

2020:

**THE PANDEMIC
AND A RETHINKING
OF THE
GLOBAL AGENDA**

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic intruded into our lives unexpectedly, in an instant upending conventional notions about everything around us. No venue, whether it be traditional media outlets, university campuses, social networks, or the halls of government, remains untouched by the impact of the pandemic. Opinions vary widely, not only because the challenges posed by the coronavirus are vastly complex and insufficiently understood. This virus simply affects almost every sphere of our lives.

First of all, the pandemic did not arrive on the scene unaccompanied; a whole series of other significant factors, each one capable of changing our lives drastically, appeared along with it. I am referring to a sharp drop in oil prices and other energy commodities, the onset of a global economic recession, and a destabilization of entire regions of the world, among many other things. We can see how intertwined these issues are; it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the pandemic and its impact from these other factors.

Moreover, it is far too early to begin speaking of the pandemic in the past tense. Only a few months have passed since last spring's first wave of the virus, and already the world has been hit with a second, a significantly more serious one (some countries are reporting they are experiencing a third wave of the pandemic). Those who had hoped the world would be able to come to grips with this invisible epidemiological threat by the end of 2020 saw these hopes dashed. We now can only hope that

2021 will be the year when the world puts an end to COVID-19. But we are also dealing with media discussion of the pandemic, a discussion quickly flooded with all sorts of speculation, myths, fake news, etc. The fight against the coronavirus has become just another staging ground for the bitter information war raging in the world over the last several years. This mishmash of information makes it extremely difficult to separate fact from fiction, verifiable data from subtle distortions, and objective analysis from veiled propaganda.

It comes as no surprise, then, that both Russia and the rest of the world have seen very little in the way of serious attempts to truly discern how the pandemic is changing the world around us, and what we can expect for the coming years in the social, economic, and political realms. All the more reason I call my reader's attention to the crucial joint report from the Institute of Modern Development (Russia) and the Baltic Forum international society (Latvia). The authors have taken on the difficult task of providing detailed analysis of how the pandemic is changing the world's economic, social, and political realms.

It goes without saying that taking on such a wide-ranging issue and condensing it into a fairly compact report leaves it open to criticism. No doubt these critics will fault the authors for not addressing certain consequences of the pandemic thoroughly enough or not addressing them at all. Presumably, the authors themselves, returning to the subject after a period of time, will want to shift their emphasis or rethink some of their conclusions. No doubt the near future will produce more interesting works on this topic, some of which will interpret the very same trends in a wholly different manner than the ones outlined in this report.

None of this minimizes the importance of the work put in by the scholars at these partner organizations in Moscow and Riga. It is my sincere hope that this instance of fruitful Russian-Latvian collaboration in analyzing major international issues will not prove to be a one-off experience put on for show. It needs to continue in the very near future.

Igor Ivanov

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (1998–2004)

President of the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs

December 24, 2020

PREFACE

The beginning of the present century has seen the accumulation of a critical mass of problems for global governance. Its institutions were established in a different era and are now perceived more and more as inefficient. Those in charge of these institutions are finding it more and more difficult to carry the burden of leadership. The weakening status of the West as the primary keeper of world order and its inability to handle current challenges in a swift and effective manner (challenges such as the growing influence of authoritarian regimes, the deliberalization of the global economy and foreign trade, as well as the complete destabilization of the Middle East and North Africa that caused the migration chaos in Europe) led to a situation where, by the middle of the 2010s, crises were occurring almost of their own accord. When institutions weaken, the public loses faith in them; it loses faith in their very foundations. The weakening grows exponentially and can result in a total institutional collapse (the Brexit crisis presents a stark example of this on the regional level).

The coronavirus pandemic, the top story of 2020 for the entire world, shined a light on already existing problems and accelerated certain trends. On the ideological level, we are experiencing a crisis of trust in government structures at all levels as well as palpable pessimism, a growth in irrationalism and xenophobia, and a rejection of liberal values. On the practical level, we have seen global governance institutions hit hard. The global economy has been relocated. The gap between

rich and poor nations has widened, as has the gap between the rich and poor within these nations. Authoritarian regimes have gained strength in various parts of the world. The leaders of these regimes acquired new quarantine tools for controlling and suppressing their people during the pandemic, as well as a sense of total impunity. The world is fragmenting, and with it — any accountability to the global community.

The latest chapter in the global leadership crisis was caused first and foremost by a sharpening of the conflict between the US and China. This confrontation of two global leaders affects both economic globalization as well as any attempt at reforming global governance, a process whose success is directly dependant on the willingness of major players to cooperate. In principle, the European Union is the entity capable of enacting such reforms, but it must first achieve a sufficient amount of internal unity. For Russia, the current situation also presents an opportunity to secure a more substantial role for itself in the world than a junior partner to China or global enfant terrible. It remains to be seen if the domestic economy and internal politics will allow Moscow to take advantage of the opportunity. One way or another, the coronavirus pandemic is bound to cause both a shift in the balance of power as well as changes in leadership on the world stage.

These changes in leadership will determine the contours of a looming restructuring (perestroika) of global governance. Renationalizaion, protectionism, antiliberalism — any trends of this sort are not capable of changing the nature of the challenges facing the world. These are shared challenges, and adequate remedies to these challenges must also be shared. A

globalization reboot (Hillary's State Dept) is on the horizon, and it is crucial that the process be a controlled one and that it produce real solutions to the problems that have accumulated over the last two to three decades. This globalization 2.0 must ensure objective efficiency, rapid response, and transparency within supranational governing bodies. It must find a workable approach to balancing the global and the national, joint responsibility and individual sovereignty.

The reforms should be conducted simultaneously on all levels of global governance. They need to be enacted both at the UN and in the informal clubs of leading nations. That would include those that currently exist (the G7 and G20) and those that might form in the future. These reforms will also affect institutions established to handle specific challenges, such as the World Health Organization. As the global leadership crisis accelerates, it is essential that we do our due diligence in creating functioning mechanisms to ensure that the activities of these organizations are properly funded. Another significant development to consider is the growing power of non-governmental players in this realm. We need to create conditions in which productivity from these factors is positive and realized to its fullest potential.

Reforms are effective if they are targeted at a reevaluation of priorities within the global agenda. The long-standing tendency to favor traditional challenges, such as military conflicts, must be overcome. We must focus our attention on newer, nontraditional challenges such as global healthcare security, biosafety, climate change, food security, and cyberthreats. The world's leaders need to work together within these organizations

to develop an integrated approach to facing threats head-on. The relevant organizations must adjust their instruments, so to speak, and we must reinforce the mechanisms in place to ensure that international treaties are being observed. But there is also a need to pursue new agreements and create new instruments to monitor the current state of each domain.

The success of this plan will form the basis for the reboot and put an end to this crisis of the entire system of global governance. As its structures begin to fail in the face of the coronavirus, it may become, paradoxically, both more and less difficult to enact necessary reforms. A globalization 2.0 will facilitate a movement towards sustained development, freedom, and prosperity for the world community, not to mention an effective counter to any new nontraditional security challenges in the current year akin to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part One.

THE WORLD FACE TO FACE WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1.1 A Crisis of Global Leadership

It's now commonplace to say that the coronavirus will radically change the world. And while some experts are certain that we are facing a complete dismantling of the process of globalization and a return to an almost Westphalian system of government, coupled with a collapse of integrated networks and political alliances such as the European Union, others are convinced that a globalization 2.0 will only accelerate in the face of external threats transcending national borders. It has indeed become abundantly clear that the global community must come together to fight this epidemic. But it's also true that other issues, such as climate change, migration, cyberwarfare, an unregulated nuclear arms race, and a stockpiling of other weapons of mass destruction, cannot be solved solely on the national level.

The international cooperative framework and institutions of intergovernmental collaboration such as the United Nations

have been placed under intense pressure. These institutions needed to be reformed long ago, but skepticism on the part of the great powers prevented any movement along these lines. Under Donald Trump, the United States — the most powerful nation on Earth and at one time the leader of the Western world — has effectively dismantled the United Nations network by exiting UNESCO, severing ties with the WHO, and cutting aid to developing countries.

Since the middle of the 2010s, the European Union, the most successful and largest integrated organization, has been waging an existential battle for its very survival. The organization finds itself in a precarious situation thanks to a multitude of problems including, of course, the UK's decision to leave, a failed attempt to set up a stable France–Germany tandem to take the lead on economic and military-political issues, lengthy border closings due to the coronavirus epidemic (a policy that looks to remain in place for some time still), and a persistent inability to come to a solid agreement on aid along the North–South axis. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe (especially the Visegrad Group) seem more and more like dissatisfied freeloaders than members, demanding financial aid from Brussels while ignoring demands to change their value systems. At the EU summit in July 2020, Charles Michel, President of the European Council, stated that fund distribution from the EU's budget would directly depend on member nations' adherence to the rule of law (something which will obviously affect Poland and Hungary). As autumn drew to a close, however, the discussion between the European Council and the European Parliament on the issue was still ongoing, and the budget had yet to be approved.

All this is occurring at a time when the unipolarity of our world is ending; the US has proven unable to carry the mantle of a global leader. We saw a retreat to isolationist positions in the Obama administration, and Trump, with his America First campaign, has accelerated the process past the point of no return. But a bipolar world has not taken shape yet either. At the moment, China has neither the material nor intellectual means to take on the role that the Soviet Union played in the years when these two systems were in conflict. The Americans have instituted a program that basically declares China “Enemy No. 1” and have advanced a more nuanced but ultimately harsher stance on Russia. These developments will, of course, prompt Beijing to take on more and more ambitious commitments, especially if the CPC's declarations on the superiority of China's form of governance and on the Middle Kingdom's place in the world do indeed take shape. In essence, if the Americans continue their policy of containment on two fronts simultaneously, against the two “authoritarian behemoths” of China and Russia, it may prove to be too much, even for a power such as the United States.

In the run-up to the November 2020 presidential elections, the US was confronted with a laundry list of problems. The COVID-19 crisis laid bare the weaknesses which existed in Congress, the Pentagon, corporate America, and the halls of academia. As the country's death toll from coronavirus reached the highest in the world,¹ we saw in the starkest of terms the

¹ According to data from Johns Hopkins University, as of November 1, 2020, the US had 9.2 million confirmed coronavirus cases and more than 230,000 had died from the virus (nearly 20% of the world's total death toll). Brazil was number two in this dubious claim to fame (160,000 deaths), followed by India (122,000), Mexico (92,000), the United Kingdom (42,000), and Italy (39,000).

disparities between rich and poor and between white America and everyone else — black, Latino, and other ethnic and religious minorities. The riots caused by the murder of a black man at the hands of police in Minneapolis were an inevitable consequence of these disparities. The unrest engulfed the nation at the end of May and remained a top story in newsrooms for the entire summer. More localized flareups along these same lines continued into the fall (in Philadelphia, for example, at the end of October 2020).

But the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement was not the only factor at play here. Every aspect of American life throughout 2020, one way or another, became a prime example of how polarized the country's society was. This is in part due to the Trump presidency, which created the conditions for this confrontation, and then the president relied on it as a way to hold on to power. But there are other, more underlying reasons behind this polarization, reasons connected to historical events and social causes more relevant than the idiosyncrasies and political views of the 45th president of the United States.

And it's clear that the policy of double containment of China and Russia, begun under Trump, will remain in force even if Democrat Joe Biden wins the election. The Democrats formalized this conflict by passing legislation. No doubt the Europeans will blindly follow this strategy; their economic and political pursuits will soon necessitate the forming of a third powerful and independent player so as not to fall victim to a China–US confrontation.

Nevertheless, NATO, with a budget largely funded by the Americans, has proven itself in the post-war years to be a reliable protector, with the Europeans having to spend very little to

keep it going. When Trump took office, this free ride came to an end. European nations were forced to increase their defense expenditures to 2%² of their GDP as the Americans clearly lost their appetite for collective defense of interests, especially those of Europe. There was talk of creating an armed forces within the European Union, but funding for such an endeavor has yet to be found. It also remains to be seen if there is widespread support from member nations for such a step. All this is to say that a worsening of relations with China and Russia could not have come at a more inopportune time. It must be mentioned, however, that Trump increased defense expenditures for 2019 to astronomical levels — 732 billion dollars. To compare, Russia spent 65 billion and China 261 billion, according to the April 2020 report from SIPRI. So European reliance on aid from across the ocean is still not a completely unrealistic hope.

