

Panel Discussion
“GLOBAL WEST” AND “GLOBAL SOUTH”:
PATHS OF DEVELOPMENT

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A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear friends, we are starting a panel discussion dedicated to the ways of development of the “Global West” and the “Global South”. This is a debatable issue, as reflected in the reports of participants in the current Likhachev Readings.

According to one point of view, the BRICS association which we have designated as the “Global South”, is a rather weak, amorphous formation that has no basis for unification, except for consolidation on the basis of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism. The BRICS countries are not comparable to each other in terms of economic weight. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia, on the other, less rich countries.

How can they interact, and even on the principles of equality? And then follows a series of questions that are typical of the modern West. Hence the desire to make the most of the contradictions within BRICS and the problems that arise during the formation of this bloc.

Another point of view is that BRICS, as an association of different countries, which is heterogeneous and has historical contradictions, is the future. More than 40 countries are queuing up to join this organization. For the BRICS states, the Western concept of world development is unacceptable, and they are ready to do a lot to ensure that the West stops dictating its conditions.

In practical terms, it is extremely difficult for states around the world to break free from the shackles of the West. An authoritative scientist with whom we spoke on this topic expressed the opinion that no one likes the global dictate of the collective West, but everyone except Russia is forced to play by its rules. The Western monopoly is evident in a number of areas, such as the financial sector. Russia was able to overcome this barrier, but for other countries, disconnection from the financial system is disastrous. Therefore, the West has a strange relationship with each BRICS country: one step forward from the United States, two steps back, towards America. The financial leverage is just one of many, in fact there are much more hidden contours of governing other countries.

Thus, Finland did something that was unprofitable for it from the point of view of national interests — it joined NATO. Sweden in its turn claims the presence of Russian submarines nearby. As a specialist in defense technology (by first education), I understand that Russian submarines have nothing to do off the coast of Sweden — we have enough other tools.

The Americans keep the leaders and national elite of other countries on a short leash: their children study at American universities, they keep money in the US banks. What is the national elite ready to do in the name of BRICS? Quite a lot of such doubts are expressed.

To summarize, we can distinguish two extremes: the first one is that the future is with BRICS, and it will come literally tomorrow; the other is that it won't work,

the United States will continue to dictate its terms, mocking Western Europe and destroying other countries where they control what is happening.

I propose to consider these and other questions related to the stated topic, but with a focus on the real consideration of the problems. What will the near future be like? The topic of the panel discussion — paths of development — corresponds to this question. The so-called “Global South”, together with Russia, will go in one direction, and the “Global West” — in the other, or, conversely, they will develop together. There are many other development models in this range. Let’s talk about this today.

The floor is given to Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Irina Olegovna Abramova.

I. O. ABRAMOVA: — The issue of the development paths is quite interesting. As scientists, we talk a lot about directions of development, but it seems to me that the task of modern science is to determine the tools. As it was said in the plenary, we need to move from the question “why” to the question “how”.

What needs to be done to make the world more just and develop more evenly, in order to finally defeat the colonial subordination of the world majority to the world minority? There are three possible main directions of development — what we can do now. It is necessary to resolve the issue of transition to new financial relations, fill the information space dominated by the West with alternative content, more objective and diverse, and develop our own technologies.

For objective reasons, the economic basis today is shifting from West to East. The countries of the global majority play a major role in the world economy, but the entire toolkit, that is, the superstructure, not only political, but also financial, informational, and technological, is still in the hands of the West. In order to resist the West and achieve solutions in our favor, we first need to establish work in the above three areas in the format of BRICS+ and the world majority. It is clear that it is impossible to start from scratch, but we have a very significant foundation.

Let me give you Africa as an example. For Russia, issues of technological and educational cooperation with this continent are coming to the fore, and the interests are mutual. During a meeting of the Russian delegation of the Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare (Rospotrebnadzor) with local virologists in Rwanda (most of them were educated in the United States), the latter stated that within the framework of grants provided by the USA, they are only allowed to identify the virus, but not to study it, much less produce a medicine to combat it. They expect Russia to provide a complete process chain, involving cooperation in the study of the virus, the creation of vaccines and the production of medicines.

Many people believe that all advanced technologies are concentrated in the West, but this is not true. For example, back in the late 1970s, with the help of Israel, South Africa created its own atomic bomb, and South African Nobel laureate Godfrey Hounsfield received the prize for the development of computed tomography, etc. In terms of the number of international patent applications filed, China was ahead of the United States in 2019.

Another thing is that we need to join forces and move to an awareness of objective processes, because the dominance of the West, and in particular the dollar, is largely based on faith. This financial instrument has turned into a religious one — everyone is afraid to move away from it.

Today, scientists (economists, philosophers and historians) should think about developing a system of tools to make the world more just, because this is the quality that underlies the activities of the BRICS.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Professor Roqueplo, you have the floor.

O. ROQUEPLO: — First of all, it should be said that the word “West”, on the one hand, and NATO, the USA, the European Union and Japan, on the other, are synonymous today. The West does not mean Europe because it does not coincide with the European culture. This is important to determine, since BRICS (Brazil,

Russia, etc.) includes countries with European culture (Portuguese culture in Brazil, Russian culture as part of the common European heritage, etc.).

