

Panel Discussion

WHAT KIND OF MULTIPOLARITY WE FORESEE

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A. P. Petrov Theatre and Concert Hall, SPbUHSS

SPEAKERS:

- A. S. ZAPESOTSKY *President of St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Corresponding Member of the RAS, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education, Dr. Sc. (Cultural Studies), Professor, Scientist Emeritus of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Executive Committee of St. Petersburg Intelligentsia Congress (moderator)*
- D. O. BABICH *Journalist and columnist for the news agency "RIA Novosti" (Moscow), Member of the Russian Union of Journalists*
- I. I. BUZOVSKY *Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus (Minsk), Ph. D. in Sociology*
- A. I. DENISOV *First Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (Moscow), First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2006–2013), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the People's Republic of China (2013–2022)*
- AI. A. GROMYKO *Director of the Institute of Europe of the RAS (Moscow), Corresponding Member of the RAS, Dr. Sc. (Political Studies), Professor of the RAS*
- G. METTAN *President of the United Chamber of Industry and Commerce "Switzerland – Russia and CIS States" (Geneva), Executive Director of the Swiss Press Club*
- G. V. NAUMOVA *writer, culturologist, President of the Miracles Association (Paris, France), Ph. D. in Philology*
- O. ROQUEPLO *Professor of Sorbonne University (Paris, France), Dr. Sc. (History), Dr. Sc. (Political Sciences)*
- M. SANAEI *Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation (2013–2019), Ph. D. in Political Sciences*
- M. V. SHMAKOV *Member of the State Council of the Russian Federation (Moscow), Chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, Chairman of the Trustee Council of SPbUHSS, Professor Emeritus of SPbUHSS*
- M. V. ZAKHAROVA *Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (Moscow), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, Ph. D. in History*

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Dear friends, the time for the traditional part of the Likhachov Scientific Conference program is approaching: for many years, we have been holding panel discussions here. Now, I am sure, there will be a very interesting conversation of people who have agreed to discuss the specific theme "What Kind of Multipolarity We Foresee". Our event is being broadcast in the Internet by the information portal of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Russia Today Media Group, so we are going live, and our audience is from 8 to 15 thousand people.

I want to introduce our colleagues who will speak from this stage today. Dmitry Olegovich Babich, journalist, columnist of the RIA Novosti Agency, Member of the Union of Journalists of Russia. Dmitry Olegovich is at the cutting edge of information flows raging around Russia. For you to understand the scope of the information field in which publications in various mass media are being analyzed: Dmitry Olegovich fluently speaks five languages, and knows what the mass media of the Arab world, Latin America, and China write: all these constitute his particular interest. Dmitry

Olegovich often speaks to the students of our University, demonstrating his highest level of awareness every time.

Mehdi Sanaei, Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. This country is an authentic ancient civilization that occupies a significant place in world culture and history and, of course, has its own vision of how to live this life, and knows what happens if one behaves right or wrong.

Igor Ivanovich Buzovsky, Deputy Minister of Information of the Republic of Belarus, one of the brightest statesmen of this friendly country.

Andrey Ivanovich Denisov, the outstanding sinologist, diplomat and friend of Saint Petersburg University of Humanities and Social Sciences, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Federation Committee for Foreign Affairs. From 2006 to 2013, Andrey Ivanovich was the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and from 2013 to 2022 – the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to China. Andrey Ivanovich's knowledge about world politics is quite unique.

Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova, Director of the Information Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia.

Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov, Chairman of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, who also holds high positions in two major international associations of trade unions, Member of the State Council of our country.

Aleksey Anatolievich Gromyko, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of the RAS Institute of Europe.

The outstanding French philosopher and culture expert Olivier Roqueplo.

And finally, Guy Mettan, a Swiss politician, culture expert, who holds very serious positions in the world of journalism in Switzerland and in the council that oversees trade relations between Switzerland and Russia.

The task of the participants in today's discussion is to share their thoughts about what will happen. We have already discussed what was and what is in the first part of our Conference, but what will happen next? Everyone talks about multipolarity. In the modern world, Vladimir Putin was the first to raise this question in 2007 at the Munich Security Conference. In his speech, he said that the unipolar world will not be able to exist for long, it will be replaced by the multipolar world. The West did not believe, our president's words were taken skeptically, although his speech was noticed. Now it is often referred to, because all the talk about multipolarity has turned into discussions about what is really happening and where all this can lead to.

Perhaps only the West does not currently agree that the world is moving toward multipolarity. Everyone else understands that this is exactly the case. There are several obvious scenarios for further development of events. One of them is that the West will win, line up everyone again, and start intriguing. We know that, first and foremost, the British intelligence, the strongest in the Western world, is behind every real clash or conflict organized by the West today. So, relying on the USA's economic power, Britain will line up everyone, and together they will pull Brazil out of the BRICS, remove India from there; the BRICS will collapse, and everything will return to its usual ways again. And they will destroy Russia in one way or another. This is the American scenario for further development of events.

There is another option discussed by political experts. Many regional centres of power will be created: China, around which other countries will be grouped; the West, which already unites more than 40 states; Russia with a certain group of countries looking up to it. Now, though, they are not really looking up to us, but this is due to the transitional period, which will be followed by a sharp increase in Russia's influence. Basically, the West, China and Russia will become major centres of power, and perhaps someone else, there are many different forecasts.

