creating new meanings.

The other side of the problem of making the society and the collective spheres of human activity more humane, where attention to motivation factors is vitally important, relates to a special class of vitally important problems that need to be resolved due to global threats and require interstate and international solidarity¹. In this case it becomes essentially important to foresee the distant consequences of decisions taken long ago and being taken today, which will include predetermined (in essence, planned) technological, ecological and social disasters. I call them “planned” not only as a consequence of strategic mistakes, inevitable in conditions of considerable shortage of reliable information and lack of quality scientific and analytical support for political decisions, but also because of unwillingness or inability for long-term planning, and the inability of creating a hierarchy of common goals in conditions of chronic confrontation and disunity.

As we see, the topic we are discussing enters the realm of political and geopolitical planning and the way it is formulated confuses many people. First and foremost, the confusing factor in this topic is the lack of understanding of what it means. If the problem of planning and forecasting in business has been addressed in many books and dissertations, the problem of political and geopolitical planning was the focus of a small range of studies, which generally repeat one and the same set of ideas and quotes. In most cases these terms are being used broadly to define any kind of planning if it presupposes socially significant consequences of activities in which public forces are involved. In this case either a consensus or an agreement must be reached to resolve a conflict².

Things are going considerably better with political forecasts, but even here there are almost no studies of forecasts built into the planning process. The reason for this strange disproportion is due to the fact that only external sides of planning can be seen in the sphere of so called public policy. Meanwhile, a range of unresolved, unquestioned and even not properly understood problems, directly related to lives of millions of people, for whom and on whose behalf decisions are made, remains almost inaccessible.

The methods of planning are usually fully delegated to executors, who, as a rule, lack real power and authority to bring together all planning issues and all future scenarios. This is why it appears so difficult to recreate the general picture that is sought after by those who wish to understand the mechanics of this process. It is for this reason alone that we need to expand opportunities for self-education of politicians, who are often so remote from science, while it is changing as rapidly as the political conjuncture.

Political planning, which involves strategic forecasting at every stage, includes not only politicians but also specialized analytic institutions and an army of “narrow” specialists; all of them together make it possible for political institutions to function. Of special significance in political life are “brainstorming centers” or “thought factories”, that exist either autonomously or within the bodies of executive or legislative power, or within non-governmental and international organizations. Whether their activities include development of real political plans, objective and popular forecasts depends on the peculiar features of the political system and the overall regime, distribution of forces and conjuncture, geopolitical contexts and many other factors. A number of centers focusing on the process of political planning has been concentrating on problems of geopolitics.

Various political systems and regimes look differently at possibilities of political planning making this process either open or closed for reflection and external analysis, since a lot depends not on the political will of the management, the balance of forces or the selected strategy but on the peculiarities of the legal system and the structure of existing national political institutions. The very field of planning and forecasting, its spatial and time characteristics, the set of its functions and the level of their efficiency depends on the customs, the lifestyle and the quality of institutions, in particular the specifics of constitutional setup of that or other countries. Institutions take upon themselves many functions of planning, turning them to the “autopilot” mode, which considerably limits the possibilities of “manual steering,” which also includes the possibility of risk management. In a number of cases it neutralized all efforts of the civil society and political elites to influence the future and avoid catastrophic consequences of inertial motion.

¹ The problem of genesis and classification of global problems was raised in our report at Likhachov Scientific Conference (see *Chereshnev V.A., Rastorguev V.N.* Global Problems: Dialog of Politics and Science // Dialog of Cultures and Partnership of Civilizations: 14th International Likhachov Scientific Conference, May 15–20, 2014. St. Petersburg: SPbUHSS, 2014. P. 179–189).

² *Benveniste G.* Mastering the Planning Policy. Creation of really doable plans and change-generating policy. Moscow: Progress: Univer, 1994. P. 18.