On February 7, 2020, French President Emanuel Macron outlined the position of European progressives on this issue in perhaps the most clear and concise manner. In a speech to graduates of the Paris Military Academy, Macron highlighted the importance of French nuclear containment forces but also spent a solid amount of time discussing the need to save the European Union, which, in turn, would lead to a strengthening in US–Europe solidarity. Tensions and rivalries among the great powers are mounting, he emphasized, and could lead to “an unmanageable military escalation.” Macron believes that regional players such as Iran and North Korea and their ability to reach Europe with their nuclear missiles have

² Germany's unwillingness to increase its defense spending to the target goal prompted Trump in July 2020 to withdraw almost a third (more than 10,000 service members) of American troops stationed in Germany.

altered the geostrategic landscape. Additional threats arise when one considers that long-standing bans on the use of chemical weapons have been violated countless times in Syria, Malaysia, even in Europe. The French president also lamented the disappearance or eschewing of international norms and the violation of procedures established for new scientific technologies.

Circumstances are such that it's time for Europe to wake up, and transition to the status of independent player in certain key sectors of international security — digital sovereignty, infrastructure, defense, arms control, to include nuclear, come to mind.

The tone of Macron's speech suggests that he no longer depends on protection from the Americans. Reliable sources in Trump's inner circle report that he has discussed the option of withdrawing from NATO. Macron stated it plainly in his speech: the United States can no longer dictate our policies. Capital from China has already bought up our ports, infrastructure, and airports, and our computer networks are being compromised by the Russians...Europe and Europe alone must be in control of its digital, maritime, and energy infrastructure.³ Although he did call for a gradual restoration of good faith relations with the Russians.

The French president delivered this forceful speech on the topic of trans-Atlantic relations at the beginning of February.

³ Cf.: Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27ème promotion de l'école de guerre; <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-lecole-de-guerre>

Then the pandemic hit, and grievances from both the US and the EU intensified. Flights and meetings were canceled, bitter competition began for medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), and President Trump came in for widespread scorn and mockery.

This notion of a distinct mission for Europe seemed only to gain steam during the first wave of the pandemic. For example, in June, Thierry de Montbrial, Executive Chairman of the French Institute of International Relations, strongly urged Europe to take advantage of the strengths within the EU to show the world not only that a viable third option exists apart from the US and China, but also what a functioning multilateral model looks like.⁴

American hegemony has always hinged upon an extremely strong economy which allows for a colossal military presence around the world. It has become a commonplace of late, however, for serious-minded politicians and experts alike to express some amount of alarm over the future of this economy. A slowdown in economic activity beginning in March of 2020 resulted in a drop in GDP of 32.9% at the end of the second quarter (data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the Department of Commerce). According to Federal Reserve predictions (Sep 2020), the decrease in GDP for the year looked to reach 3.7% — a significantly worse drop than at the height of the last global crisis.

At the beginning of 2020, unemployment predictions stood at 3.2%. By the fall of this year, that figure had jumped to 7.6%.

⁴См.: Т. de Montbrial, "Common House — Absolutely", Общий дом — и никак иначе // Russia in Global Affairs, June 11, 2020 г., <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/obshhij-dom-i-nikak-inache/>

The unprecedented 3.7 trillion dollars injected into the US economy may provide a certain amount of stability by the end of the year, but US finance and economic officials expect a full recovery only by the end of the decade. In addition, the massive national debt will increase by another 10%, merely passing the problems to the next generation.

How will this impact American military presence in the world? Even before the pandemic hit, both the left and the right in the US were doing their best to convince the president and Congress that military spending must be cut, with those funds then used on domestic infrastructure. It seemed, at the beginning of his term at least, that Trump agreed with this sentiment and ran with it. He announced a withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the Middle East and demanded that Europe increase its NATO funding. But then reality set in. It is almost certain that the US will spend somewhere between 11 trillion (the optimists from J.P. Morgan) to 19 trillion (the pessimists from McKinsey) dollars on fighting the pandemic. Continuing to spend more than 700 billion dollars on defense annually will simply create too heavy a burden. Instead of deploying significant numbers of troops in Asia to “protect US vital interests” as China dramatically increases its military potential, the US is faced with unavoidable spending cuts. One can only conclude that its status as a world leader is looking less certain.

Aside from a potential reduction in the US’s global military presence, there is also the very real domestic issue of social inequality, one that has only been exacerbated by the pandemic. According to estimates from the prominent Pew Research Center,

80% of American households hold 48% of national income. Income disparities in the US between the rich and poor are the starkest among nations in the Big 7. We are seeing stagnating demand, which naturally creates a destabilizing effect for the supply side, what leading US economist Larry Summers calls “the precursor to permanent economic stagnation.” And the authors of a study from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco agree: the repercussions of the pandemic may be felt in the US for the next 40 years. These repercussions will certainly impact US capabilities and its standing and influence abroad. The question of the nation’s reputation is also not insignificant. Apart from military and economic might, American influence over its allies has always depended on soft power as well. The US is perceived as a wealthy nation with a government run by sober-minded officials. It is the leader among democratic nations. It has autonomous, resilient institutions and a clear separation of powers among the three branches of government. But in 2020 this nation was split in half, its economic and political future unclear. The policies drawn up by the president of the United States could in no way be called progressive or even minimally coherent. And his potential successor has done little to garner enthusiasm even among many Democrats.

For the first time in American history, there is talk of moving completely to a vote-by-mail model, which, of course, will lend itself to accusations of ballot tampering and fraud from both sides. Trump only poured gasoline on the fire when he suggested (and later walked back) delaying Election Day due to the pandemic. This bastion of democracy is doing its best to undo its very foundations. China and Russia, which very well

might emerge from the COVID-19 crisis with fewer lives lost, are advancing talking points that authoritarianism is more effective than democracy. These arguments will likely do little to sway citizens of democratic nations, but the fact remains that the public image of the leader of the Western world has taken a hit.

Henry Kissinger, in an editorial in the Wall Street Journal from April 2020, stated that the US is deeply divided, and without an effective, forward-thinking government, it will be unable to deal with the unprecedented challenges of the day, challenges which have only grown worse during the pandemic. The situation will likely impact social peace as well as relations with other nations. Kissinger outlined three crucial steps the US needs to take to restore the leadership role it once enjoyed in the post-war period with the Marshall Plan and the Manhattan Project:

- *Take the lead in developing a coherent response to the epidemiological threats to mankind, which will exist in one form or another for all times*
- *Establish a multilateral framework for economic cooperation so that future crises are not so devastating on a global scale*
- *Safeguard a liberal world order in which democratic principles exist in harmony with the protections of the rights of citizens and nations*⁵

⁵ Kissinger Henry A., “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order”,—The Wall Street Journal, April 2, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-pandemic-will-forever-alter-the-world-order-11585953005>

In an article in The Atlantic, William Burns, a former deputy secretary of state, US ambassador to Russia, and the president of the Carnegie Foundation, was in full agreement with Kissinger. He noted that “the post-pandemic world will pose a massive test for American statecraft, the biggest since the end of the Cold War. If policy makers are able to see the landscape before them as it is, and not as they want it to be, and are also able to draw the right lessons from our missteps over the past three decades, recovering a healthy and disciplined foreign policy is still possible.”⁶

How has the present US administration responded to these threats? By withdrawing from the World Health Organization, engaging in a Cold War with China, and freezing transatlantic relations with its European allies.

And so that brings up one of the most basic questions of a post-COVID world order — who will come out on top in the battle for leadership between the two leading military and economic driving forces, China and the US? A weakened United States and an emboldened China will inevitably compete. The question is whether this competition results in a hostile confrontation. One can assume that authoritative regimes, especially China’s, will do much in the future to consolidate its new technologies, creating additional problems for Western democracies.

Going back to the Burns article, the former diplomat writes, “There is a lot to be worried about in managing mounting friction with China, but containing its rise altogether is beyond America’s capacity.”

⁶ Burns William J., “A Make-or-Break Test for American Diplomacy”,—The Atlantic, April 6, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/a-make-or-break-test-for-american-diplomacy/609514/>

And all the while, the small inroads made in trade negotiations between the US and China before the pandemic have come to naught in the face of mutual incriminations and threats of sanctions and countersanctions. It is fair to say that it was the US that injected ideology into the rivalry. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper presented a path forward that was clearly anti-China. It referred to the Chinese Communist Party as the number one threat to the US and to the free world. It was perhaps the first time that US officials of that level had articulated a long-term, non-negotiable strategy, not simply of containment, but of direct conflict with China on all fronts — military, political, information, trade, etc. Although even before that, in October 2019, Pompeo’s controversial remarks at the Hudson Institute referred to the conflict between the US and China as one of competing ideologies and values, and that “the Chinese Communist Party is a Marxist–Leninist Party focused on struggle and international domination.”⁷

It seems that when it comes to China, the ruling elites in the US are interpreting the Thucydides Trap, which rattled Graham Allison back in 2012 (a waning power engages in armed conflict with an emerging one due to its unique perception of the geopolitical landscape), not as a threat but as an inevitability ordained by fate. The most acute and perhaps dangerous tension between the two at the moment is unfolding in the Pacific Rim. The US is accusing China of expansionism while Beijing is upset that the Americans are trying to box in the PLA within the

⁷ “2019 Herman Kahn Award Remarks: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the China Challenge”, 6, https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Transcript_Secretary%20Mike%20Pompeo%20Hudson%20Award%20Remarks.pdf

First Island Chain of the Yellow Sea. China is not playing along, however. Its strong resistance to US naval presence and the pressure it is exerting on Taiwan forced Congress to pass a law on Taiwan which firms up the legal status of the island, which China still does not recognize.

A new conflict arose at the end of May 2020 over Hong Kong. In response to new legislation concerning policing of the area passed by the Chinese, legislation which virtually eliminated the one nation — two systems policy, Washington imposed sanctions and rolled back existing trade procedures with the former British colony.

A Pew Research Center opinion poll conducted in the US in April 2020 showed that two thirds of Americans view China as a hostile nation, a figure 20% higher than in 2018 and the highest since the polling began 15 years ago.

Spin doctors from both countries began promoting conspiracy theories about the other side. We heard that the virus was a bacteriological weapon developed in a secret lab in Wuhan and that the American military had transported the virus into China. Points of contention had begun to accumulate long ago. After it became clear that China would be unable to integrate gradually into the system of rules and regulations established by the West, the US was faced with two basic truths:

- *China intended to create a new international system for its own benefit, one based on its own interests and using an authoritarian, not democratic, template*
- *China has become a large-scale manufacturer of finished and semi-finished products on which the US depends, even in the defense sector*

H. R. McMaster's account of President Trump's visit to China in November 2017 was very telling in this regard. The former US national security adviser released more details of the visit later, after he had left his position, in a May 2020 article in *The Atlantic*. He described a meeting with Li Keqiang, the premier of China's State Council and the titular head of the government:

"He began with the observation that China, having already developed its industrial and technological base, no longer needed the United States. He dismissed US concerns over unfair trade and economic practices, indicating that the US role in the future global economy would merely be to provide China with raw materials, agricultural products, and energy to fuel its production of the world's cutting-edge industrial and consumer products."⁸

Those who share General McMaster's convictions within the American political establishment are certain that China's party leadership believes there is only a small window of opportunity to make the necessary course corrections in the global system of law and order. China will face difficulties regarding the centralized management of its economy, its aging population, and a disgruntled younger generation. The vulnerabilities in China's system of governance were laid bare by the coronavirus epidemic, but there is no question that the ability of the party to consolidate the efforts of government, big business, state industries, and the science and military sectors poses a real danger to the Americans.

⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/mcmaste-china-strategy/609088/>

To be clear, China's actions on several fronts provide plenty of cause for concern, both for the US and the global community as a whole. The list is a long one, and the facts are of no secret: a crackdown by central authorities on Buddhists in Tibet, a hostile reaction to an increase in the number of Catholics and Protestants in the country, including the destruction of places of worship, the integration of Hong Kong already mentioned and the resulting suppression of protests, more than a million Uyghurs in concentration camps, and finally, the conflict with Taiwan.

And then there is China's personalized system of social credit, instituted to track the loyalty of its citizens on-line. Now the securing of loans, promotions, housing, and much more is dependent on a person's trustworthiness. We see something similar to this Big Brother conduct toward underlings in China's foreign policy, specifically in several of its major projects — the Belt and Road Initiative, Made in China 2025, and, in the technology sphere, Military–Civil Fusion. These projects have ramped up since statements made by Xi Jinping in 2015.

The Belt Road Initiative has declared investments of 1 trillion dollars and covers the countries in the Indo-Pacific region with access to both Western and Eastern Europe. The demanding terms for Chinese investment result in undeclared political covenants. According to data from 2018, 23 of the 68 recipient nations were considered high credit risks, and eight of them (Pakistan, Mongolia, Laos, Djibouti, the Maldives, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Montenegro) were for all intents and purposes incapable of meeting their debt obligations. When Sri Lanka found itself in this situation in 2017, it was forced to lease its port to China for 99 years with no compensation.

On the eve of the pandemic, we saw that some experts were still holding out hope that Washington would return to its engagement + deterrence policy. This policy was created to “make China a responsible stakeholder” and to “encourage Beijing to exert its influence in the region and beyond as long as it strengthens the international system.” It would welcome China’s help in combatting global warming, nuclear proliferation, money laundering, and terrorism.⁹ Others, however, seemed to think there was no longer a way to escape the Thucydides Trap.

When asked about the current political landscape, observers in Russia (and many abroad as well) often speak not just about a clash between the two poles of China and the US but about a triangular US–China–Russia conflict as well. How has the pandemic altered or perhaps will alter relations between China and Russia? At the highest levels, the two countries certainly enjoy a close relationship supported by a strategic alliance, and this closeness trickles down to the lower levels of government (although the elites of both countries continue to view the other with suspicion). It is too early for talk of a military alliance. At the Valdai Club meeting on October 22, 2020, Russian president Vladimir Putin spoke on the matter: “This is not one of our priorities, but we also cannot rule out the possibility.” Be that as it may, Russia conducted joint military training, the largest of its kind, with the People’s Liberation Army of China; and Moscow also assisted Beijing in creating an early warning

missile system. Trade volume between the two nations exceeded 110 billion dollars in 2019, a figure three times lower than trade volume between Russia and the EU (278 billion dollars) but two times higher than the figure from three years ago. It represents 17% of Russia’s foreign trade, and the figure will only go up in the future.

The pandemic, along with the sharp drop in oil prices, has forced Russia to seek out new relationships with foreign partners and shore up already existing ones. The Russian economy is focused on exports, while demand on the domestic side has taken a big hit. GDP is forecast to shrink in 2020, according to various estimates, somewhere between 4% and 5%. Real disposable income plummeted in the second quarter of 2020 by 8.4% and in the third quarter by 5%. In light of the continuing sanctions from the EU and the US, China would seem to be the best market for Russian manufacturers. And while China’s economy did suffer at the outset of the pandemic, it is beginning to recover. Demand for oil and gas will only grow.

Russia is highly dependent on the rest of the world for new technologies. Because of the sanctions, China would be able to step in for Western partners, albeit mostly with steel and plastic-making technologies of occasionally dubious quality. And no matter what is said in political circles about an equal partnership, Russia in its current state can look to nothing more than the status of “little brother.” This state of affairs does not please those in charge of the economy, foreign policy, and the military and intelligence services. But they will have to live with it until they are able to find a way to balance geostrategic positions.

⁹ Zakaria Fareed, “The New China Scare”,—Foreign Affairs, January/February 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-12-06/new-china-scare>

What will the global political landscape look like after the pandemic? There actually are not as many answers to this question as there might seem.

One possible scenario would be the emergence of a new bipolar world with the United States returning to its leadership position among major Western nations. China would buttress its position as the head of a nascent group of authoritarian states, offering itself as an alternative model. Global development would continue within the framework of these two competing systems, fully consistent with Hegel's law of the unity and conflict of opposites.

The second scenario envisions the world community finding the resources and political will to deal with the mounting number of pent-up conflicts and animosities in order to overhaul the existing mechanisms of global governance and reform its international institutions. A significant portion of this book is dedicated to possible outcomes and methods for structuring this reform.

A third scenario could take hold if the global community enters a dangerous phase where fundamental treaties and agreements no longer exist or cease to function. As the system of united nations collapses, the game of sovereign nations and local alliances continues. According to those who foresee this scenario developing, both the United States and China emerge from the pandemic significantly diminished, and we see a "slow but steady drift toward international anarchy across everything from international security to trade to pandemic management."¹⁰

¹⁰ Rudd Kevin, "The Coming Post-COVID Anarchy",—Foreign Affairs, May 6, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-05-06/coming-post-covid-anarchy>

And once again, then, we are left with this Hegelian "negation of the negation" and the prospect of rebuilding (almost from scratch) a new, more rational post-disaster world.

There is, however, evidence from the aforementioned speech by French president Macron that there are forces in the world that support a fourth scenario. Here we would have a tri-polar world consisting of the EU, China, and the US. This scenario could actually be considered a subset of the first one. In fact, all of these scenarios have their own subsets, and every day that passes in our COVID and post-COVID reality is a day of bifurcation. People will make both good and bad decisions, and history will veer in the appropriate direction. But we must fully realize that the rough drafts of our future have been written in the distant and not-so-distant past.

1.2 New Facets of The Social Order

In the social sphere, as in global politics, the pandemic has not so much created a new reality as highlighted and accelerated trends that had already taken hold within the old social structure.

The twenty-first century is not merely a milestone on the calendar but a fundamentally different era as well. A new generation has come of age. It is common knowledge that generations are marked by shared experiences and events — wars, revolutions, economic chaos. But if we consider the golden billion nations, people born in the 1980s and 1990s of the last century, we can see that no one saw or personally experienced anything listed above. Sure, there were some minor, cyclical ups and downs in the economy, in 2008–2009, for example, but that was a small bump in the road compared to the Great Depression of the 1930s with its massive unemployment and a devastating drop in income for the majority of the world’s population. So, what was the common experience, then, which shaped this generation? A revolution, not of class but of information, one which ushered in a new stage in the globalization of life, not only in the golden billion nations but across humanity as well.

We are still underestimating the role the Internet, mobile communication, and big data play in all aspects of public and private life. Thanks to these tools, our personas have expanded through space and time. At one point in time, the territorial principle set the limits for human communication. Now, thanks to Internet messenger services, a person moves easily through the world, “taking all his loved ones with him.”

A specialist writing an article for which he needs digital data from another work already published on the topic simply clicks a few times with his mouse and has it all in his inbox. Mere 25 or 30 years ago, he would have spent days in the library looking for the information. Not to mention the changes in human consumption. On-line commerce and delivery services make it possible to indulge every whim, no matter how exotic, without leaving your house.

The most important innovation, however, has been advancement in the world's access to information (and its frequent dissemination on an almost daily basis) and in the ability to communicate virtually with absolutely anyone via "social networks." Thirty or 40 years ago, the phrase *citizen of the world* was just that — a phrase used to describe a small group of forward-thinking intellectuals. Nowadays, we see that many educated young and middle-aged people can calibrate this phrase with tools thanks to their ability to access any point on Earth.

Lastly, we come to the issue of peace and war. Those born in the 1980s and 1990s or later not only have not experienced a worldwide armed conflict, of which there were two in the past century, they know about war only from movies or from stories told by the few remaining veterans. Peace for them, consequently, is the normal state of affairs, which makes this cohort, whether they realize it or not, into pacifists. They simply do not understand why humanity would spend trillions of dollars on the manufacturing and storing of weapons of mass destruction.

Compounding this distinct value system of the next generation is yet another technological revolution, the fifth in succession. It is doing more than simply automating or digitizing the workplace; it is changing the very nature of labor. Low-paying repetitive jobs are becoming a thing of the past, at least in economically developed nations. These positions are being replaced by work that can be done only when a person has acquired certain knowledge and a specific skillset, one that clearly cannot be acquired through the standard school curriculum.

The concepts of *work time* and *leisure time* are changing radically as well. For those whose mind is their main instrument of labor, these two concepts have disappeared entirely. They work 24/7, with occasional attempts to engage on other topics. These attempts are considered their "leisure time." The rise of teleworking, in practice now almost everywhere thanks to the pandemic, has made this work/leisure relationship even more common.

This entire mosaic of new trends laid out before you is now the norm for the younger generations, which can only mean a series of significant changes await us. These changes will take place very soon in all spheres of public life, when the so-called *millennials* come into their own and receive the "controlling stake" in governing the world.

Prosperity as a source of problems and change

The golden billion first appeared in the 1960s, when majorities in the US and the more prosperous countries of

Western Europe moved past a daily struggle for physical survival. We saw the middle class (or rather, middle classes) grow into a dominant position, and poverty become a marginal phenomenon. Those born into families of the majority found themselves surrounded by creature comforts; they could go to school with no problems and, if they wanted, move on to college. And naturally, this cohort began to consider issues of love, fairness, and sincerity. In many respects the result of all this was the 1968 generation of revolution, the hippies, and other types of social misfits. The youth of the time, unburdened by a job search or securing food to eat, wanted something more, something sublime.

And although revolutionary fervor eventually waned without disturbing the societal structure of golden billion nations, a feeling of dissatisfaction with a merely prosperous existence remained a hallmark of the more educated (university educated) generations of young people. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the issue of protecting nature came to the fore, a concept understood to include not only the environment but an integral part of our very selves as well. Not to mention, of course, global social inequality.

Meanwhile, we saw issues come to a head internally in nations of the golden billion. The middle class stopped growing and, in some places, even began to constrict. Its general welfare did not improve (and even worsened in some places) compared with the halcyon days of the 1960s. Living side-by-side with an ever-increasing number of immigrants became a real problem. These immigrants strove against all odds to reach the countries of the golden billion.

The coronavirus pandemic also compounded concerns over the healthcare system, which was caught completely unawares in most cases. For all these reasons and more, we see a rather high level of dissatisfaction in almost all economically developed nations with the course these countries are taking. The more educated population and, most notably, the younger generation are in favor of more targeted action and even complete systemic change as the best path to solve the crisis.

These golden billion nations, after successfully reaching a high-level of prosperity, have now fallen victim to this very prosperity; they are faced with the need to completely overhaul their public institutions and social structure.

Even more democracy

We are only now beginning to see the contours of this realignment. It is clear that the most engaged members of society do not want authoritarianism, totalitarianism, or any other form of dictatorship. Especially considering that the newer generation now entering leadership positions views the current Western establishment as undemocratic. To be overly simplistic perhaps, according to them, this establishment is made up of a bunch of corrupt bureaucrats who have usurped power and are unwilling to share it with those who truly believe in democracy.

The concept of “direct democracy” has been discussed at length on the theoretical level. We are now seeing it in practice not only in electronic voting but in demands from local leadership for more and more autonomy. Even the most extreme instances where territorial integrity (in Catalonia or Scotland,

for example) is threatened are not really about ethnicity. National self-identity is a good cover for emancipation (or even full independence) from a central authority which, according to those who spearheaded the separation initiatives, has amassed too much economic and political power. But these two examples are extreme because they are so rare. The general trend is to give more authority to the cities and municipalities.

Another matter worth discussing is the potential for development of the so-called global cities. There aren't that many of them. The most prominent of them are New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in the US, as well as Tokyo, Paris, and London. Their role in the political, economic, and social fabric both within their own countries and throughout the world continues to grow. They are the cities which provide the primary innovations for society and where the most crucial, informal decisions are made. The mayors of these cities are in many cases more influential than some heads of state and their most engaged residents, thanks to virtual communication, are able to reach across borders at all times. Knowledge of English is a great help, of course, and has become an absolute must-have for the "global citizen. This citizen is most likely to be found in these cities and is, in fact, what makes them global.