Once I heard another version, articulated by Professor I. N. Panarin at our Likhachov Conference 12–15 years ago. The West will not become a centre of power at all, because the United States will collapse, and about 7 new countries will appear in its place. The notorious American melting pot, in which all nations are transformed into a single whole, and are cast into a uniform shape, will stop operating. The single language will disappear from the territory of the United States. Everything that held it together

will lose its meaning, and something similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union will finally happen to the United States. At that time, Professor Panarin's version seemed rather extravagant. Although before the collapse of the Soviet Union, it never occurred to anyone that such a thing might happen.

I spoke to my friends – rectors in the United States, and one of them told me, “Alex, you know, we have already introduced teaching in Chinese.” And that was not in San Francisco, where there is a huge Chinese diaspora, but in the state of Florida, extremely far from China, where for years they have traditionally taught in English, in Spanish, and suddenly they began to teach in Chinese. What can such things theoretically lead to, if not to the country's collapse? Different national communities appear. Instead of uniting the nation, there is disintegration. And what is happening with the language is one of the first signs of this process.

However, I am fully prepared that the people who gathered on this stage can present completely different scenarios to our attention. Therefore, I'd like to ask if our guests, honourable colleagues, can name any other scenarios that are being discussed, on top of those that I have listed. The first question to Mr. Guy Mettan is, will the multipolar world appear, and if yes, what poles will it have?

G. METTAN: – I am sure that the world will be multipolar in any case. It may have at least 5 or 6 poles: the United States as the weakening unipolar force, China, Russia, India, Africa and at least Brazil with Latin America.

I believe that multipolarity is not just a matter of GDP, geographical location or military power. All this, of course, is very important, but the main thing is the desire and will to create an independent pole in the multipolar world. Without will, without aspiration, the pole cannot be formed.

To build a multipolar world, independent sovereign poles with capabilities to represent a potential civilization and culture are required. I do not consider Europe as one of the potential poles, because it has renounced its sovereignty, and has become a vassal to the United States. In the meantime, Muslim countries undoubtedly have huge potential for creating a strong pole, because they have sovereignty, though the main thing is their desire and will to preserve the sovereignty, as well as their ability to offer the world their contribution to cultural and civilizational heritage. Although the Muslim world is multipolar in itself. There is Iran, which can claim to be the pole in the multipolar world, but there are also Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia... It is a standalone multipolar world within the global multipolar world.

Over the past year, Russia has destroyed unipolarity with the United States' dominance and currently follows the course of creating a multipolarity. This ability – the will expressed – inspired other possible poles of the multipolar world to gain courage and declare themselves at the world stage, and that was a big step, the results of which we can watch a year later.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Please, Mr. Olivier Roqueplo, your opinion.

O. ROQUEPLO: – To my mind, events currently happening in Europe are of great importance. The situation there is getting increasingly complicated day by day. The United States and Britain seem to be just trying to absorb

the European Union for the purpose of creating the Western superpower. Besides this project, which I call Euramerica, I see the prospect for Russia, which will become a great power for long, having developed very interesting and long-term relations with Iran, India, China, etc. China is already a giant, no doubt about this. By itself, it can affect the whole world. Then, the situation in Turkey needs to be examined very carefully. Of course, this country can become a great power as well. Iran may also become one of the poles. And Latin America has not yet fully shown itself in international relations. Regarding Africa, I can say nothing in respect of its future yet. There is also the great country of Japan. Will it become a part of the great Euramerica or an independent power? It's too early to conclude something about it, too.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Aleksey Anatolievich Gromyko, please.

Al. A. GROMYKO: – In my opinion, talking about centres of power in the 21st century, we must bear in mind that these centres, which claim to be leaders, should be large, with significant resources, professional diplomacy, special services, military power and, of course, strong economy. Therefore, first I would distinguish those centres of power that can exist on their own, because there will also be other centres of power trying to maneuver. I believe that in the coming years and for several future decades, China, Russia, the United States and India will enter the top five. I am sure that in five or seven years we will talk about India as often as we talk about China now. And, to my mind, new centres of power will also appear in the Asia-Pacific region. There are potentially strong growth points there: Indonesia, Vietnam. Africa undoubtedly will have a great future. Now, in Africa, we can watch almost the same thing that was happening in the last third of the 19th century: the struggle for people's minds and wallets.

But there are also centres of power, let's say, of the second row. They can still come forward or remain in the shadow of the leading centres of power of the 21st century. In continental Western Europe, there are countries with great history, whose genetic memory will not allow them to forget that in the past they were mighty empires. The United States will not be able to return to the philosophy of Western centrism based on recognition of European allies as equal to America. Despite everything that is happening, I still believe that the strategic decoupling between the United States and its European allies subtly continues. The United States tries to lay an increasing burden of functions on Europe. For the United States – and this is spelled out in all doctrinal documents of this country – the systemic enemy for the decade ahead is not any of the West European countries, but the state in East Asia – China. So, in relation to China, the United States is now systematically pursuing the policy reproducing the Cold War patterns that, as they believe, led to their victory over the USSR. However, in my opinion, there is very little chance that they will succeed the second time. Thus, I repeat: the future centres of power are Russia, China, the USA, India and possibly Europe, Turkey, Mexico, Brazil and Indonesia. And if you find the countries I've listed in the world rankings, according to such indicators as the share in global GDP at the current exchange rate, the share in GDP at purchasing power parity, the share in GDP per capita at the current ex-