Napoleon once argued that the Spaniards had never been Europeans, and the Russians would never become Europeans, and showed how Western Europe differs from the rest. That is, Portugal, Spain, Russia are a different Europe, a different European culture, and the West includes only the northwestern part of Europe.

The countries included in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, India, South Africa and new members, including Iran, the UAE, etc.) have a lot in common, even if it is not very obvious. These ancient civilizations held sway even before the era of colonialism. Everything that began in the 18th century, especially the French Revolution, the emergence of modernism, and so on, has already ended. Hence the collapse of the West, the dominance of obscurantism in Europe. It is at this moment that the cultures and civilizations of the BRICS countries should develop, but without abandoning traditional values.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — I give the floor to Academician V. V. Naumkin.

V. V. NAUMKIN: — In light of what we have talked about here, the idea arises that the future of the world, the reformatting of which is now taking place (we are living in an interesting period of reformatting the entire system of the world order), is uncertain. The international community, especially the expert groups that are partly represented here, have shown incompetence in the face of the pandemic, the escalating conflict between man and nature (as an example, the recent flood in Orenburg, Orsk, etc.).

The uncertainty of the relationship between man and nature, their dependence arose unexpectedly and is based on parameters that did not exist before. All this suggests that uncertainty will also affect the BRICS and other countries, because security systems, in particular agricultural security, and various resources are based on the relationship between man and nature. The struggle for resources will intensify and arouse a desire to use force.

I think talk about creating a single currency and abandoning the dollar is pointless. This is a long-term process, perhaps in twenty years it will happen. But today there is no need to transition to a unified financial system and scrap the old one. We must solve problems, and not indulge ourselves with illusions that a single currency will soon appear, with which we will pay for bread.

There are also issues of a political nature. Konstantin Fyodorovich Zatulin is present here, who not so long ago participated in St. Petersburg in a discussion about whether Russia is part of Europe. Of course it is. We are the saviours of Europe. To develop further, we must save Europe, which is perishing because it has abandoned Christian values, and Russia is extending a helping hand to it. There is no need to say that we have a different value system, and everything should be destroyed in Europe. Christian values came to us exactly from there.

I just want to sow the seeds of doubt so that we can ask more questions and give serious answers based on expert assessments, carefully checking the consequences of the calls we make.

Traditional values are our wealth, and we must defend them and fight what the West imposes. But at the same time, we must adhere to the position of realism, which I always encourage everyone to do, and take an inventory of values and what is the basis of our civilization. Russia is a great civilization. But there is no need to set impossible tasks.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Outstanding diplomat Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko, please.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — I agree with Academician V. V. Naumkin that there is uncertainty in the development of the world. Today, certain trends have clearly emerged. Although at first glance it may seem that BRICS is an amorphous entity, a key point should be taken into account: the countries that are currently part of BRICS, and those that want to join this association, are ready to work in two key areas.

The first policy direction is to shape a new agenda. In retrospect, ten years ago we had a climate agenda that was imposed on us by Western countries. I don't believe that the climate situation is as dramatic as they are trying to make us believe. This is about imposing Western technology on the climate agenda. No one has allocated the hundred billion dollars that the West promised to transfer to developing countries five years ago.

The second direction is the creation of an alternative financial system. A single currency for the BRICS countries is a distant prospect. But the creation of an alternative financial system today is quite realistic. Within the Western frame of reference, most countries do not understand where they can store their financial resources, because now the Western side is threatening with expropriation and seizure of assets. But this did not start yesterday, when the collective West stole 350 billion dollars from Russia; before that, the same thing had happened with Venezuela, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, etc.

While working as an ambassador in London, I asked a member of parliament how much money Gaddafi had kept in London. He answered carefully: "About 24 billion". When asked what would happen with this money, he replied: "Let them go to court". That is, these 24 billion were simply confiscated.

The creation of an alternative financial system will allow BRICS and other countries, in particular the states of the Middle East, to protect their interests and create an alternative. I am not calling for the replacement of the dollar or other reserve currencies. But we must have an alternative to it. By the way, Middle Eastern states are now actively withdrawing funds from the United States because they fear their expropriation for a number of reasons: political, economic, etc.

The main political thesis is the creation of an alternative agenda that will be based on common sense. Here it is appropriate to ask the question: what has the transition to a green economy led to in Western Europe? Essentially, they have ruined their economy, for example Germany is spiraling downward because of the economic decisions it makes.

In the first place should be the global agenda which involves the formulation of new tasks that most states are ready to subscribe to, and the financial agenda, because this is the basis for the future development of the world. The main thing is to get rid of the dictates of the dollar.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova, the floor is yours.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — I would like to draw attention to the fact that our topic today concerns the “Global South” and the “Global West”, but there is no Russia in this paradigm, since our country cannot be fully attributed neither to the West, nor even less to the South. We are everywhere, and at the same time we do not fit into these structures. There are approaches according to which Russia is associated either with the “Global North” or with the “Global East”. And the Foreign Policy Concept 2023 defines the Russian Federation as a distinctive state-civilization, a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power. That is, there is a concept broader than this framework, into which we fit. And in the context of our discussion, it is impossible to ignore Russia, taking into account its influence on world processes.