But it seems traditional local self-government is about to change radically as well. It will most likely take on more duties even in such decentralized nations as Italy, Spain, and Finland.

With all this unfolding, the recent changes to the Russian constitution making local self-government essentially a part of the state power vertical seem rather anachronistic. This shift will further complicate matters for many young people

who would like to start their political careers in localities that are relatively independent of regional and federal authority. Now that this path is blocked thanks to strict administrative measures "from the top," conditions are forming for this pent-up energy within the younger generation to be released in a manner outside the official system.

A New Politics of Social Welfare

The issue of inequality has become the foremost topic of discussion for the world as a whole, both in the global and domestic contexts. It is no coincidence that professor Tom Picketty's book *Capital in the 21st Century* became a worldwide bestseller.¹¹ It is often impossible to calculate these inequalities, but public opinion is driven by optics and a deep-seated feeling that injustices are worsening. This creates a big problem for practical policy when it comes time to do something on the practical level about this inequality.

Should we raise taxes on the rich, as Tom Picketty suggests? But these people will simply move to other jurisdictions where they can pay as little as possible. And then we might see the economy take a major blow due to the ensuing lack of investment.

Recently, we saw the emergence of an option which apparently would make putting this idea into practice possible—having some portion of the rich either voluntarily transferred a significant part of their wealth into charity foundations (as we saw with Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg) or taking on a higher

¹¹ "2019 Herman Kahn Award Remarks: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the China Challenge", 6, https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.hudson.org/Transcript_Secretary%20Mike%20Pompeo%20Hudson%20Award%20Remarks.pdf

tax burden (cf. <https://www.millionairesforhumanity.com/>). It is likely that this movement will gain momentum thanks to the coronavirus pandemic.

It might catch on even more due to the more concrete discussions taking place on instituting a Universal Basic Income (UBI). To recall, many governments provided across-the-board stimulus checks to minimize the damage done by the pandemic with little to no limitations on who was eligible to receive them. Even in Russia all families with children under 16, regardless of income, received 20 thousand rubles per child. In some countries, such as Italy and Spain, the government has already promised to enact UBI. It helped significantly that even before the pandemic, innovative business leaders such as Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Raymond Kurzweil spoke in favor of UBI on several occasions.

Clearly instituting UBI will require additional budgetary resources, resources that could be taken from the taxes and voluntary contributions from the wealthy. A special tax could also be levied on robots, algorithms, artificial intelligence, and other technologies which have supplanted human labor.

A Universal Basic Income could also drastically alter the pension system and welfare programs. For example, a significant number of pensions (most notably those below the middle tier) could be replaced by UBI, which would leave the insurance to cover only the income of seniors whose income is rather high (the upper middle class?). And then the numerous monetary payments, allowances, and benefits could be incorporated into UBI. In addition, a non-monetary component to UBI could incorporate commitments to healthcare and education.

Healthcare, however, is a whole separate discussion as it relates to our post-pandemic future.

First of all, it seems that the world (or the golden billion nations at least) let down its guard when it came to pandemics. The last time that humanity was faced with something like this was a hundred years ago and the so-called Spanish flu. Since then, the world has been able to vanquish almost completely the plague, cholera, smallpox, polio, and many other infectious diseases. The flu has become an ordinary seasonal ailment resulting in few deaths. And you can always get a flu shot to avoid infection. Ebola, swine flu, avian flu, and other epidemics that flare up from time to time in tropical Africa and Southeast Asia are quickly localized and do not become pandemics. For this reason, the healthcare systems of the developed world, well-financed and accessible to virtually the entire population, stopped maintaining the protocols that need to be enacted during mass global epidemics. This does not mean, however, that we simply need to throw more money at healthcare systems. By all accounts, their very organizational models need to be transformed.

Let's take a look at the US for example, where they have an insurance model. In order to access medical services, you must buy insurance, which, for many, is simply not possible due to its cost. When Barack Obama began to reform the healthcare system, over 10% of Americans did not have medical insurance. This did not mean that these people were left completely without access to medical care. Some very modest government-run facilities, mainly hospitals, do offer services. Retirees and the poorest Americans can receive medical care via two major federal programs, Medicare and Medicaid. Still, it is widely held that the

level of access to medical care in the US is unsatisfactory; this despite the fact that spending on healthcare makes up almost 17% of GDP.

What Obamacare does is reduce the cost of insurance and then force the uninsured to buy it. In a sense, this reform should have created a healthcare system where insurance was mandatory. But under Obama it faced strong resistance from the more well-off and conservative sector of American society. And now Trump has virtually put an end to the reform and is attempting to turn back the clock to the pre-Obama status-quo.

The fact that the coronavirus has led to disastrous consequences in the US is not up for debate. It became clear that the healthcare system was unprepared for the sheer number of infected requiring intensive care. There was no comprehensive plan or strategy to deal with a pandemic on the national level. Things thus began to be decided at the state and city level, each in its own way. The result: the number of new cases and the number of deaths from the virus stubbornly refuse to go down.

But countries with government-funded healthcare systems (often supplemented by a private insurance option) and fairly strict quarantine measures experienced significantly less damage to their economies and healthcare sectors. The developed world long ago began to move toward government-funded medical care, and the pandemic will most likely only speed up this process.

Replacing the Establishment

Everything outlined so far in this book focuses on a major global issue, an issue which arose long before the coronavirus

pandemic but which this crisis has placed in sharp focus: the need to replace the establishment.

It needs to be stated: the current leadership in many developed nations has outstayed its welcome and has failed to keep pace with events. The most glaring examples: the US and Germany.

The United States is even showing signs of a gerontocracy taking hold. The frontrunners for president in the 2016 and 2020 political cycles are members either of the generation born during WWII or the one immediately after it: Donald Trump (74), Hillary Clinton (73), Joseph Biden (78), and Bernie Sanders (79). The problem here is not their age; it's their mindset and lived experience, which, at the end of the day, define the political views of these leaders. This dynamic in many ways defined the internal political crisis which engulfed the US in 2020. The only solution to this crisis, no matter who wins the election in November 2020, is for an entirely new generation to take on leadership positions within the US political system. These are the 30 and 40-year olds whose names we do not even know yet but whose paths from obscurity to top leadership roles, as history shows, could be quite short indeed.

With Angela Merkel (66) stepping down next year, Germany is also experiencing a passing-the-baton moment to the next generation of political leaders. It comes as no surprise that the Green Party, where younger activists play such a prominent role, is again seeing a sharp rise in popularity. This dynamic is playing out in the EU as well with its long-term Strategy to green the economy.

In some countries, the political establishment is already being replaced. In Canada, for example, Justin Trudeau (49) has

been the prime minister now for several years. Sebastian Kurz (34) is the Chancellor of Austria, Sanna Marin (35) the prime minister of Finland, Jacinda Ardern (40) the prime minister of New Zealand, and Zuzana Čaputová (47) the president of Slovakia. We can also include the president of France, Emanuel Macron (43) and the prime minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez (48), in this group.

And here are some of the policies which this cohort proposes:

- *A transparent and compact state*
- *Prioritizing environmental issues*
- *More focus put on social welfare programs*
- *Restrictions on federal authority while promoting the autonomy of local and regional governments*
- *Human rights and fairness as tools of support (and not merely talking points) which must be implemented*

It would be incorrect to characterize this group of leaders as left-wing, right-wing, liberal, or conservative. Through the lens of twentieth-century political science, the policies and concrete measures which they propose are rather eclectic and smack more than a little of populism. But as the hold that traditional parties (ones based strictly on classic ideological tenets) have on politics begins to wane, this eclecticism is becoming more and more mainstream. Taking their place are political movements whose very existence is based on the mantra that change in and of itself is inherently worthwhile. Just a few months before he won the presidential election in France, Emanuel Macron

created a movement, En Marche!, whose name is completely devoid of meaning.

Of course, no process, be it political, economic, or social, develops in a linear fashion. Only population growth can be predicted over a long period of time. Consequently, the trends outlined above describing a shift in the political establishment will certainly remain — even if we see a few examples of the pendulum swinging back.

Part Two.

GLOBALIZATION 2.0

From: Challenges of Global Governance Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. Perspectives From Council of Councils Institutes / Council on Foreign Relations. International Institutions and Global Governance Program. Paper Series. May 2020.

COVID-19 and Rebalancing the Global Agenda

Igor Yurgens

*Chairman,
Institute for Contemporary Development (Russia)*

Sergey Kulik

*Director for International Studies,
Institute of Contemporary Development (Russia)*

As the COVID-19 crisis continues, any predictions or recommendations as to its further course are inevitably tentative and approximate. Its scale and, more important, its duration can only be guessed at. The uncertainties include how deep the crisis will be in the sectors hardest hit by the lockdown, how much unemployment will rise, and whether governments will claim a bigger role in the economy. How these and other issues will play out globally or in any particular nation is not yet clear.

What is clear is that failures in protecting global health security will seriously affect the economy, politics, and the public sphere. Efforts to improve global governance will need to be made against a background of increased pessimism, xenophobia, irrationalism, disinformation, a crisis of confidence at all levels of government, and a crippled economy. Value-added chains and businesses that move goods and services across national boundaries are already severely affected.

Notably, the pandemic has given a powerful impetus to confrontation in relations between the United States and China. Each has been quick to blame the other for creating a threat to all man-kind. This confrontation directly threatens economic globalization and hinders efforts to improve institutions of global governance.

All these elements make it even more difficult to reformat institutions, which have not been able to adequately meet the task of organizing a collective response to current challenges. On the other hand, the daunting threats, both present and future, are now more clear than before. Although the leading powers have failed to demonstrate much-needed solidarity, nonstate actors have the opportunity to step up and assume more responsibility.

Institutional renewal should be based on rethinking the priorities of international politics. Existential threats call for correcting the imbalance in policymaking and policy research. In addition to the continuing and still-prevalent emphasis on the threat of nuclear holocaust and the more recent interest in mitigating climate change, the challenges of biosecurity need to be moved to the top of the global agenda. Biosecurity

is still marginal in the priorities of analysis and forecasting of emerging threats. Many official national security documents simply ignore them. When these challenges are mentioned, as Russia's national security strategy does, the approach is more declaratory and less specific.

Advancements in biotechnologies can have both beneficial and harmful effects on national and global security. Institutions of global governance therefore face the task of developing new rules to place limits or ban research in certain areas of biotechnology and biomedicine and on market supply of their products, as well as of creating the tools of appropriate, agile, and comprehensive control and verification.

In avoiding overemphasis on military security and armed conflicts and a lack of adequate attention to the new, nontraditional threats, global health security must now be regarded as a critical priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this quite clear. Both national governments and international organizations may rightly be faulted for paying too little attention to global health security. Specialized agencies with responsibilities in this area have also demonstrated serious shortcomings, especially the World Health Organization (WHO).

Success in ensuring global health security when an epidemic escalates to a pandemic depends, first, on timely and effective government responses where the epidemic first appears; second, on the effectiveness of international mechanisms; and, third, on other governments' stepping up to their responsibilities in regard to a robust health infrastructure. A proper analysis and evaluation of these three components will take time, but even

now it is obvious that gaping holes need to be addressed in all of them.

The WHO in particular needs to address flaws in its mechanisms, including project financing, bureaucratic inertia, and tensions between headquarters and regional offices, among others. Member states and the WHO should consider increasing shares of nationally assessed contributions to adequately reduce the organization's dependence on voluntary donations. The substantial imbalances between the two reflect the scarcity of national governments' interest in global health challenges. COVID-19 could reverse this, despite the worldwide economic and financial crunch. Decisive action is needed to ensure that the WHO and other specialized agencies, as well as the global health system as a whole, work effectively and in a concerted way with national governments. Here, future obligations of national governments, particularly financial commitments, should be allocated and enforced more strictly than they are now.