change rate, etc., they will all be among the first 10–15. If we compare the current situation and one that happened 20 years ago, we can see that the countries that are not included in the traditional West and the traditional Non-West are moving up; the further, the faster. As to those who used to consider themselves ahead of everyone in the 20th century, they have either stagnated or recessed. And we will observe this situation this year. Just today I have read that, according to the data of the first quarter of 2023, Germany showed a reduction in its industrial production; that is, according to the laws of economic metrics, this country is formally already in recession.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – I would make one remark on the margins of Mr. Gromyko's speech. I am not an economist, but as I observe the situation regarding calculation of countries' economic power, their gross product, etc., I get the impression that the whole world has become a victim of a grandiose hoax, during which not very rich countries pose as very rich, and not very successful ones – as very successful. I had a chance to work on books for several years in collaboration with Academician O. T. Bogomolov, one of the largest and brightest experts in the world economy, and once he told me that French President Nicolas Sarkozy invited two Nobel laureates to help him figure out how to calculate GDP. He was completely dissatisfied with the method by which the gross product of France was calculated. And since then I have read many articles that claim incorrectness of this method. There are, though, other opinions. For example, Academician A. D. Nekipelov, our Honorary Doctor, states that everything is fine, we have very good methods.

But let's try to figure out how the gross product is calculated. For example, somewhere in Astrakhan, a watermelon is grown, then it gets to Saint Petersburg through the string of dealers, and is sold at the market or in a store. What part of the value of this watermelon relates to GDP? The first initial cost price? After what number of markups do we count it – three? Five? And let's see what happens with sex services in Thailand. If they are taken into account when calculating GDP, Thailand can dramatically turn into a world power with powerful economy. And what about services provided to each other by industrially developed countries of the West? They make up a huge part of the economy. Moreover, these countries don't seem to do anything else except for stealing money from another part of the world, which they then use to provide themselves with services. This is indeed thieves' economy! Every one of us has seen the tables on public debt in which there are only Western countries. That is, in terms of their gross product, they are ahead of the rest of the world, but at the same time they are also leaders in public debt. Number one is the United States, followed by another 25–30 countries. This seems to be really a huge global deception. The West assures us that it has some kind of a monopoly on efficient production. And we have been seeing for long that in China, production is much more efficient. The West claims that Russia has 1.8% of the world economy, but at the same time there is something very close to a collapse, but our overall situation is quite stable. I doubt that we have 1.8% of the world economy. I consider this share is a bit larger.

In short, countries can be ranked, but I have increasing doubts about the validity of these rankings. When one looks at the map, it's obvious who is bigger, but when it's about

economy, stability, sustainability, the situation is completely different.

Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov has the floor.

M. V. SHMAKOV: – To begin with, I will respond to your remark, Aleksandr Sergeevich. I'd like to note that for different methods and purposes of analysis, you need to take various factors. Firstly, to my mind, there will certainly be multipolarity, development cannot stop at the stage of unipolar world. Secondly, if we do not dive into the depths of the past, but take only the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, we can see that even then the world was multipolar. There were various sovereign states with their own interests, which allied with each other. It is now generally recognized that after the Second World War, the world became bipolar. But, strictly speaking, bipolarity is not unipolarity, but multipolarity, because what does "multi-" mean? how much is it – two or ten? It depends. And, thirdly, in considering our issue, it is certainly relevant to use such criteria as the economy with all its indicators, territory, population, armed forces and the like. But I think such a factor as the philosophy of development should be considered as well.

The philosophy of development may be various. Actually, we may roughly distinguish two of its main types. There is labour philosophy of development that is professed by the state, civilization, a conglomerate of countries, from which follows what you talk about: when calculating GDP according to certain methods, services are wound up, but in fact they are taken into account, and generally a specific physical, natural product is produced in different areas. And there is consumption philosophy. The one that dominated under the name "globalization" in the unipolar world, and was presented as the most important philosophy, the most attractive one for citizens of all countries. But if you take a closer look at the consumption philosophy, it turns out to be modernized colonialism. In a state based on consumption philosophy, enjoying life is available only for those who are part of the so-called "golden billion"; everyone else should work for them. Once slaves were captured for this purpose, today it is done in softer ways, but the economic and practical meaning remains the same. States' development philosophy will greatly affect their attractiveness, so today predicting which countries or regions will become new centres of power, new grains of multipolarity, is like fortune-telling. I generally agree with Andrey Anatolievich, who named the countries that are most likely to develop into centres of power. But I want to emphasize once again: without taking into account the state's development philosophy, our forecast may be wrong.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Thank you, Mikhail Viktorovich. You have touched upon another very interesting problem that has to do with pricing. The richest country is not the one that produces more, but the one that regulates prices more confidently. If the West set prices that were beneficial to it, its contribution to the world economy turned out to be much greater than the contribution of the countries producing raw materials (oil, wood, etc.). And when the countries producing oil got together and offered to raise prices, it suddenly turned out that in Russia, under sanctions, the budget fills up much faster than before. It seems that we did not produce anything else, we even be-

gan to produce less oil and gas, but the economy suddenly became more successful. I still doubt that we have real ways to measure the country's economic power, and, in my opinion, there are huge political capabilities in the world, backed up by the military capabilities, for the West to speculate on its part of the world's production, and conditionally make everyone else poor, even though they may produce more essential things.