By “Global West” we mean the United States, the European Union, and partly the Asia-Pacific Region, which are welded together by American-centric military-political and economic alliances and held together by North Atlantic, as they call them, values. It is a product of the historical West, which, over the course of half a millennium, has probably consistently extended its influence to the rest of the non-Western world and sought to dominate it by all means. The only correction is that we very broadly call the current era neo-colonialism. I wouldn't call it this way. Colonialism means France, Spain, Portugal, cultures with all their faults, but with history. In recent decades, in the United States and Britain, those whose mentality was piracy and robbery, and not colonialism, which is also not good even from the point of view of philosophical understanding, broke through to power; and robbery and burglary are worse than neo-colonialism. At one time I used such a metaphor: the

United States behaves like a cowboy in the Louvre, firing at everything he sees, not realizing that there are works of art in front of him.

The “Global South” is a less unambiguous concept, since it was initially pejoratively applied to all poor or, as they were later called, developing countries. And in comparison with the rich North, the South with its history and culture looked like an inferior phenomenon, and even more so in comparison with the West. Today it also includes India and China, and it is absurd to talk about these powers of the world’s largest economies as developing ones. But we continue to do this with fantastic persistence, not paying attention to the fact that there is no longer such a thing as a “developing country”. Alexander Vladimirovich put it correctly: currently Germany is a developing country, because it is in such a dead end that it can only be overcome by starting to develop. However, the countries of the “Global South” cannot be left out, since, within the framework of today’s discussion, we are invited to discuss the ways of development of the Western, and not just the Southern, but the non-Western world, that is, the Global Majority.

What is the connection between these, relatively speaking, macroregions? Historically, the interaction between them developed, first of all, in the course of colonization of non-Western states by Western ones. And the present day not only bears the hereditary imprint of that long, five-century era, but reproduces old practices in new forms. Now this is called neo-colonialism, only with an admixture of banditry.

When we talk about this ugly phenomenon, which will eventually become a thing of the past, we mean Western illegal methods such as sanctions bypassing the UN Security Council, which are actually trade wars; abuse of dominance in international organizations, primarily financial ones; the use of the dollar and loans not as a means of pressure, but as a weapon; financial and economic pressure, including pressure to increase debt dependence; restrictions on development through unfair competition and non-market protectionist measures; freezing of public and private assets for geopolitical reasons; provoking coups d'etat and armed conflicts; manipulating the consciousness of entire nations and carrying out subversive

operations in the information space; crude imposition of ideological guidelines; finally, promoting one's own exclusivity. The "Garden of Europe" and the "jungle of the rest of the world" in the interpretation of Josep Borrell became proof of this, as did the revelation of the current US National Security Advisor Jacob Sullivan, who, even before taking office in 2019, wrote that the victory condition for the concept of American exclusivity could mean only "the defeat of the paradigm that foregrounds ethnic and cultural identity". In the same row is the story of the signing in November 2023 of the Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific countries, in the text of which Brussels forcibly included the LGBT¹ agenda, that is to say the surreal concept of a rules-based order promoted by the West; no one knows what are the rules — this is not communicated, but is imposed by force.

Now let's turn to statistics. According to the most conservative estimates, since the 19th century, the United States has tried to influence domestic political processes in at least 150 countries, and of the current 193 UN member states, only 22 have never been subjected to armed attacks by Britain. Over the past few decades, the West has cracked down on the countries that stood in its way, such as Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. In August 2021, the 20-year stay of the United States and the coalition it led in Afghanistan ended ingloriously. The United States abandoned the country, leaving it in ruins. This contrasts with the way the Soviet Union left Afghanistan — with plants, factories, functioning structures and central heating. Thus, the "Global West" demonstrated its unceremonious and arrogant attitude towards the countries of the "Global South", using them as instruments of influence for the non-stop pumping of resources in the broad sense of the word. This is not only oil, gas, gold, but also labor resources. Are people invited and given advantages so that they come to work in countries, for example, of the West, when they, driven by an extremist LGBT agenda, find themselves without labor resources? No.

¹ The International LGBT Social Movement is recognized as an extremist organization, its activities are prohibited in Russia.

Previously, in order to invite and lure resources, some kind of competitive advantages were created: a social package, a good salary, housing. Now the “Global West” is fueling conflicts that drive people out of their own countries, making it impossible for specialists to be present in their homeland, because the homeland is literally on fire; creates conditions when people do not have the opportunity to receive an education or realize what they have received. Thus, millions of migrants or refugees are forced to leave their homes without the right to compensation or any kind of moral support.

I didn't talk about the “Global South”, but the fact is that this is that very resource base that, thanks to the colossal movement of the 20th century led by the Soviet Union, gained independence in its use. Globalization has added scientific and technological capabilities to the states of the South, and now these are new centers of power.