So far, such commitments can be changed quickly and under various pretexts. It is therefore important, though currently more difficult, to fix resources, both state and nonstate, that would provide funding for a foreseeable period. To address this task with at least some success, interaction and coordination of efforts by leading actors and international agencies are essential.

Stricter national compliance with the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR) should also be required. The IHR obligates national authorities to report and exchange information on potential threats to ensure timely responses. In the absence of enforcement mechanisms, however, COVID-19 has revealed serious flaws in this regard.

The Group of Seven–Group of Eight has contributed significantly to progress in global health security, particularly in the period of Russia's participation. In addition to supporting specialized agencies, the group advanced initiatives, interacted with state and private donors, and helped promote a certain degree of international discipline. The group's potential and power have recently changed substantially, however. It could be helpful to establish an informal forum focusing more on health security challenges and reenergizing efforts to shape an integrated approach to global health risk management. Other functioning platforms, such as the Group of Twenty, should also give much more attention to the tasks for overcoming these and related challenges.

National governments need to be adequately ready to meet and mitigate the more serious effects of COVID-19 in developing countries as the situation evolves. Even before the pandemic, infectious diseases accounted for almost half of all deaths in poorer countries. COVID-19 is likely to make the situation worse. This is another major challenge for global risk management. In addition, food security should also be placed higher on the international agenda. Approximately 70 percent of infections originate in food supply chains.

The WHO and national governments should more closely consider and fix preparedness gaps made apparent in the Global Health Security Index, a comprehensive assessment and benchmarking of health security and related capabilities across 195 countries. The tools and methods of evaluating national government actions should be reexamined and expanded to offer more robust monitoring of both warning signs and compliance of national governments with international obligations.

The pandemic also calls for serious reconsideration in areas that are directly, partially, or unrelated to global health security. For example, disruptions in supply chains suggest the need to get rid of overdependence on major producers and suppliers.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, it is more and more clear that stoppages and disruptions of supply chains could lead to persistent troubles. It is quite probable that foreign businesses have new incentives to gradually phase out excessive dependence on China, including pharmaceutical supplies. Russia, for instance, gets 60 percent of its raw materials for pharmaceutical production from China (and 20 percent from India), and Russia also depends substantially on pharmaceutical end products.

To call COVID-19 a globalization killer, at least for now, appears to be an exaggeration. The crisis could also give a second wind to globalization. The closing of borders, disruption of transborder flows, surge of nationalism, limitation of civil rights, and greater resort to tools of social mobilization and control are all closely associated with the crisis and serve to further it. In both developed and developing countries, people tend to see the pandemic as a time of trial — but also as something that will pass. When the threat recedes and a postcrisis reality emerges, a public demand for demobilization and a return to peacetime practices will inevitably make itself felt.

Nevertheless, the world needs to prepare itself for a rebalancing of the global agenda and a reformatting of international institutions to make them more agile, effective, and transparent. Unless this is done, the opportunity for a Globalization 2.0 may be missed. “Where there’s a will, there’s a way” — but only if it has institutional mechanisms to make it a reality.

2.1 The Future of the Third Wave of Globalization

It is said the world has undergone two waves of globalization: the first from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and the second extending from the nineteenth century to the beginning of World War I. This current third wave began in the 1980s. The first signs that it was weakening appeared during the financial crisis of 2008–2009. The pandemic is sure then to either accelerate or continue the process underway.

But in order to fully understand the future of the third wave of globalization, we must first determine what it is essentially and how it differs from the previous two. No one has been able to provide a universally accepted definition. Many point to an increase in trade of goods and services along with more financial and economic interdependence. However, we must also mention the importance of a growing political, social, and cultural interdependence that has been spurred on by economic and technological globalization.

And here it is perhaps important to mention the work of well-known researcher Hans Peter Hahn, who wrote in 2012, “What we are truly witnessing is the following: for the first time in history globalization has become truly global... In the past, globalization was a one-way street run by the West or run by a nation that was dominant for a certain period in time or it wasn’t truly global; it did not encompass all parts of the globe. Until very recently, ten years ago or so, Africa and Latin America did not figure at all in discussions about globalization or the world order...That has now come to an end. Nowadays you address

developing markets, frontier markets, natural resources, human capital, and growth that is reaching all parts of the world. It is a fact that we are now living in a world of globalized globalization, a geographically consummated globalization.”

The current wave of globalization is, in many ways, one without precedent. It has resulted in both clear benefits and costs of a global scale. In our fast-changing world, its reach and velocity can increase or decrease, thereby altering the nature and proportions of emerging risks and allowing new ones to crest. But to hold forth on its upcoming “funeral” due to the pandemic would be, at the very least, shortsighted.

In fact, it wouldn’t hurt to conduct further, more comprehensive research into globalization. Globalization studies, you may recall, have already made important contributions to the definition of many long-term global trends in the fields of economics, technology, social welfare, and culture. It is as crucial as ever before during this pandemic to recognize the costs and benefits of the sharp rise in interdependence we have seen over the last three decades among nations and societies in the most varied of sectors.

We are talking about an inevitable shift in the world order as we know it as well. And with that, we will also see a certain number of changes to the laws and regulations which have traditionally governed nations and everyday life.

Many have said in the past that globalization results in a certain kind of dependence which limits a country’s options if tensions arise with a partner. For example, after investing substantial resources in China’s economy, the West has become noticeably more concerned with Beijing’s aggressive behavior

and the increasing possibility of a conflict, all of which has left little room for maneuvering. The pandemic has done nothing but exacerbate these concerns, but with one crucial element added — a realization that the West is overly dependent on Chinese goods and parts. And we’re not talking only about China. All nations are beginning to exhibit somewhat similar concerns towards the rest of the world.

Before the pandemic, many emergent developing economies reaped the benefits of globalization and began pursuing a more independent course. They sought out new coalitions and frameworks. They were then joined by a group of nations which was less than pleased with the meager returns they received from it. They had expected more. We are seeing these sentiments, for now at least, expressed not so much through attempts to thwart globalization processes as much as through a desire to revisit its controlling mechanisms. And here, the pandemic could very well force a recalibration. Several nations may decide to resist globalization aggressively through populist slogans. They simply do not realize that this option heads straight towards a dead-end, at the very least when it comes to the well-being of its citizens.

Globalization has already made an impact and clearly will continue to do so, specifically in the reformatting of geopolitics, a process that has seen the rise of new power centers and nodes of influence ready to assert their demands. This process will certainly accelerate a shift in the current world order and have a palpable impact on the well-established international control mechanisms. Even before the pandemic, those responsible for making crucial global and regional decisions concerning the

economy, trade, and finance could not keep up with the pace of these changes. And now it will be even more difficult to overcome this challenge, but, essentially, their backs are against the wall. People must do their best to come up with a suitable plan for the global community and keep pace with the course of events rapidly unfolding before us.

And the old question remains: are nations willing to strike an appropriate balance between ratcheting up competition and being somewhat regionally and globally interdependent; between their own priorities and those of the global community? It should be noted that under present conditions, interdependence could be seen as a good starting point for solving a lot of disagreements, especially thanks to the revamping of global governance mechanisms and the existing Code of Conduct for the non-political sector.

Still, as interdependent as we all are, we cannot forget that all nations are sovereign entities and are responsible for all that occurs within their borders. At the same time, however, they are vulnerable to many problems that simply do not respect national borders, everything from market instability to the toggle switches which set in motion the tragic events of today (located outside the borders of these countries). Again, we see a questioning, this time at the highest levels of power, of how governments act in the face of risks that cannot be managed by a nation's leaders, but which directly affect their citizens?

If countries do not adapt properly to globalization processes, the disconnect between their plans and the demands, opportunities, and realities of an interdependent world will become more and more apparent. These demands include

preserving and even strengthening cooperation in the fields of science, technology, and industry, as well as accelerating innovation processes in a growing list of countries that are “tied to” their foreign partners. We also see the need for standardized transportation and communication systems and a modified trade framework.

Our analysis on the pandemic's effects on global flows throughout the world draws on the methodology used at the McKinsey Institute (in this regard, the most respected think tank). Before 2020, the tempo of global flows greatly impacted the world's GDP, driving up to a fourth of its gains. We also saw that increases in national GDPs began to rely more and more on the level of global integration in the world economy. And the leading participants in these flows saw more substantial gains in their GDPs.

Countries participate in these flows to varying degrees. Nevertheless, we can perhaps place them into four groups: generalists, specialists, distributors, and hubs. The “generalists” participate in a balanced manner in all global flows. The US and Germany are the most prominent representatives of this group among developed nations, while Malaysia leads the pack among those in the developing world.

The specialists participate in one or two flows. These would include China (goods and finance), India (services and migrant labor), and Mexico (goods and migrant labor).

The hub” (distribution centers of sorts for the global flow network) are Luxembourg (finance) and the Netherlands (goods and information technology) as well as Singapore and Hong Kong.

The majority of nations, although far from all, fall into the distributor category.

Globalization is a harsh process whether we want to admit it or not. It involves not just competing economies but competing institutions along with all the unpleasant costs which obstruct the synergy needed to solve the world's problems. The pandemic will most likely intensify this already punishing process.

2.2 Risks And Challenges — 2020

The onset of the pandemic coincided with the manifestation of qualitatively different realities and the acceleration of a number of global trends. It is worth noting a few of the ones which might “fall victim” in a way to the pandemic:

- Expansion of the global middle class, especially in developing countries, with an accompanying growth in the economy and increase in prosperity. The pandemic has the potential to slow this process, which provides stability at the local, regional, and global levels
- The shift in demographic changes. The world's population continues to grow, although at a slower pace; young people in the developed world will have more difficulty finding jobs where they currently reside. The pandemic could intensify the imbalance between demographic trends and the labor market
- The increased tempo of technological progress and a quick transition to the next wave of innovation. This progress encompasses new technologies, including automation of production, something that indeed has its pluses but also comes at a cost to social welfare. It will also involve certain structural changes
- The continuation of climate change, a rise in the planet's average temperature, and a greater burden on the global community to combat it

- A larger deficit of resources, which is linked with yet another trend, that of heightened urbanization. This urbanization, in turn, increases the number of resource consumers and is especially prevalent in developing nations. The pandemic will have an impact on both trends
- A break with the hierarchical model of governance on the global and local levels, in part due to successes achieved in the fields of science and technology, and a move towards a distribution network model. Here work outputs are attained via horizontal communication. Already making inroads in business and economics, this principle is slowly being incorporated into politics as well. The pandemic has the potential to accelerate this shift, but under certain circumstances, could also tilt things in the opposite direction, at least on the political level
- A massive wave of globalization (and then a slight decline) and an increase in the interdependence of countries and continents
- A more prominent role played by developing economies. The pandemic will more than likely weaken this trend
- A weakened status for the Western world

Political and expert communities are faced with the difficult task of identifying emerging challenges and dealing with the already existing ones as they navigate the new realities of this century and the global trends that come with it. This identifying process is not easy, but it must be done quickly.

The pandemic has pushed this issue to the forefront of the global agenda. These communities preferred to tackle

the obvious and discuss only those risks that already existed. Meanwhile, they completely overlooked not merely a threat but a challenge existential in nature. They are more than willing to engage with issues of conflict, sometimes even to excess, but rarely do they recognize nontraditional security threats.

This bias towards traditional threats (military conflicts first and foremost) has been a long-standing sensitive issue. Many newer, large-scale nontraditional threats (which impact the traditional ones) have yet to receive the attention they merit, including the issue of global health security.

The pandemic has pushed all of these issues straight to the surface. There is plenty of blame to go around for the lack of attention paid to global health security, from national governments to international institutions. Indeed, serious lapses at core institutions such as at the World Health Organization were brought to light during the pandemic.

According to UN documents, the relatively ordinary phenomenon of international terrorism can be considered a nontraditional threat, but so can a growing scarcity of resources, new, unaddressed troubles in the finance and economic sectors, the cross-border creep of social inequities, climate change, inconsistent support for global health security, failures to protect cyberspace, and the disruptive effects to socio-economic stability of incorporating technological innovation. We must also mention so-called ungoverned spaces, which are either only superficially regulated by a government or not regulated at all.