The floor is given to Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: – I would like, if possible, to respond to a couple of remarks in today's speeches. Concluding the plenary session, you, Aleksandr Sergeevich, said that science would have yet to clarify the term "civilization-state", because it is ambiguous, although it has already entrenched in our public discourse. But we live in the era when many words are used without reference to their original meaning. Don't you think that the fact that we have finally admitted to ourselves that we are a civilization-state is a response to the long-term misuse by the collective West of the term "democracy" in its own interests, without any reference to the essence of this word? After all, they privatized the word "democracy", perverting its essence, as they privatized the concepts "freedom", "human rights", edited something, invented something, combined it with historical meanings and presented it as their unique concept, declared themselves exceptional and began to try to dominate. This is the first thing.

Secondly, the meaning of the established concepts is really changing. I'll give you only one example to work with – the word "people". We are so used to it that we don't even think about its meaning. Yes, it didn't make much sense, but we still understood: there is a country, there are people, everything was clearly fit into geographical boundaries and certain historical metamorphoses. But what now? Is it possible to say that the people are determined by geography? Of course not. And by what, then? It is difficult to answer. And, by the way, all this is very closely related to the issues of the formation of centres of multipolarity. This is a very important topic not even for discussion, but for study, because it's a completely new political science concept that should now be introduced into circulation.

I will give you one example. The concept "terrorism" still doesn't have a single international legal qualification, although now even children in the street can define it (and, by the way, in any country of the world, because in this sense there has been no well-being anywhere for long). And there is still no international legal definition. No matter how much they tried to develop common understanding, no matter how much they brought their positions closer, there is still no definition of the concept. Why? For a variety of reasons. Therefore, there is a whole layer to be dealt with.

And thirdly. Aleksandr Sergeevich, in your speeches, you used the word "hoax" several times. I will draw your attention to the article by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, published on July 18, 2022 in the *Izvestia* newspaper. Its title is "On hoaxing as the method of Western policy". True, there is more geopolitical sense in it, but there is also financial and economic background.

And the next point is GDP, how to count it. Excuse me, but how to calculate and generally determine inflation? We are used to seeing these indicators as "inflation figures", in a layman's terms. And what is it? How is it created? Why

does it occur? As a representative of the Foreign Ministry, I articulate a lot of materials and deal with press kits for different countries, and I can say that in the texts of this kind, the abbreviation “GDP” can be found on every page, because this is one of the basic indicators, along with trade turnover. Those who deal with political and foreign policy issues are used to this. But what about contents related to digital currencies, cryptocurrency in the blockchain? Can you imagine their scope? Many countries have never achieved such financial indicators in decades, and these are interstate flows, and they cannot even be called particularly criminal, because they do not yet have a legal basis for existence.

We live in the world, in which pre-existing definitions (that define us in the world and the world around us, so that we could communicate with each other, and it’s not only about dialogues, but also about understanding, building relationships) need to be inventoried, “reset”, because globally they don’t reflect what they have to, any more. Meaning of almost every concept has changed, compared to its earlier essence. I will give you as an example the term “bipolarity” that was used more than once during our discussion; in my opinion, this term reflects the interplay of meanings. For a modern young person, this word has a completely different meaning than what we put into it during the discussion, and is associated with bipolar personality disorder.

Besides, I would like to raise the issue of determining the amount of trade turnover between Russia and other countries. It is calculated on the basis of figures given as official data (information from banks, tax inspection, financial monitoring, etc.). But the general audience knows better the amount of trade turnover in the area that is not regulated by the state, and its opinion is becoming increasingly more weighty and decisive.

Today, the discussion mainly assessed the prospects of multipolarity and analyzed the new world centres as they are linked to geography. To my mind, this approach is wrong for several reasons.

The first reason is that the centres should be determined not only by geography. For example, such a centre as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is formed not only on the geographical basis. Another example is the North Atlantic Alliance. Previously, it included the countries of the North Atlantic region, and today it includes the states of Eastern and Western Europe, countries of the former Warsaw Pact Organization. NATO is expanding not only to the east, but now the task is to level the semantic load of interaction with the Asia-Pacific region by proposing an Indo-Pacific Partnership instead, etc. That is, NATO claims to become a centre of attraction not only in terms of geography.

Though there are constructive examples in this regard. BRICS is also a centre, not geographical, but geopolitical. Therefore, it is not necessary to link such centres to geography. These are primarily semantic centres (political, financial, etc.). That is, emergence and development of new centres is a kind of a 3D history embodied not so much on the plane as in the 3D space. Here, a few words about artificial intelligence are rather appropriate: it will not be engaged in counting the number of machines, it is interested in solving more complex tasks, including construction of new geopolitical centres.

The second reason explaining why the geographical principle should not be taken into account when we as-

sess multipolarity. We need to consider the criteria not as a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but as a starting point for discussion. The basic criterion of multipolarity is the capacity to perform sovereign domestic and foreign policy, that is, independence, the ability to manifest oneself as a centre with true sovereignty, and not imaginary one achieved through hoaxing. If the emerging centre will be dependent, it will be absorbed by other centres that will influence it. There are many examples to illustrate this idea.

The third reason is resourcing. This issue should not be schematized: if there are natural resources, it’s a centre, if not, it is not a centre. This is a neocolonial approach. Resources ensure socioeconomic stability, high-level self-sufficiency of the national economy and the humanitarian sphere.