Let's return to the foreign policy of our country. The Russian approaches, as formulated in the 2023 Concept, are based on “the formation of a system of international relations that would guarantee reliable security, preservation of its cultural and civilizational identity, and equal opportunities for the development for all states, regardless of their geographical location, size of territory, demographic, resource and military capacity, or political, economic and social structure”. Now I will quote a phrase from the US National Security Strategy adopted in 2022: “There is no people better suited to the role of a strong and purposeful leader than the United States of America”. And these same authors call their country a global power with global interests and say that it is called upon to lead the strength and determination.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — As I know, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has already responded to this quote. He said this way: “They will receive the ears of a dead donkey”. Our trade union leader Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov, please continue.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — I'll begin with almost the same words that Maria Vladimirovna finished with. There is no stronger people that can lead everyone than the Russian people. This is our goal and we have this ability. When we talk about the “Global South” and the “Global West” and conduct a discussion at the scientific, academic, expert government level — and this is a fairly high level — then we do not mention Russia, because this does not affect the citizens of those countries which we assess and compare with each other in any way.

Trade unions, and global ones, in all countries, including the Russian Federation, have a unique opportunity. Firstly, this is the only public organization that can work within enterprises and organizations. And secondly, we work with people who talk about the problems of themselves, their family, each person and share these problems. And when we say that we protect economic and social interests, we start from the needs of people. What is the global confrontation or struggle that we are discussing: “Global South”, “Global West”, BRICS? What exactly are all countries fighting for? This is a general competition between countries — their elites earn money, they have already saved and want more, but are forced to look at what happens to their voters or to the citizens of the countries they represent. Having information from both the West and the South, I can tell you that we in the Russian Federation live on the whole en masse better than people in America, Germany, Great Britain and other Western countries. I'm not even talking about the countries of the “Global South”, where the standard of living is lower than in Russia. According to our data, there 10 thousand dollars or 10 thousand euros in free savings are a colossal amount for any ordinary citizen. It's not something that's saved in retirement funds or long-term financial assets — they can't be tapped, they're not debts, mortgages or car loans, but something that can be used when you need the money. 10 thousand dollars is equal to a million rubles. For more than 80 % of the citizens of the Russian Federation, this is not that much money.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Mikhail Viktorovich, the audience is clamoring. It seems to me that our professors doubt that a million rubles is not money.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — Of course, it's money. But I want to remind you that we have a state guarantee on deposits in banks, up to 1.4 million rubles in case the bank goes bankrupt or something happens to it and it stops paying, and now they want to double or triple this amount for some items. Let's relate this to real life, and not to how much someone has in their pocket now — 100 or 1000 rubles.

We discuss global issues. We had a project called “socialism”. It was an attractive project for the whole world. We abandoned it and moved away. Today there is a project called “BRICS”. BRICS will be successful when it is also a fairly attractive project for the countries that join it. I would like to end with the thought that the Russian people are the people who are capable of uniting the world and making this life comfortable and decent for everyone.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — I give the floor to Konstantin Fyodorovich Zatulin, a specialist in CIS affairs.

K. F. ZATULIN: — You know, I was going to start with some other information, but two wonderful ladies — Irina Olegovna Abramova and Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova — provoked me into confession. You know, in the movie...

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — You are a married man, Konstantin Fyodorovich.

K. F. ZATULIN: — Yes, but what can be done? What can be done? Many married people will understand me. In the film “Kill Bill”, Uma Thurman who killed her husband Bill (David Carradine), got nervous and said: “I'm probably not a good person”. Now, I'm probably not a good person, because after listening to everything that has been said about how we must get involved in the struggle for a just world and make it truly just for the first time in the history of this world, I can say that I am not ready for this.

I am ready to defend what I consider to be the national interests of the Russian Federation. To look for allies for this, to get out of the difficult situations in which we find ourselves. Because during the 20th century, our country twice suffered huge historical defeats, which other countries, in principle, have not always coped with in their history. You know this very well. We, however, remain, albeit in a reduced form. And we must fight in every possible way to regain the positions that we have lost.

Here, for instance, we mean BRICS. In fact, last year — last year was landmark one — the gross domestic product of the BRICS countries exceeded the gross domestic product of the G7 countries for the first time. 31.5 % is the share of BRICS, the BRICS economies, in global GDP. Based on this, where should we strive to regain our positions, develop our capabilities, trade, and form alliances? Of course, this is true, to BRICS, where there is room for action in this area. And this makes sense to me.

By the way, I congratulate our discussion on the fact that here, at the forum at the St. Petersburg University of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the “death of the East” was highlighted for the first time. There is no East now. There is West and South. And there has always been the East. Generally speaking, in 1654, at the Pereyaslav Agreement, Bogdan Khmelnytsky and the Cossack elders swore allegiance to the Eastern Orthodox Tsar. We were eastern. And we were the heirs of the Eastern Roman Empire. Now we are discussing South and West. These are very characteristic changes.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that in this space that we are discussing today, the South or Southeast, we own a part that is and was called the post-Soviet space after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And for some time now, at the suggestion of some of our friends, it began to be called the Eurasian space.

Although I’m not a fan of how we sometimes overuse this term without putting any sense into it. It was actually given to us by our wise friend Nursultan Nazarbayev, who interpreted Gumilyov in this way. Gumilyov understood Eurasianism completely differently than Nursultan Nazarbayev. But it was important

for Kazakhstan that it was one of the main drivers of this Eurasian idea. And therefore, for our, so to speak, own pleasure, Nazarbayev actively developed this idea in our classrooms.