There has been some movement towards dealing with nontraditional threats in recent years. The pandemic might

very well accelerate this process even more and drive the world's experts to study these new challenges with renewed zeal. We saw how the pandemic exposed how insufficient the work done on these challenges in previous years was and how worthless most forecasts turned out to be. Even more disturbing was the fact that some experts did sound the alarm a few times, and they were simply ignored, both within international institutions and in the corridors of power of the world's leading nations.

This tragic pandemic has made it abundantly clear: the specific nature of these nontraditional, and therefore largely unpredictable, challenges demonstrates the need for national and international structures to address them on a global scale and treat them as priorities to be managed and controlled. Likewise, more attention needs to be given to warning signals indicating that this or that nontraditional threat to national or global security is changing or developing in a certain way.

In January 2020, the World Economic Forum (WEF) issued its *Global Risks Report – 2020*. The report is the fifteenth one released by the WEF and is considered to be one of the most authoritative of its kind. It cites data from a poll of approximately 800 experts and participants in decision-making processes. The survey respondents ranked the risks of most concern both according to how likely they were to intensify and to how possible it would be to counter them.

Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed listed economic clashes and internal political polarization as the two leading risks for 2020. The top five was rounded out by extreme heat waves, destruction of natural ecosystems, and cyber-attacks: operations and infrastructure. Again, extreme heat waves and

the destruction of natural ecosystems are linked to a critically important long-term risk—that of climate change.

It was quite apparent that even at the outset of the pandemic, the level of concern over issues such as global health security had taken a back seat to other issues: climate change, migrant flows, all manner of conflicts, etc.

The WEF was not the only one to miss the boat. Several leading think tanks whose business is to make annual projections also registered a lower level of concern over lapses in global health security when compared to certain other risks. What's more, they chose not to revise these projections as the pandemic spread. There was perhaps only one exception — the Eurasia Group in the US, after issuing its report at the very beginning of the year, updated it somewhat in its April edition.

We can highlight ten key risks that endanger all mankind and show no signs of letting up. They include threats to global health security, international terrorism, armed conflict between countries, armed conflict within countries, cyber risks, potential violations of nuclear non-proliferation treaties, climate change, global economic instability, challenges in the realm of global trade, and in promoting international development (first and foremost aid to developing countries).

Even before the pandemic appeared, traditional and nontraditional threats were closely intertwined. Climate change and its concomitant disasters (drought, floods, etc.) often result in internal conflicts, which then reach across borders. Major outages within IT systems at critically important facilities can result in the use of military force against the countries suspected of sponsoring cyberattacks at those facilities.

The pandemic has the potential to impact the relationship between discrete groups of global risks, namely:

- The economy: financial crises in the leading world economies; high unemployment and underemployment rates; breakdowns in major financial mechanisms and institutions; sticker shock in the energy industry
- The environment: shortages of drinking water; inability to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change; a yearly increase in the number of severe acts of nature; continued spread of various illnesses and epidemics; reduced biodiversity and likely collapse of ecosystems
- The socio-political: substantial income disparities; scarcity of goods; high levels of societal and political instability; a breakdown or crisis in the functioning of the government apparatus
- The geopolitical: breakdowns or failures within international governing or regulating institutions; the use of weapons of mass destruction

And then, in most recent times, another group joined the list, this one dedicated to the frenetic dissemination of new information technology. This group has solidified its presence of late and includes risks of cyberattacks, database theft, and security breaches at critically important infrastructure facilities (nuclear power plants, military installations, etc.).

Meanwhile, disagreements between nations as they attempt to counter traditional conflict threats at a minimum have a negative impact on international cooperation when they move to

counter the nontraditional ones. We see this at play in the Middle East and in other hot spots across the globe.

The pandemic and its potentially massive socio-economic consequences threaten to increase the propensity for armed conflict and to spread it into new areas. It also may very well complicate already less than ideal negotiations on nuclear arms reduction, nuclear non-proliferation, and arms reduction as a whole.

We are also seeing major players like the US and China using the pandemic as a tool to exert pressure on already existing conflicts. It has also contributed to balance of power shifts and, in certain countries, significant changes in public opinion regarding key partners and foreign policy in general (the EU and China). The pandemic is all-consuming; it diverts the world's attention and siphons off resources from traditional donors that should be directed at combatting other pressing challenges (aid programs for poorer nations).

2.2.1 Global Health Security

At the start of the twenty-first century, a significant portion of the world began to acknowledge the degree to which epidemics pose a threat to personal, national, and global health security. As a result, we saw increased cooperation in developing sustainable methods for overcoming these threats. This collective approach made it possible to connect the issue of global health security with the political and economic interests of a number of countries and even recalibrated priorities within the World Health Organization (WHO).

The pandemic has substantially quickened the pace of these changes by creating a new set of tasks, the most critical of which is the instituting of qualitative improvements to national and international health organizations and the enhancing of global health security. Until very recently, these issues were of little concern even to many of the world's specialists in the field, let alone the general public within primary donor nations. But much has changed, and we anticipate that this same general public will very soon start to pay quite close attention to the measures and protocols being put forward by governments and international institutions in this area. We saw this exact scenario unfold with the issue of climate change and the challenges surrounding it. Consequently, it is worth discussing in detail a few pressing issues concerning global health security and the reforms that could be enacted to address them.

The novel coronavirus, first discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan (the SARS coronavirus of 2002 also began in China but was quickly contained), resulted in a pandemic that almost

immediately began to test the limits of global health security mechanisms. The World Health Organization (WHO), which typically issues the battle-cry when it comes to epidemics, rushed to the forefront by announcing emergency measures and mobilizing its resources. The organization was granted the authority to such in 2007, and this was the sixth time it did so. Nevertheless, the Chinese government and, thus, the WHO did not respond quickly enough to the epidemic in Wuhan to keep it from becoming a pandemic.

Any successes or failures in the fight to protect global health security will depend on three factors. The first factor would be **prompt and effective responses from government mechanisms in the nations where an epidemic is discovered**. The pandemic exposed an “illness” of another kind which proved rampant within many governments: the conduct of local and regional officials. The local authorities in Wuhan were afraid to inform leaders in Beijing at the appropriate time about the epidemic. The same thing happened with the Ebola outbreak in Africa in 2014. We see time and time again that some countries are simply unwilling to fulfill their obligations, especially those pertaining to the International Health Regulations. This issue must be addressed more aggressively. Improvements must also be made to domestic health regulations.

“Perestroika” within domestic health regulations

Successful strides have been made in recent years in improving international health regulations. Governments are required to exchange information and best practices if an

epidemic is discovered so that a coordinated, timely response can be developed.

The International Health Regulations became one of the most effective tools in ensuring global health security. The pandemic has shown, however, that these regulations must be made even stricter.

The WHO adopted these regulations in 2005, with all 194 member nations agreeing to exchange information on even the slightest signs of an epidemic. This would ensure a prompt response to at least reduce the spread of disease. However, by June 2012, the deadline set by the IHR, only 40 nations had met the requirements they themselves had adopted. A slight increase followed, but far from all participant nations being compliant.

The current pandemic is likely to compel all countries at last to adhere strictly to IHR requirements. This is a crucially important problem which the IHR was established to solve: if a country does not issue notification of an outbreak in time (within 24 hours), the risk of an epidemic or a pandemic increases sharply. For this reason alone, it is vital that countries adhere strictly to the IHR requirements. There is no room for exceptions, and non-compliance must be met with threats of unpleasant sanctions. The “Wuhan saga” has only confirmed this, this time with lethal consequences felt throughout the world. If the IHR requirements are not adhered to, we could see this scenario unfold again and again.

If the global community considers it expedient, our new reality might very well force it to amend the IHR requirements themselves. If this process moves forward, WHO leaders will focus, over the objections of many, on placing stricter

requirements on member nations to adhere to the IHR obligations they agreed to adopt.

The second factor is work carried out by **international mechanisms, first and foremost the WHO**. In 2014, WHO leadership was widely criticized during the Ebola epidemic when it waited for five months to declare an emergency based on information that was already late in coming; this despite being pressured to do so earlier by prominent organizations such as Doctors without Borders. The echoes of this failure are still being felt within the organization despite successful reforms carried out after Ebola. We will need to discuss this particular factor in some detail, so let us mention the third factor now: the conduct of government leaders, some of it responsible, some not, from those nations that were not the primary source of the epidemic—but from which the epidemic required adequate steps to protect their citizens.

Despite the reforms carried out after 2014, the WHO still suffers from insufficient troubleshooting of their internal mechanisms, including program financing, as well as from excessive bureaucracy and friction between headquarters and six regional offices.

Added to the mix is the fact that, in the wake of the pandemic, the WHO has become a kind of host platform for intensifying confrontations between leading global players, primarily the US and China, and will remain so, at least for the near future.

The WHO and Politics

The degree of dissatisfaction with WHO policies is increasing as the unfavorable dynamics of the pandemic in the US and the world make themselves felt. Critical statements are giving way to direct accusations and calls for a “sound investigation” of both the actions of this UN structure and those of Chinese authorities at the outset and during the subsequent spread of the pandemic. For the moment, these appeals are coming from analysts and politicians whose purview lies outside of initiating executive action.

The United States has accused the World Health Organization of unacceptable delays in issuing warnings and recommendations which would have enabled the White House to take more effective steps. After all, it is the main structure responsible for global health security. Considering the specifics of the moment and the extremely damaging course the pandemic has taken in the US (and in many of its allied and partner countries), it seems that blaming the WHO is easier than accepting responsibility for the country’s own delays and failures in implementing countermeasures. And while they are at it, accuse China of having too much influence within the WHO and gain convincing talking points in their anti-China campaign. This last possibility is perhaps even more important than any coordinated activities against the WHO. And not just for Washington.

Grounds for this criticism of the WHO have existed for some time; they will most likely only grow as more and more information comes to light. For the moment, the main

accusations are that WHO leadership has allegedly been taking its cues from Beijing when issuing statements and conducting policy.

WHO funding: mechanisms and sources

With this in mind, let us single out a major cause of these failures: the financing which member states are asked to provide.

The pandemic freed up additional funding, not only for domestic programs in many countries but also for global health security. But the nature and scale of this funding will largely be determined by economic transformations, especially in the leading countries of the world, as well as by collective political will.

Let’s take a recent example. After a relatively prolific period, the onset of the financial and economic crisis of 2008–2009 significantly slowed the allocation of funds for international health care programs. Both public and private donors began to draw attention to these issues. Every day people in major donor nations such as the US and the EU were suffering due to the crisis; they became less concerned with conditions of poverty in recipient nations and stopped pestering their leaders to take action on their behalf.

After a gradual return to ample aid funding, the pandemic set in. Some lessons can be learned from the financial crisis of 2008–2009, but conditions now are not identical. It is quite possible the scenario could repeat itself, but this time, with less favorable results.

We live in the world of the pandemic now, however, and that fact greatly increases the likelihood that countries will be willing to shell out more money than before not only on their own health care systems but on the global one as well.

The last crisis managed to highlight certain structural deficiencies, including various redundant aid programs and inner mechanisms. And so even ten years ago, we saw how important it was to optimize the management of specialized national, regional and international structures and to coordinate action among them. It's up to respected forums such as the G20 and the G7/8 to urge countries and international institutions such as the UN to manage these tasks as effectively as possible.

Considering how different this crisis is from others, chances are perhaps higher than ever before that countries will see an extra incentive to streamline operations and rid themselves of redundancy. The same holds true for combatting excessive bureaucracy within international institutions such as the WHO. The expected result would be decreased costs and increased returns from the work of international health institutions.

There will also most likely be shifts in the structure of the WHO donor process. The tradition has been that the "general piggybank" of the WHO is sustained by member nations. We have seen, however, that these nations often amend their financial commitments with little to no warning, citing various types of domestic hardships.

The system is structured in such a way that it is very difficult to conduct long-term planning to solve the world's health security problems. Often the organization can plan a mere two years into the future — finding reliable sources of funding for longer periods of time has traditionally been a difficult task.