The fourth reason is presence of the significant cultural potential on a planetary scale. It is not so much about developed exposition and exhibition activities, a large number of museums, gyms, etc., as about opportunities for the society’s and man’s realization. This reason is directly related to sovereignty. It is not the imposed introduced cultural model that is significant, but the one that has matured and is traditionally present in this territory, where people have the opportunity to implement it.

It is also important to be able to project your development philosophy and vision of international politics outside, today this ability is called “creating meanings”. This is the ability to promote meanings and ideas in a creative way. But the power of this creativity should not be transformed into imposition of culture, which happened to the West, which first demonstrated a brilliant example of civilizational development, but then began to impose its values on everyone else. It’s about the ability to offer something to the world without imposing. Any imposition, as history has shown, ends in self-destruction.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Maria Vladimirovna, thank you for your brilliant speech. I draw the attention of those present to the fact that Maria Vladimirovna strengthened our doubts about the methods of calculation, as well as named the criteria determining the centres of power. She suggested not to be limited by geography in terms of countries’ borders when talking about multipolarity, and noted that multipolarity can be built on other principles. That’s what I suggest us to focus on. Andrey Ivanovich Denisov, you have the floor.

A. I. DENISOV: – I would like to respond to what was said by colleagues. As a former senior economist who worked at the Trade Mission of the USSR in China, I want to defend the statistics, including indicators of gross domestic product. Statistics is a serious part of the economics, including numerous methods, correction coefficients, elasticity coefficients, etc. Though I agree with Maria Vladimirovna that it is necessary to evaluate not the numbers, but what is around them.

Now about the quality of forecasts, and about forecast in general as a manifestation of the scientific approach in foreseeing the future. At the time when Oleg Bogomolov headed the RAS Institute of International Economic and Political Studies, I was a postgraduate student (40–45 years ago). It was then that the idea to make the long-term fore-

cast of development of the Soviet Union (for 25–30 years) arose in the leadership circles and was announced from the rostrum. In the narrow expert community, Oleg Bogomolov said that all the talk about long-term forecasts is irresponsible chatter of comrades in charge. Therefore, our attitude to forecasting should be careful, especially now, in the era of off-scale turbulence. Sometimes forecasts are based on objective indicators, and sometimes this is just how it plays out.

Inventing the steam engine and creating steam locomotives, constructing railways and internal combustion engines turned the world upside down, causing a civilizational shock that lasted for many decades. Maria Vladimirovna spoke about artificial intelligence, but digitalization, information-communication technologies, the pandemic, climate, space, etc., can also be included in the list. So, tectonic upheavals currently take place in chemical science. We don't know what will happen, and this makes it difficult to look ahead.

30 years ago, the Cold War ended and the era of monopolarity began, which lasted another 30 years. Our country was the first to rise up against it. This happened in 2007, with the speech of President Vladimir Putin at the Munich Conference. Talking about hegemony, Vladimir Vladimirovich asked Senator John McCain, an American hawk, sitting in the front row, "Well, who will like it?" No one likes this, including the global majority, which has emerged now on the ruins of the collapsing monopolarity.

Vladimir Vladimirovich asked the next question 8 years later (in 2015) from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly. After listing all the crises (Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yugoslavia) into which the Western group of countries led by the United States plunged the humanity, he asked his question, "Do you at least understand now what you've done?"

I translated this question into English and kept asking it in conversation with partners, while it was possible, working abroad. And no one could answer it. All this is reminiscent of the situation when President Biden was asked about Hiroshima at the G7 summit in Japan, "Will you apologize or not?" He replied, "No, we will not apologize."

And a few more words about the transition from monopolarity to multipolarity. At present, multipolarity is nothing more than a trend, and a rather vague one. The path from monopolarity to multipolarity will take several decades, if there is no nuclear war, or perhaps the whole century. This is a complex and multidimensional process: there may be setbacks, as well as factors we cannot foresee from today. Currently, we are dealing with total imbalance of the global international system and weakness of global governance institutions. Some European international structures are degenerating (even the UN is to some extent affected by the crisis process), others have emerged and have been gaining strength. I mean the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS, which are on the rise, but they still have quite a long way to go to the top.

According to the British historian Toynbee's concept of human civilization development, there is the stage of creating prerequisites for take-off, followed by the plateau stage. We have not reached the plateau yet, and are at the beginning of the stage of creating prerequisites for take-off.

Aleksandr Dmitrichenko, our Foreign Ministry expert, once said that on the way to multipolarity, unfortunately,

we would have to go through the period of non-polarity, when many potential integration centres would be either no longer able to implement their efforts, or, on the contrary, wouldn't gain strength yet. Are the aforementioned China and India ready to perform this role?

I would suggest using the term "underpolarity" instead of non-polarity, as it is a more accurate description of the current situation. In the West, there are states referred to as middle powers. What we are witnessing now is a struggle for survival in the conditions of representative bourgeois democracy that has also degenerated. Those who come to power in the West now try to retain this power in some way, renouncing their election promises, which has become a general rule, and escalating tensions, for the purpose of abandoning democratic governance in the face of increased risks. For example, in Poland, they consider the draft law permitting to violate the right of private property, which is sacred to Western democracy. It is easier to impose power this way, when, under the pretext of avoiding risks, you can abandon things that really have to do with democracy.