By the way, curiously, there was zoning in the Soviet Union, everyone knows this — the Baltic states, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and then Central Asia and Kazakhstan. So, “and Kazakhstan” meant that Kazakhstan is not quite Central Asia yet, it is something somewhat different. And now, when we are developing our unions within the framework of this somewhat different way — the Eurasian Union, the Collective Security Treaty — we talk all the time, and our leaders talk about the need to develop four freedoms here. This is freedom of movement of capital, goods, services and labor.

But, dear friends, we must look objectively at what is going on with the challenges that are associated with the spread of these freedoms? Unfortunately, this is so; our partners, under the influence of that same West, are reducing the possibility of free flow of capital. They are cunning, of course, they are deceiving both us and the West. They say to the West that they will not fight sanctions, that they recognize sanctions. At the same time, they are transit countries for supplies of what we currently cannot buy in the West. It all happens at the same time. Both sides benefit, because, you know, “a friendly calf sucks two mothers”. This is a well-known story. But the fact remains.

Today, under the influence of what is happening to us, an anti-migration wave is rising within the country. Well, I know this better than anyone, because for the second term in a row I am the special representative of the State Duma on citizenship and migration issues. And I turned from a friend of the Russian people into an enemy of the Russian people during this time. If you read the Internet, you can open any page where certain individuals who suddenly discovered nationalism of the highest standard in themselves, demand the immediate introduction of a visa regime with countries included in the Eurasian Union, the Collective Security Treaty, expel migrants, etc.

Just think about it. We are waging a war in the West, and they want to start a new conflict here, taking a whole series of steps for this under the pretext that we cannot today guarantee that Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and others who come here will not bring drugs with them, will not bring terrorism with them, etc. All these figures, all these facts are exaggerated and create the ground for the growth of xenophobia in the country.

Xenophobia in a multinational country, like Russia, means the death of this multinational country. Because, having started with the Tajiks, it will not end with them. It will go further when it comes to the Caucasus. Stop feeding the Caucasus! Tatars, Bashkirs, etc. This will affect our country itself. What do these people want? To create a state of “pure” ones, only Russians? Let’s count how many nationalities are in this hall.

I want to say that this danger is very serious, because behind it there is a sacred desire to protect oneself, to secure oneself from terrorism, from some other negative phenomena. But instead of finding ways to combat this, we begin to call for pogroms. I’m not joking, by the way. The day after the tragedy in Crocus, one of the deputies of the State Duma — a Deputy of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, by the way, which in itself is surprising — stated in his Telegram channel: “Moscow is mentally ready for pogroms, but the government is still hesitating”. Can we afford this if we are generally thinking about confrontation with the global West, about turning to the East? We understand that by doing this, we become enemies of all our former tsars, emperors, first secretaries, Skobelevs, Przhevalskys, Kaufmans, who moved in this direction, bringing with them culture, our statehood and at the same time the opportunities that the Russian people offered and realized in these territories. And who built all this? This is known. We need to understand ourselves. We need to figure out what we can and cannot do. Because you cannot magically combine the desire to establish yourself as an advanced country and at the same time protect yourself with some kind of fence due to the fact that we cannot cope with some phenomena.

Let's figure it out, maybe those who are trying to cope are not working the right way? Maybe the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which created a corruption trough from migration, is not enough, something else needs to be created? The President has already said this. These are very important issues, mind you.

And one more thing that I would like to say, moving away from the internal agenda. We constantly dream of a multipolar world. We say that we (this started with Evgeny Maksimovich Primakov and earlier) are for a multipolar world, because we are for a just world. As a propaganda slogan, this is true. This is completely acceptable. But we have never lived in a multipolar world. It seems to me that the only period when we lived in a multipolar world was during the Second World War, when Germany was on one side, we were on the other side, and our allies were on the third side, the third center of power — the British, the Americans.

It was a multipolar world to some extent. And what happened after that was a bipolar world — the USSR and the USA. And now, although we dream of a multipolar world, we increasingly get the impression that in reality the world is becoming bipolar again. But at one pole there is the United States, at the other there is China. And this is what I would like to avoid for us. I would like to avoid that we would so definitely end up at the same pole. We are being driven there by the position of the West, which has lost its way, its European way. We need to keep our limitations in mind.

And one last thing. Here Vitaly Vyacheslavovich (Naumkin, head of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences) is present. Yesterday, we together participated in a conference “Russian-Iranian relations in a changing world” held by our institute. I want to say that, of course, we should not allow ourselves to doubt that our statehood, our people are primarily Europeans. This is the European origin of the Russian people. I don't want to give the European Union, the NATO bloc, that Europe of Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Umberto Eco, Pushkin, Turgenev, Dostoevsky. Neither I agree to consider that Europe is them, and we are Eurasians. We are Europeans. We are Europeans who have reached the Pacific Ocean. And we must pay attention to this. You will not dress us Europeans in the

most wonderful oriental robes, as Baron Ungern planned. He, as you know, did not gain anything from this.

This must be understood when developing relations with Asia, with all respect. It is clear that we need allies, and today our allies are within BRICS. Today our allies — to a certain extent, of course, to the extent that they themselves are capable of it — are the Chinese, Indians and others, since they are conducting a dialogue with us. They are also looking for their own benefit.