Clearly, the requirements placed on member nations need to be tightened so that funding can be locked in for the long term. The pandemic could make this need a reality if leading actors and international platforms are willing to combine and coordinate their efforts. For now, however, we should not delude ourselves; a different scenario looks likely to unfold.

Mandatory contributions, after all, are only part of the solution. They make up a mere 20% of the WHO budget; the other 80% comes from voluntary contributions from the public and private sector. The amounts vary from year to year and are thus difficult to budget for. The major donor sources of this type are the US, the United Kingdom, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The situation is complicated even further if we consider the following two factors:

1) Over the past decade, the WHO's dependence on voluntary contributions has increased markedly. This circumstance was brought on by member nations' refusal to agree to an increase in mandatory contributions, even when the funds were earmarked to help protect the health of their citizens by combatting cross-border threats. Meanwhile, it is these very nations that are demanding that the WHO expand its agenda, all without a concomitant increase in funding.

2) We are seeing policy shifts within major donor nations. Case in point, the current US administration has decided to aggressively reduce its contributions and seems ready to cede its leadership status to other actors, among them China and the EU. Time will tell if these actors are willing to assume the mantle. Beijing, in any case, has already been hinting it is.

At the moment, donations from the American government account for 15% of the WHO's budget (in 2019, almost half a billion dollars, against only 40 million dollars from China). If we consider private donations as well, and here the Americans again are in the lead, the US accounts for even more of the budget — 22% of total WHO funding. And this has been the status quo for many years with only occasional minor adjustments. So current American policy in the field of global health and its plans to reduce aid to poverty-stricken countries can only be viewed as a bad sign. Unless, of course, other major players are willing to step in and pick up the slack.

The WHO simply must be able to plan for the long-term. For this to happen, however, it must be assured of funding in the amounts agreed to. Member nations must agree to mandatory contributions to ensure this certainty; the organization cannot plan effectively based solely on voluntary donations, even if they are from these very nations. The pandemic has made it clear that a discussion is long overdue on tightening member nations' financial commitments to the organization.

Apart from providing a firm basis for requiring member nations to contribute their fair share to the WHO's budget, the pandemic might also encourage the corporate world to provide funding and other support for international initiatives.

WHO reform: where to start

Even before this pandemic set in, there was a history of countries suffering huge economic losses due to the emergence of new infections. Experts in the field stated that this trend

would continue, although no one predicted the scale of what we saw in 2020. Shortcomings in treatment mechanisms, however, had already begun to manifest themselves, and ensuring resistance to bacterial infections became more complex. What's more, despite existing capabilities to effectively combat most of the world's infectious diseases, they still account for almost half of the deaths in poor nations.

A striking example of this was the epidemic caused by the Ebola virus. We witnessed how dysfunctional risk-management policies were as the epidemic transitioned to a full-blown crisis, in part because the WHO was slow to act. But even successes in crisis management when fighting a virus are more often attributed not to the WHO or other specialized international and regional organizations but to the "coalition of the willing," which includes several leading countries along with the European Union. Only after it had made significant headway did it pass the baton. The G8 did its part as well. The Ebola case prompted many researchers to seek new formats for solving urgent problems, such as finding ways to prevent new infections and to respond adequately to them, as well as widening access to immunization programs.

It's worth mentioning, with the various accounts of how the pandemic emerged in mind, one of the important links between global health security and "tangential" fields of expertise. Insufficient food security is now often included in global health discussions as it accounts for approximately 70% of infections. Now that the food supply chain has become fully globalized, we must strengthen global food security at all levels. This will require greater coordination among relevant UN institutions, including the WHO.

The WHO has been spinning its wheels when it comes to fighting noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) as well. These diseases have recently been ranked once again at the top of the global agenda and are being discussed more and more within the UN and the WHO. NCDs include cancer and diabetes and account for most deaths throughout the world. It is estimated that half of these deaths could have been avoided. As NCD case numbers rise, the burden on financial resources and domestic health systems themselves becomes greater. The economic costs of an increased number of NCD cases are also rising, and not just in developing nations. Here again, we see a lack of coordinated action within UN internal mechanisms as well as insufficient interest in the issue on the part of the world's leading international forums.

International Forums

Several international forums, especially the G8 (before it became the G7 again), have made significant contributions to the implementation of many initiatives and programs. They are important instruments for lobbying the more formal international structures, in this case the WHO, to tackle the serious risks and challenges of the moment. The G8 has been involved in one way or another in the establishment of a number of programs and initiatives, including the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the Advance Market Commitment for the purchasing of vaccines, and the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal,

Newborn and Child Health (named for the location where one of the Group's summits was held). In 2006, the Group adopted an Infection-Control Strategy and in 2009, at its 35th summit in L'Aquila, Italy, a Global Food Safety Initiative, which directly affects global health issues.

The successes achieved in the fight against AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis are largely attributable to the members of this "club" and their efforts, but leading international forums must not let up in their funding for this program. The G8's work with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was also vitally important.

Towards the end of the G8's existence, discussions had begun on the possibility of an integrated approach to global health risk management. Unfortunately, the G7 did not provide the necessary support for this approach owing to various circumstances, including Russia's withdrawal from the club.

A Revision of Performance Criteria

All three of these factors were reflected in one way or another in recent, isolated attempts to determine criteria for assessing the effectiveness of national health institutions and their cooperation with international bodies. The pandemic has given a "second wind" at the highest political level to the process of developing and adjusting the criteria (indices) for assessing the healthcare resources of individual countries as they look to prevent the spread of disease.

Let's take a look at a landmark example. In October 2019, a month before China's first identified case of the novel

coronavirus, the Global Health Security Index for 2019 was released, compiled in conjunction with the Center for Health Security, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The main conclusion of the report? Countries are poorly prepared for a potential crisis of global health security. The average score was 40.2 out of 100. But these numbers are actually rather meaningless: low scores in one country could cause major issues in a neighboring, better prepared one, due to a number of factors unrelated to the healthcare field. One of the most significant of these factors would be open borders; a huge percentage of the planet's inhabitants is now able to move freely across borders. The richer countries of the world did little better than the poorer ones; the average score among these 60 countries was a mere 51.9.

Statistics from countries hit hardest by the pandemic demonstrate that having a solid national health system and adhering to commitments to international institutions are by no means a guarantee that their citizens will be protected from infection. Case in point: Italy ranked 31st on the list with a score of 56.2 but is suffering significantly from the pandemic, while China, ranked 51st with a score of 48.2, is now at the tail-end of its crisis. In fact, China ranked even more poorly in terms of cooperation with international institutions and fulfilling commitments.

Countries which received a high ranking, however, were not always successful in actually combatting the pandemic. Spain, for example, received a score of 65.5 and a ranking of 15. South Korea did even better: 9th place and a score of 70.2. The United States was also high on the list. These countries received a high

ranking in the Index in the category of detection. The ranking was based on whether a country had the necessary technical and professional capabilities to effectively carry out this process.

Even though these countries did indeed receive some of the best scores in this category, they lagged far behind others in the healthcare system category, which analyzed, among other things, hospital capacity as well as the degree to which the country's population had sufficient access to medical services. Ensuing events demonstrate, at least for now, that the authors of the Index were fairly close to the mark.

The effectiveness of health systems depends on many factors, of course, and some of them are difficult to place in a ranking system. Both South Korea and China, unlike Europe, had learned their lesson from the 2002–2003 SARS epidemic in the region. That lesson was to enact strict quarantine measures immediately and to encourage cooperation between the public and private sector in developing the tools needed to identify and eliminate potential threats.

In light of the tragic events still unfolding, it is likely that analysts will begin to engage with the healthcare assessment process to determine just how prepared we are for future epidemics. This increased engagement will produce more accurate statistics on international institutions and individual countries and allow them enough time to take the necessary steps to prevent another outbreak.

Biotechnology Perspectives

The pandemic has moved the biotechnology sector and its prospects to the top of the global agenda. The sector has its

advantages and disadvantages, of course, including existential ones, and much still needs to be done to streamline procedures and norms for conducting work in this sensitive area. Unfortunately, even before the pandemic, very little discussion was had within international structures or the scientific community on the subject.

Biotechnologies have the potential to impact global health security positively or negatively. Either case would result in broader consequences for national security and the stability of the world order. An unregulated biotechnology sector joined the ranks of other dangers threatening the very existence of mankind, such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and unaddressed climate change. We are far from a full understanding of the topic, unfortunately. Global health security discussions are still focused almost entirely on countering epidemics and ensuring food safety.

Only recently has there been a realization that the development of biotechnologies could lead to extremely dangerous outcomes on a global scale, especially if oversight mechanisms remain as weak as they are today. We need a strict, global monitoring system regulating research studies conducted in this sector. We see signs, thankfully, that the public and the scientific community at large are beginning to take a closer look at this very real threat. The next step would be for the issue to take its rightful place on the global agenda, despite any current disagreements and controversies on the topic.

Even then, important questions would remain, questions whose answers would affect the entire world. One would be: if we indeed find it necessary to ban certain research studies and

products in the biotech sector, how can it be done in a way that ensures strict guarantees for all, without exception?

Global governance institutions will need to create new, largely unprecedented rules and protocols to prohibit the marketing of ready-made laboratory products and to establish agreed-upon monitoring mechanisms for suspending or outright banning certain research studies in the field of biotechnology and biomedicine. These rules have yet to be developed, and existing prohibitions, on human cloning for example, are such that they can be circumvented by individual countries.

The McKinsey Global Institute released an interesting report on the bio revolution in mid-May 2020, entitled *The Bio Revolution. Innovations Transforming Economies, Societies, and our Lives*.¹² The authors believe that we are now witnessing the beginnings of a bio revolution (*revolution* was the word they used). This revolution promises to spread across the globe over the next two decades and will have a major impact on many aspects of society and human existence.

One of these important aspects will be the threats humanity will face. The report states that manipulating biology has the potential to open a Pandora's Box, which will unleash lasting damage to humans and their ecosystems. As materials and tools become more accessible and cheaper, the risks rise in the biotech field.

The McKinsey authors have laid out a very real threat. Access to technologies and the freedom to develop them need to be contingent on the presence or absence of appropriate

¹² <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/pharmaceuticals-and-medical-products/our-insights/the-bio-revolution-innovations-transforming-economies-societies-and-our-lives>

norms and regulations of conduct on both the national and international levels. But the global community has not paid as much attention to biological security as it has to, say, nuclear security. Therefore, the call for a comprehensive code of norms and regulations was not as robust as it could have been. Ideally, this code would require strict commitments from both national and supranational structures to prevent reckless or unregulated activity as this bio revolution unfolds. Hopefully, the pandemic will force the global community to take a serious look at this topic in the near future.

2.2.2 Climate Change

The pandemic is now affecting the campaign to reverse climate change. Our successes or failures in the battle against COVID-19 are sure to impact that greater struggle as well. Climate change, like a breakdown in global health security, has the potential to have catastrophic effects on all of mankind. Most of these effects lie in the realm of the unpredictable. Climate change's reach is a global one, and it has already sent shockwaves throughout the world. Its negative effects are not limited to a mere deterioration of the environment. They are inextricably linked with many other threats of a global nature. For example, the financial burden of countering climate change affects the amount of money able to be allocated to developing nations whose economies have been hit hard by the pandemic. The present condition of our climate has already begun to weaken global food security and increased the potential for large-scale famine.

On a more abstract level, we can see the connection present within the triangle “climate change — lack of resources — demographic processes.” As the Earth's population and the world's middle class grow, so does the need for fresh water, food, and energy, a fact that has already caused concern about the balance between supply and demand.

If one is to believe forecasts projecting the world's population to reach more than 8 billion by 2030, food production will have to increase by 50% to meet demand. Global energy demand will increase by 40%, and the projected gap between water supply and demand will also stand at 40%.¹⁵ Moreover, changes in climate cause more frequent droughts and other natural disasters, which in turn increase migratory flows throughout the world.