And what about those who live here? After February 2022, we are increasingly aware that self-sufficiency and self-identification are the main thing for us. Maria Vladimirovna mentioned the term "civilization-state". Even at the end of the Soviet period and in the post-Soviet period, we were striving somewhere, we wanted to integrate into the pan-European house from the Atlantic to the Urals, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. But we faced the fact that others did not want it. Europe coalesced without us, despite us, and now also against us. What to do in this situation? To build our own space around ourselves. I agree that Russia is one of the possible poles of the multipolar world and, perhaps, the most reasonable one in terms of awareness of its place in the surrounding reality. But, unfortunately, we have to pay a high price for this awareness.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Andrey Ivanovich, I have one more question to you. We all know about China's achievements, but I would like to hear your opinion of China's real intentions in today's world.

A. I. DENISOV: – Someone who has lived in China or worked with Chinese colleagues is like the character from a popular song: you can check out of the California Hotel any time you like, but you can never leave. So is China: you will remain connected with this country forever.

The Chinese modernization of the last decades is the unique experience in the human history. Moreover, this modernization is conscious, and well-calculated. Of course, there are mistakes, but the Chinese study these mistakes, correct them and try not to repeat them. The country has reached a decent level of consumption: about 400 million people are included in the middle class. In China, they talk about a middle-class society, that is, not individual persons, but the whole nation, in general, has reached the level of normal civilized existence, having practically got rid of poverty. Over the past 25–30 years, the problem of poverty has been solved for 700 million people, including 100 million people under President Xi Jinping's leadership. The country's strategic development is scheduled until 2049, when the centenary of foundation of the People's Republic of China will be celebrated.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Thank you, Andrey Ivanovich. The floor is given to Igor Ivanovich Buzovsky.

I. I. BUZOVSKY: – I agree with almost all the statements articulated earlier: we are on the same wave of mentality, however we live this part of life in the process, which should be alarming. Having asked the question whether or not multipolarity/unipolarity is meant to be, we mean the process once again, and I would like to ask about the goal. Until we understand the goal of the civilizational development and determine the line of travel, we will keep arguing about the mechanisms of this process. We will look for allies and tools for implementing those aspects which we situationally respond to.

Today, starting from personality psychology and ending with sociology of a more global society, one of such criteria is success, parameters of which, as well as the direction of our movement, should be shaped by culture.

In psychology, there is the concept of “personality recognition”, which implies an emotional, personal response. What are the criteria of success today? This is not mercy and kindness, but the opportunity to have a good car, apartment, etc. These are not postulated things, but implied, they are a kind of measure, a sign that a person was recognized and appreciated: (s)he was paid, due to which (s)he was able to acquire this or that material value. This is an integral part of the modern process, in which economy is also involved.

We’ve lost our positions in the spiritual-moral sphere, now it is not decisive for us. A man can be highly spiritual, highly moral, but this will only be an attachment to the fact that he is successful for other reasons. For young people, such men are part of our culture. I’d like to ask who influences young people today and how the influence is implemented (including at the expense of economy).

I share Maria Vladimirovna’s opinion that influence can be exerted through the media, PR and using appropriate tools. Today we have virtually no tools, despite the fact that they are one of the factors determining multipolarity or unipolarity. Absence of these tools implies the unipolar world, which will continue to broadcast values, culture foundations and priorities that exist today in the global format.

I would like to emphasize that at present I stand for our monopolarity, insisting that globalism should be on our side. But we lost. We need to understand why.

Today, the number of Internet users in the Republic of Belarus, at the age from 7 to 85 years old, is 85% of the population. All of them are influenced by a culture different from ours, because we do not prevail. As soon as we define strategies and goal-setting, we will understand that funds should be invested in development, and not only in production of goods. Economists believe that 75% of the product cost is PR. Today, for promotion, this is crucial. The Chinese can produce everything, from a paper clip to a spaceship. But their main task is promotion of thoughts, ideals, and culture.

Today, there is no division into countries in terms of which culture will dominate. Do we need a political map of the world at the moment? If we reflect on who influences the geopolitical processes currently taking place in various countries, the picture will be far from perfect. The influence is exercised by global corporations, the banking sector, liberal forces, etc.

I liked the idea of one of the speakers that geopolitical fractures that form today which we should comprehend are not in the economic plane. As soon as we understand this, we will have our future, the strategy, and then the unipolar world will arise, which will lead the society to development and creation.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Mr. Mehdi Sanaei, you have the floor.

M. SANA EI: – Answering the question of what the world will look like and what the world order will be, I want to say that the old world order does not meet modern needs and does not reflect the reality. The structures of the old world order do not work effectively enough. But whether the new world order will arise soon, and whether the new world order is even possible, is a question. So far, this is only a wish.

Today there are attempts to restore the monopolar world, although it should be said that it was never even created. In the 1990s and 2000s, attempts to create it were made. Many new centres would like to create the new world order based on multipolarity. It already exists to a certain extent, but is not officially recognized.

There are three components comprising the old world order: man, country and the world. The world and countries have changed significantly, as has the man, although out of the three components, the man has been least influenced.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the old world order will gradually dwindle, however it will continue existing, although it will be less effective. In the near future, the new world order will not appear, although rules of the game have changed. The old world order was based on the system of nation-states, and now the nation-states are a single player in international relations. However, players from the new centres are much stronger than the nation-states, so there are new rules of the game and new players. God only knows what the new world order will be like.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Dmitry Olegovich Babich, your turn, please.