I am finishing. But we need to understand what a difficult situation we are in. We shouldn't multiply the number of your opponents; we should really see our potential. BRICS is important for us due to the fact that with the collapse of the Soviet Union we have lost the quality of a country that can be self-sufficient. When there were 300 million consumers, then it was possible to do anything within the country, including making space rockets or submarines, ships. But now we require cooperation, because the market has narrowed, and we need a wider market. That is why we are doing the right thing in this regard today, turning to the East and South. But this does not mean that we should deny our origin, our cultural historical code. Thank you.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Dear colleagues, not so long ago, Mikhail Borisovich Piotrovsky, colleagues from the Russian Academy of Sciences and me had a discussion about whether Russia is Europe and whether the West is Europe. Our opinions coincided in many ways (but, of course, not in everything), and we came to certain conclusions.

Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev argued that Russian culture is undoubtedly European. And we — our University and our scientific school — firmly stand on the same position: Russia is Europe, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok. Orthodoxy is the eastern branch of Christianity, but the point is not even in creeds, but in the fact that any religion is the core of the development of the culture of a particular people. Christianity once split into Western and Eastern, and as a result, two different models of social development emerged. This difference is still clearly evident. Russia

remained in the position of European values, and the West eventually came to “new ethics”, other “new” ideas and, as a result, ceased to be a European culture.

Dmitry Olegovich Babich, who is present here, explained his theory to me several years ago. The twentieth century saw the birth of three ideological bastards. The first is socialism, which at the stage of Bolshevism took on an absolutely inhuman form. The second is the national idea. There is nothing wrong with nationalism if it is love for one’s nation without hatred of others, presupposing respect, willingness to cooperate, etc. Loving one’s nation, one’s Motherland, striving to work for the good of one’s country — all this is human. But when nationalism grows to a hypertrophied size, an ideological “dislocation” occurs, which is what fascism became.

And the third bastard is liberalism. In general, the liberal worldview is quite positive. It provides for a certain system of values, including work, respect for the person, individualism — also reasonable, not opposing one’s interests to the interests of other people and society. Healthy liberalism encourages a person to balance all values and live in harmony. But suddenly something unexpected happened. The West which has always been distinguished by pragmatism, began to devour itself. True, the United States prefers not to devour itself, but there is virtually no democracy left, no freedom of speech, no independent judicial system, no advanced economy (otherwise why did the United States begin to lag behind China in terms of the pace of economic development?). At the same time, they rob the rest of the world. The USA has lost its status as a model state that has recipes for prosperity using its resources. It is still thriving, but, as their colleagues correctly said, only through theft.

Thus, the West ceased to be a full-fledged branch of European culture and turned into something flawed and rotten. Special kindergartens for LGBT children are already being created — is this normal? It is clear that the rights of people with “peculiarities” cannot be infringed upon, but this does not mean that their peculiarities should be considered the norm. Let’s say a person was born blind — of course, he/she needs to be socialized and somehow supported. But we won’t give him/her a driver’s license, right? The same is true with the love of a man for a man, a

woman for a woman. Such couples cannot produce children, and this cannot be considered the norm for humans. Moreover, in some countries they decided that it is possible to register the marriage of a person and an animal. We look with surprise and, of course, cannot accept this as the normal development of the European civilization. Therefore, it is an absolutely right step to adopt our own national foreign policy doctrine. We need to isolate ourselves from all this ugliness. The less we have to do with it, the better. Of course, we really don't want to give up classical European culture, visiting the Louvre and the Prado, but we'll have to get over it.

Currently, Russia is experiencing a real economic takeoff — 4 % per year! Although, Russian banker Oleg Vyugin, who is called an outstanding economist, predicts a deterioration because the balance of payments is disrupted. But what was this balance before? Money used to come from the West and go back then. And now the outflow has stopped. Oligarchs no longer transfer billions of dollars to Western banks and are forced to invest them in the domestic economy. Of course, no one forbids them to continue withdrawing their capital, but now it is unsafe — it can be taken away. As a result, the growth curve of the Russian economy went up.

At the same time, Russia stays with the rest of the world which is building BRICS. What is new about the BRICS association? Western countries are trying to maintain a unipolar model, where they will continue to dominate, dictate their terms and at the same time live by robbing the rest of the world. But other countries advocate that in a free world community everyone should have equal rights and respect each other. Of course, relations between states are never completely cloudless, and disagreements also occur. But if we strive for the same goal — cooperation for the common good, then all issues will be solved in working order. I think that the West is doomed in its opposition to this aspiration. Of course, for now they are holding everyone by the throat, because they still have very powerful levers of influence. But the more persistently they impose their will, the more resistance will stiffen, that is, the tendency to move away from the West, because no one wants to tolerate its dictates anymore.

Western hegemony will not fade away gradually — it will simply collapse at some point, and this moment will not have to wait long. Western Europe will probably stop subordinating to the United States — they simply will have no other choice. And the financial collapse in the United States is inevitable — the national debt cannot be increased indefinitely. As a result, a new system of international relations will be built, primarily economic and financial ones, but also cultural. And Russia will enter this system as an equal participant.