D. O. BABICH: – I’d like to develop the ideas expressed by Maria Vladimirovna and Andrey Ivanovich.

Maria Vladimirovna said that the West had privatized the words “democracy” and “human rights”, and I would also add the word “Europe”. Now, when they say “Europe”, they mean those countries that constitute the EU. Aren’t Russia and Belarus Europe? Chinese tourists come to Vladivostok and Khabarovsk to see Europe.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – In one of his works, Academician Likhachov noted that the whole of Russia is Europe, from the western borders to Vladivostok.

D. O. BABICH: – If we go back to the origins of the word “Europe”, then it is defined simply: Europe is the Christian world. Blessed Augustine was related to Europe through his Christian faith, although he had never been to Europe, since he lived in North Africa.

Talking about civilizations, we should go a hundred years back, to 1923, the colonial era. The independent Ottoman Empire collapsed at that moment, China was in the

state of civil war, so they cannot be viewed as independent civilizations. Culture experts found out that there were three civilizations that were non-European, that is, independent of Europe: Russian, Japanese and Ethiopian. In particular, the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie, whom the current Rastafarians consider one of incarnations of the god Ja, headed the independent civilization that the Italians tried but failed to destroy in 1935–1936.

Max Weber's ideas, in my opinion, are the classic example of how a person with a Eurocentric mindset can be mistaken. At the time when he wrote his works (1905–1920), Protestant England and Germany were economic leaders, and Weber created a whole theory that Protestantism contributes to economic success. After the First World War, Catholic France and Italy sprang forward. How to explain it? Well, let's assume that Western Christianity creates good conditions. But then Japan begins to grow, then South Korea, followed by China. And then scientists guessed to turn to history and saw that the longest period of prosperity among European countries was demonstrated by Byzantium, more precisely, the Eastern Roman Empire, i. e. the Orthodox civilization. Amazing, isn't it?

There has always been multipolarity, only its centres of power have been changing all the time. Currently, as Maria Vladimirovna correctly noted, geographical location is no longer a necessary thing to be taken into account. Because, for example, due to modern financial instruments, such as swaps, even oil trading has become possible between any countries.

And which countries are most often chosen as economic partners? About five years ago, the Gallup poll on this topic was conducted in various countries. It turned out that the large number of countries in Africa and Latin America still wanted to trade with the United States and the European Union, India wanted to trade primarily with the European Union and the United Kingdom. However, in Africa, there are countries that prefer China to France and England, and in Latin America, there are more China-oriented countries than countries choosing the United States. The Central Asian countries (former republics of the Soviet Union) want to trade with both Russia and China. The following picture eventually comes into focus. Two economic blocs are emerging – Russian-Chinese and Western. The second one is likely to include India, whereas Pakistan is more China-oriented. But there may also be the third block – mighty ASEAN countries that cooperate with China, but are afraid of becoming too dependent on it. Just as Poland knows Russia, but does not want to be in the Russian orbit.

This situation begins resembling what happened in the 20th century, namely: a competition between socialism and capitalism, which resulted in the emergence of two well-known world systems, while the so-called non-aligned countries remained kind of between them. And now there are the Russian-Chinese areal, the Western areal and the third one of the ASEAN countries. In any case, this is what is obvious today. In a dozen years, the picture may be quite different.

In my opinion, at the Likhachov Conference, it is appropriate to admit that once, under Dmitry Sergeevich's influence, my worldview had changed. Academician Likhachov believed that Marxism is a pessimistic doctrine, because it asserts that everything is predefined and determined by economy.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Moreover, he believed that Marxism presupposes historical determinism of certain processes, which hardly depend on man. Speaking at an event in our University, he really called Marxism a pessimistic doctrine. In fact, there is no evidence that in the social sphere, there are objective laws working with fatal inevitability. The future that awaits us will be as we make it ourselves.

D. O. BABICH: – There was a time when I was very impressed with this idea of his. But recently I decided to re-read works by Marx and Engels. And I was surprised to find that they made a forecast for the very distant future, predicting problems that we are facing now. One of the problems is displacement of man from the work processes due to increasingly advanced technology. Many professions are disappearing before our eyes, including such a highly intelligent one as the profession of a translator. Unfortunately, ideas of these great philosophers were perceived primarily by Russia and China – agrarian countries that were very far from replacing man with machines at that time. But what struck me the most was the problem of alienation, which the classics wrote about. They should have seen what this problem looks like today, when more and more people work remotely.

In general, it is difficult to say what the coming multipolarity will look like, but it is safe to say, with 100% probability, that in some form it will emerge.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Let me remind you that at the Likhachov Conference, issues of the crisis of the West were first touched upon about 20 years ago. In particular, this question was considered by one of the most prominent Russian philosophers, Academician Stepin (unfortunately, he is already deceased). Having analyzed the causes and the essence of the crisis, he concluded that either the West would be able to overcome the crisis, or it would lose its former role in the world. For all these years I have also conducted research and published a number of scientific papers on this topic.

Today, causes of the crisis of the Western civilization are quite clear. The United States of America, the most highly developed country in the West, was the first to “hit the wall” when faced with exhaustion of the development potential of capitalism. For example, it is known that one of the most important development drivers is the market. Competition forcing to improve the quality of products, reduce their cost and improve technology, was described by Karl Marx, but there has been no classical capitalism for long. And what instead? The archaic model of state monopolies that operate without any competition, thereby limiting the opportunities of capitalism.