In any case, the future certainly does not belong to the Western model of civilization. Just 15 years ago, we believed that the United States and Europe had a chance for salvation. Academician Stepin and other prominent Russian scientists said that the West will either sink deeper into crisis, or draw conclusions from a series of disasters and direct all resources to elaborate a new development trajectory and follow it. Now we can conclude that Western countries were unable or unwilling to take the second path, so I believe that a sad future awaits them. Although, I must make a reservation: my opinion is not the ultimate truth.

Now, as a moderator, I want to ask the attendees a few questions. I am addressing the rector of the Belarusian State University, Professor Korol. Andrey Dmitrievich, how do you see our future?

A. D. KOROL: — Let me remind you of the famous statement of Claude Lévi-Strauss that the 21st century will be the century of the humanities or it will not exist at all. The education system can largely influence the implementation of the first option, and we are doing everything possible for this.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — That is, the world will get on the right path?

A. D. KOROL: — Yes, I am deeply convinced in it.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Alexander Vladimirovich, what will you say?

A. V. SHERSHUKOV: — I would also like to answer in the words of a respected person (not accurately, but close to the text): if events subsequently unfolded somewhat differently than Švejk predicted, then we must take into account the fact that he had not completed diplomatic education.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Not long ago a very interesting book about color revolutions was published. I address one of its authors: Sergey Grigorievich, what awaits us in the near future?

S. G. MUSIENKO: — The doubts about the prospects of BRICS that I hear from some colleagues remind me of how in the past many doubted the future of relations between Belarus and Russia. They turned out to be wrong.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Mr. Binev, what is your opinion?

A. P. BINEV: — I perceive the future as something “behind the curtains”. You don’t know what’s in there until it opens.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Perhaps Mr. Babich knows?

D. O. BABICH: — Since totalitarian, that is, distorted, liberalism has won in the West, victory will be ours. But we may lose if we return to totalitarian socialism, which many are pushing us towards, unfortunately. Under no circumstances should this be allowed to happen.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Professor Gromyko?

Al. A. GROMYKO: — I agree with those who believe that Russia’s European roots are very strong. We should not leave the very concept of European culture to the West, but we must remember that in the times of Pushkin and Dostoevsky, our

country was stronger than it is now integrated into what we now call Eurasia. Diversity is the fate of Russia. Being a northern European country in its cultural foundation, it still cannot focus only on Europe due to its natural geography. In the 21st century, at the next turn of historical development, we must integrate into both the global East and the global South. This is the task facing us now.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Thank you. Sergey Alekseevich, your opinion?

S. A. TSYPLYAEV: — “The world is falling into the abyss”, the Archbishop of York used to say a thousand years ago. But the abyss turned out to be not as terrible as he had feared. And now, I am sure, we will overcome the fears that torment us, become more open and enter the next phase of modernization, feeling confident and not afraid of influences from the outside. The way Peter I did it, the way it happened to a large extent during Soviet times. We can do this.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Academician Chereshnev, a couple of words.

V. A. CHERESHNEV: — I am an optimist. I believe in the next 10–20 years we will reap bumper crops in Texas and Oklahoma.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — What will happen next, Mr. Okoli?

M. OKOLI: — BRICS is, first of all, a very serious idea that is already becoming a reality. Of course, there will be challenges — not a single big project can do without them. But BRICS will cope with them, because it has a new promising agenda. And the West, with its value system, will not be able to brush aside this reality that has already arrived.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — That is, you think that BRICS will exist and develop. Evgeny Ivanovich, what awaits us in the future?

E. I. MAKAROV: — The second wave of BRICS expansion will occur in Brazil in a year.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Academician Nigmatulin?

R. I. NIGMATULIN: — The future depends on the younger generation, whose representatives are present here.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — OK, we need to treat students more strictly. Abdusalam Abdulkerimovich, your opinion?

A. A. GUSEINOV: — I believe that Russia will get out of its current problems.

G. F. FEIGIN: — I think that now it is simply necessary to reformat the global institutional architecture, because many of the previous projects have not shown sufficient effectiveness. And I believe in the future of BRICS as a global institution that will contribute to and participate in such a restructuring. This is the direction in which the world should develop.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — The latest remark was from Professor Feigin, Doctor of Economics. And now I turn to Sorbonne Professor Olivier Roqueplo. What can you say on the issue under discussion?

O. ROQUEPLO: — In my opinion, BRICS is the first step towards a multipolar world. But I would like to emphasize that we have not seen a multipolar world for a very long time, several centuries. Therefore, now BRICS is the hope of humanity.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — A very strong thesis! Alexander Vladimirovich, welcome.

A. V. YAKOVENKO: — What to expect? Firstly, new technological standards and dividing the world into technological zones — for the very simple reason that technologies will determine the economic development of countries. Secondly, regionalization of the currency sphere, since the influence of the dollar is steadily declining. If 10 years ago payments in dollars in the world trade and financial turnover reached 70 %, now their share has decreased to 46 %. Here are two trends that will shape the world's economic development over the next 10 years.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Maria Vladimirovna, do you want to ask a question? Welcome.

M. V. ZAKHAROVA: — Yes, a question for my colleague Zatulin. Konstantin Fyodorovich, you say that we should not take on issues of global justice, but should take care of our own internal affairs. But imagine that you have a beautiful house and a well-kept garden, you keep them in perfect order, but suddenly the supply of water, electricity stops, and a whole series of other problems arise. You'll have to go and settle it.

The history of mankind knows many examples when such voluntary isolation of states focusing exclusively on life within their borders, led humanity to disaster. By the way, the Second World War was possible for this reason. Politicians in European countries said: "It's not our business", and many allowed the Nazi troops to transit through their territories, believing that they would not be touched. Therefore, unfortunately, in order to preserve our civilizational identity and develop in the way we consider correct, we must strive for a more equitable world order.

K. F. ZATULIN: — The country that annoys us so much has developed a formula: we do not have permanent friends, but we have permanent interests. I do not

propose to copy it, but I want to draw your attention to the fact that in the past we have been at enmity with all of our current neighbors, with the exception of the Armenians and Georgians. But at the moment we are not doing well with them.

I don't think we should cut ourselves off from the rest of the world in order to build a city on a hill. I just want to say that the very BRICS that we are talking about must be used, improved in every possible way, etc. But it has not yet passed any checks either by time or by trials, it has not gone through fire and water. Individual BRICS members behave differently in different situations. Therefore, no matter how much we want to see what we want, we must see what is. That's what it's really about. And don't make anything a fetish.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Now Mikhail Viktorovich Shmakov will express his opinion.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — Two final theses. Firstly, when we talk about technology, let's not forget that today Russia is the generator and owner of a number of the most advanced technologies. For example, we have a fast neutron nuclear reactor which will ensure energy independence and electricity in our country for several hundred years to come, because it uses a special type of fuel. So in this matter we should not rely on either the West or the East — we can do a lot ourselves.

The second thesis concerns BRICS. What is the future of this association and the world in general? My answer is: it depends on how we work. At the heart of everything is work, which gives the right to a decent life. Unity, solidarity and justice — these values should be our motto.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — I must make one clarification: Mikhail Viktorovich is not only the leader of the Russian trade union movement, but also a graduate of one of the best technical universities — the Bauman Moscow State Technical University. He also worked in the defense industry for many years, participating in the development of rocketry and space systems.

Academician Naumkin, you have the floor.

V. V. NAUMKIN: — Probably, in the near future, subjects of global politics will continue to search for partners based on common interests. As a result, a system of partnerships will be created, and now we cannot say what it will look like. Perhaps BRICS will expand to gigantic proportions, but this association will still not be the only one. Whatever the circumstances, Russia will need at least 15–20 years to remain at the center of this system.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — The floor is given to Professor Irina Olegovna Abramova.

I. O. ABRAMOVA: — I will also discuss for a while with Konstantin Fyodorovich. I believe that we still need to set big goals now — both within our country, and within the BRICS framework, and for the entire “Global South”. When we formulate tasks, opportunities arise, but under one condition: it is necessary to clearly define the mechanisms for their realization.

And the second thesis. It is necessary to abandon stereotypical ideas, in particular the perception of the world and global culture as Eurocentric. Yes, Russia is a part of Europe. But even our education was structured in such a way that a huge layer of culture fell out of it. And it’s also time to get rid of the low self-esteem. We often hear complaints that we are weak, that we have nothing. But what Mikhail Viktorovich said refutes this opinion.

Well, the future, of course, belongs to the young.

M. V. SHMAKOV: — But the answer to Maria Vladimirovna’s question has not sounded.

K. F. ZATULIN: — We agree that we should not isolate ourselves, but rather set big goals and fight for sacred goals. “In your struggle you will find your right” —

this is the slogan of the Socialist Revolutionaries, in fact, before the first Russian revolution.

A. S. ZAPESOTSKY: — Let's support the slogan of the Socialist Revolutionaries. But it is still necessary to put your home in order.

Dear friends, in conclusion I will express my personal opinion. It's unlikely that I understand more than others, so I don't pretend on having the ultimate truth. But from everything that is happening in the world now, I conclude that humanity is on the verge of very big changes — hopefully, positive ones. A completely new model of the world order is gradually being built.

Academician Likhachev once expressed the idea that the development of society proceeds according to completely different laws than the development of nature. If Darwinism wins in nature — the strong wins and rules — then in culture this law ceases to operate, since humanism gradually grows in people. Sometimes it seems that this is not so, that savagery still triumphs. An aggressive state seeks to destroy a people it does not like, burning villages with napalm and shooting civilians — the victory of the one who is stronger is obvious. But in fact, Likhachev believed, culture and humanism ultimately break through like grass through asphalt, although this asphalt may look very hard and durable. The law of cultural development is the law of the continuous rise of humanism. It's just that at some moments it retreats a little, but then moves forward again. As a result, the world truly becomes more humane.

I think that's what is happening. I would like to believe that we are now on the threshold of the next stage in the progress of humanism. After all, what goals do the BRICS countries pursue? This is a new type of association; it cannot be judged by the criteria by which the European Union or NATO were created. Previous alliances were formed for the purpose of dominance — economic or military. And the BRICS countries are united by the idea of more free and equal development, when countries do not infringe on each other's interests. I repeat, I really want to believe that this will happen.

Meanwhile, military confrontations continue, people are dying in huge numbers, leaving their homes, and becoming refugees. But any conflicts always end in peace, and we all hope for their end soon. Humanism will certainly triumph.