Another development driver is democracy. Canadian scientist Peter Dutkevich writes that in the West, democracy and the market collided in irreconcilable contradictions. Well, democracy is actually designed to prevent abuses and limit the unrestrained desire of business for profit, from which both society and the environment suffer. But in the end, the market has largely subdued democracy, and moral categories are discarded by business as useless in making a profit. Electoral mechanisms are controlled by financial and industrial groups, and democracy is essentially privatized by them.

Another powerful driver of capitalism, which has influenced its successful development for a long time, is freedom of speech. But today it is already in the past. Because the media, too, are all bought up by moneybags.

In Russia, however, from the very beginning of the existence of capitalism, it was no better: all the media went in hands of owners of financial and industrial groups. Here is a simple example. Students often ask the question, “We study at the University of Trade Unions (Russian name of the University of Humanities and Social Sciences – translator’s note), but we know nothing about trade unions. Is this a real organization?” I have told Mikhail Viktorovich about this question more than once. But how is this possible? Twenty million people are members of trade unions, participate in their activities, pay fees and, in turn, receive assistance when it is required. But there are no trade unions in the public consciousness! Why? Because almost all the mass media are taken over by large capital, and the trade unions have one newspaper – “Solidarnost”. Trade union members read this newspaper, and the rest of the country’s population obtains information from sources owned by the oligarchs. Freedom of speech disappears, it is privatized.

Finally, another important factor is the crisis of the elites, who are degenerating because they are reproduced not according to the principle of productivity, but according to some flawed algorithms. Just look at people running for the presidential election in the United States. The same faces familiar to voters for decades. No new persons, no fresh ideas. And in the Western Europe, they came up with an amazing mechanism. If a party discredits itself, as, for example, in Italy, it is replaced by another party, which is created in haste. In our country, in the 1990s, dozens of such fake parties were “copy-pasted”. Such a fake party proclaims populist slogans, hits the top of the ratings in a few months, and replaces the former party. Then it turns out that it did not declare its positions on key issues, and it did not have a proper election program. There are virtually no statesmen, politicians remain so far, but there is a problem with them as well. Olaf Scholz, Annalena Baerbock do not give the impression of strong leaders, and the Italian Georgia Meloni is generally a black horse.

Olivier Roqueplo wrote a brilliant report for our Conference, in which he gave the derogatory but accurate description of the modern Western elite. In this regard, I want to ask him a question. Mr. Roqueplo, in your opinion, which option of those that Academician Stepin considered is more likely to be implemented? Will the West be able to overcome the crisis that has befallen it, or will it be pushed into the background by other, more passionate representatives of the world community? Will the West become one of centres of further human development?

O. ROQUEPLO: – In my opinion, it depends primarily on the European political elites, but, unfortunately, the European Union is undergoing not even a crisis, but decomposition for almost 50 years. And the EU’s political elites are not exceptionally far-sighted. I happened to work with them, and my impression was very unpleasant. The

older generation still retains some wisdom, but the new leaders do not know their people or the world around them, neither they find it necessary to preserve historical memory. Therefore, to my mind, they are leading the European Union to a collapse. Whether this will mean the end of the Western European civilization or its revival, nobody knows. But I can say a few words about what will happen in France. In recent years, we have seen an interesting initiative – the yellow vests movement. These are a truly popular initiative, they have no leaders. They began in 2012, and have been repeated regularly ever since. The government took tough measures to disperse them, but I believe that the “yellow vests” give reason for hope, because various people participate in this movement, including ideological heirs of communist culture in the form in which it existed before the 1990s, as well as adherents of the philosophy of Gaullism.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – Now Galina Valerievna Naumova, a historian, culture expert, public figure, has the floor. The key method of Ms. Naumova’s research is communication with the major modern thinkers: philosophers, cultural scientists, sociologists. She even had a chance to interview such a legend of our time as Claude Levi-Strauss.

G. V. NAUMOVA: – Indeed, over the last 30 years, I had a chance to visit various countries and meet many outstanding thinkers. Among them were Nobel laureates in literature – Nadine Gordimer from South Africa and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria; famous philosophers Regis Debray and Claude Levi-Strauss, and of course, Samuel Huntington, who I had many interesting conversations with.

What is happening with Europe today? Two countries, the locomotives of development in the recent past – Germany and France – are really in a deplorable state. Intense intellectual life remains in the past (this is especially noticeable in Paris), although Edgar Morin, at his age of 102, keeps analyzing the current discourse, writes about both Russia and Ukraine. But this is an isolated example, the last of the Mohicans. Regis Debray, whose research was regularly published on the pages of *Libération* and *Le Monde* until recently, has not published anything for quite a while. Still, the texts of globalists such as Bernard-Henri Levy continue to be published, but this has nothing to do with French national culture.

And yet, following Morin, who calls for reforming the mindset, I keep hoping. The main thing that we need today is to change the policy of war to the policy of peace, otherwise the humanity will simply not survive, will disappear from the face of the Earth. It is necessary to look for answers to numerous challenges we face – problems of the biosphere, the climate threat, the crisis of human identity. The biggest danger is dehumanization, consequences of which may be very severe.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: – I thank all the participants for the discussion that we had today. We will move on in comprehending what is happening in the world.