The financial strain is increasing as well, both on individual countries and on the global community. According to NASA, the Earth's temperature rose by 0.85 degrees Celsius between 1880 and 2012. The world's oceans have risen 1.7 mm per year since the early twentieth century and even faster (3.2 mm) since 1993. As droughts have worsened, so have global grain yields: they have declined on average by 6%. Between 1980 and 2012, 7,500 incidents of droughts, floods, storms, and extreme temperatures were recorded. Over the past two decades, these disasters have affected over 4.4 billion people around the world with a loss to the global economy of at least two trillion dollars.

¹⁵ Future State 2030: The Global Megatrends Shaping Governments / KPMG International, 2014, 42. www.kearney.com/web/global-business-policy-council/article/?a/divergence-disruption-and-innovation

If the Earth's temperature continues to rise by 2.5°C, the loss to global GDP will be between 0.2% and 2%.¹⁴

These huge economic and social costs will surely impact traditional security threats for both individual countries and entire regions, increasing the potential for conflict. In addition, many water resources are under the jurisdiction of more than one country. As these water resources become scarcer, a conflict could easily follow.

Environmental threats have their own category in the World Economic Forum's list of global risks. These threats include a lack of potable water, an inability to mitigate and adapt to climate change, an annual increase in the number of natural disasters, a decrease in biodiversity, and the likely collapse of ecosystems. Rounding out the list, even before the pandemic, was the further spread of various diseases and epidemics.

The social welfare risk category includes food shortages and increased instability within society. Yet another, the geopolitical one, lists failures in global management and regulating mechanisms. Climate change is clearly linked to risks within its own group and to risks in the others. But if one ranks the groups, beginning with the WEF's first report in 2007 and continuing to 2014, the economic risks are listed higher than the environmental ones.

From 2014 on, we saw a significant increase in geopolitical risks, primarily ones of a cyber nature. Nevertheless, risks to

the environment held its ranking. Considering how connected environmental threats are to other global risks, the need for humanity to confront them will always remain, no matter how many pandemics we experience. But there can be no doubt that the pandemic is having a negative impact on our plans to mitigate climate change; it is diverting resources and time from our international institutions. And so, for the foreseeable future, the number one item on the global agenda will have to remain keeping pace in our fight against this evil.

The fight will require an appropriate level of climate change management. The financial and economic consequences of the pandemic will likely lead to certain adjustments, perhaps even reforms, to the mechanisms and strategies used for this management. Recent events within the climate change field revealed that although there are many problems to be addressed, there have also been significant positive shifts in public opinion and more support from politicians. All this must be considered when any adjustments are made.

The work carried out on this issue within the global community falls under the purview of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in 1992 to stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level that is not hazardous to climate change. The UNFCCC has two main areas of focus — reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted, a supplement to the Convention and a more specific document setting stricter requirements for industrialized countries for the period

¹⁴ Global Trends 2015–2025. Divergence, Disruption, and Innovation. Twelve key trends will shape the global outlook and operating environment through 2025 / Kearney A. T. Global Business Council, October 2015, 14–15; <https://www.kenarney.com/web/global-business-policy-council/article/?a/divergence-disruption-and-innovation>

2008-2012. The protocol was then extended (Kyoto-2) for the period 2013-2020, but with a smaller number of participant nations. Negotiations on a more comprehensive and expanded agreement to replace the Kyoto-2 Protocol began in 2007. Two years later, at a UN summit in Copenhagen, the parties were unable to come to a consensus. A few years later, a new platform for negotiations was created.

As the sense of urgency to find a consensus on the matter began to dissipate, many countries and supranational institutions expressed their growing concern over the planet's rising temperatures. The World Meteorological Organization declared 2015 the warmest year in recorded history (2014 being the previous record-holder), primarily due to the unprecedented levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The gases are mostly carbon dioxide resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and rampant deforestation. Two-thirds of the world's carbon dioxide emissions come from just ten countries, with China, the United States, India, and Russia at the top of the list.

Despite sharp disagreements over the Kyoto process, it is perhaps not surprising that the issue of climate change has gradually begun to unite the global community over the past two decades. Now at the top of the world's agenda, it has managed to push many other nontraditional threats to the sidelines. A number of international structures and platforms have now joined the discussion, not just the UNFCCC. We see input from the UN General Assembly, the G20, the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

External factors helped motivate countries to act at the highest levels. This momentum was clearly lacking during

discussions on the Kyoto Protocol, which many of the world's leading nations did not join and whose insufficiently strict requirements resulted in spotty compliance at best from those that did.

The Grantham Institute analyzed the legislation of the 99 countries which account for 93% of total greenhouse gas emissions and found that, since 2014, 804 laws or regulations have been passed on climate change, a veritable explosion of domestic initiatives. For comparison: in 1997 (the year the first Kyoto Protocol was adopted) there were only 54 and in 2009 – 426.¹⁵

In December 2015, the Paris Agreement was adopted at a Climate Summit. It requires countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the planet's temperature from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The ideal increase would be 1.5 degrees. It also stipulates that the developed world allocates \$100 billion to help improve the environment, mostly within the developing world.

This last point caused quite a bit of controversy over the sources for this financing and the best method for distributing the burden in a fair manner. Our new pandemic reality will likely do much to exacerbate these tensions.

Implementing the Paris agreement will significantly reduce the consumption of fossil fuels during the lifetime of all current generations. Increasing incentives for the development of renewable energy can also have a noticeable impact on national economies. China has had considerable success in this area and is poised to outpace the traditional front-runner, the European

¹⁵ The 2015 Global Climate Legislation Study. A Review of Climate Change Legislation in 99 Countries, 12; www.lse.ac.uk/grathamstitute/legislation

Union. A new, enormous market is emerging, and with it, a new arena for competition and conflict among the world's leading nations.

China's interest in the agreement, aside from a desire to improve the environment, was motivated by several factors. One of these is surely the rapid advances we have seen in renewable energy technology as well as inroads into important markets that could use it. This, along with global agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, gives China significant advantages in the export sphere. China has already spent over \$100 billion on infrastructure to produce clean technologies and energy (solar, wind, etc.). Armed with the fresh memory of Washington's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and a certainty that the global community is truly invested in fighting climate change, China would gladly take on a leadership role in this area. Beijing would be able to pursue a number of national interests here, ranging from geopolitical to purely commercial.

Essentially this agreement codified how the global community had evolved on the issue of climate change. It was no longer an internal problem to be dealt with by individual countries. It is a threat to the entire world requiring the efforts of the entire world, and not just at the federal level; many non-governmental organizations actively participated in the drafting process. The document, which for all intents and purposes entered into force in 2020, has yet to achieve concrete results; that has not stopped it from being fiercely criticized. The US's imminent withdrawal from the agreement will likely trigger other countries to do the same, using issues dealing with

the pandemic as an excuse. Due to these very same issues, we will likely see some member nations essentially stop complying with the agreement's provisions.

We are already seeing substantial disagreements among signatories as parties realize the agreement has opened up a new area for competition, namely the market for renewable energy sources. The disagreements will extend to the shift in production to meet new environmental and technological standards as well. If these standards are not met within a few years, a country could easily lose its competitive advantage.

On the issue of implementing the Paris Agreement, the well-known NGO Germanwatch, based in Bonn, has been issuing something called the Climate Change Performance Index once a year now for several years. The index rates the quality of effort and the effectiveness of a country in reversing climate change. In the latest Climate Change Performance Index from December 2019, the top three most effective countries out of 61 rated (but still far from being sufficiently compliant with the provisions of the Paris Agreement) were Sweden, Denmark, and Morocco. Russia ranked 52nd, the same as the year before. But some rather "rich" countries performed even worse, including Canada, Australia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia. The US was ranked last at 61. In other words, many of the world's leading nations whose actions will affect the fate of the Paris Agreement, either directly or indirectly (for example, via assistance to poorer countries in the name of this noble cause). Now, these conclusions from Germanwatch can certainly be debated, but it is nevertheless a respected organization with a

large following across the world. And it is this following (with support from some government leaders) that is making more and more strides on climate change issues.

It's worth mentioning some of the reasons behind this new momentum, and here polling data from the World Economic Forum will prove useful. First, 90% of young people surveyed consider the fight against climate change to be priority number one. It was these young people who were in the front lines protesting government inaction on climate change. And there is no reason to think they will let up. Scientific research also is now capable of providing more accurate and credible data on this risk category, data that is causing everyone concern as it is disseminated across the globe. And no one can deny the frequency and scale of climate change disasters, especially in recent years when we have seen rampant wildfires and unprecedented heatwaves. These incidents have alarmed the general public like never before, and not only in the countries where the disasters occurred.

The Rhodium Group's study¹⁶ published at the end of 2019 also contains insights relevant to the discussion at hand. The study outlines five major questions which need to be answered before countries will be able to comply with their commitments to reverse climate change. They include:

- *Will countries successfully achieve the European Union's stated goal of reducing emissions by 2030 to 55% of 1990 levels (the European Green Deal)?*
- *Is Brazilian leadership willing and able to cease predatory deforestation of the Amazon?*

- *Will the American people choose a president committed to following the global community's guidelines for reducing emissions into the atmosphere?*
- *How hard was the Chinese economy hit by the pandemic? The answer to this will greatly affect Beijing's priorities in the environmental sector.*
- *How high will the demand for electricity go in India? That is to say, if it begins to reach levels seen in China, emissions from power-generating facilities will double by 2030.*

As for Russia, reducing non-ecofriendly technologies in the energy sector remains a very sensitive issue. Moscow will find it difficult even to cut back on them, let alone stop their production completely. Stricter environmental regulations for energy production would lead to a decrease in the exporting and production of coal. This is especially true for a promising market such as China, where increased environmental standards and the development of environmentally friendly technologies have been elevated to the level of national strategies.

Russia has made several important strides, however. In the run-up to the conference in Paris, Moscow committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20–25% in comparison to 1990 levels by the year 2030. It also met, one of the first, submission deadlines for Nationally Determined Contributions which were required in order to sign the agreement. Moscow also approved, back in 2009, the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation. This document focuses on passing necessary legislation and emphasizes the need to strengthen cooperation at the international level. In 2013, an executive order was

signed to reduce emissions by 25% compared to 1990 levels (and then, a couple of years later, on the eve of the Paris meeting, this commitment was adjusted). Commitments were also made to increase the amount of energy produced from renewable sources, although the exact figure also ended up changing to a more modest one in the end. Still, the development of a regulating mechanism for the coal industry at the federal level has been slow-going indeed. Moscow continues to underestimate the risks of lagging behind in the global race to refocus national economies towards preservation of the environment.

2.2.3 Migratory Flows

As was the case with several other major worldwide threats, the global community overlooked the growing risk posed by migratory flows, especially those headed to the European Union. Even more concerning is the fact that this issue was low on its list of priorities even in the early 2010s, unlike climate change or global health security. It wasn't until a huge influx of refugees attempted to enter European countries did the global community begin to address the issue; before that, experts in the field believed it was something that needed to be dealt with by each individual country. Several high-ranking UN officials acknowledged that this was a mistake, including António Guterres, at the time the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He is now UN Secretary General and has voiced support for the creation of an International Organization for Migration under the auspices of this very United Nations.

In June 2016, the High Commissioner presented his annual report. According to data cited in the document, between 2011 and 2016, areas of conflict across the globe resulted in the number of refugees increasing from 42.5 million to 65.3 million. This figure includes 16.1 million refugees to other countries, 5.2 million Palestinians (who are not under the mandate of the High Commissioner), 3.2 million seeking permanent asylum and 40.8 million internally displaced persons. In sum, the number of migrants living in another country for at least a year has reached 243.7 million.

These statistics were not enough to impress many analysts, however. The High Commissioner receives information from specialized structures responsible for migration, and these structures use a wide variety of sources. The data supplied by developing countries came in for particular scrutiny. In general, migratory flows moved too quickly for a solid statistical database to be established. And so even though some progress has been made, a significant obstacle standing in the path of resolving the migrant issue is the fact that sufficient statistics simply do not exist, even within the UN.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many believe the current situation qualifies as a major oversight on the part of global governance enthusiasts. International institutions and the academic community have yet to develop a comprehensive plan for regulating migratory flows, which takes into account our new reality. There was a widespread analyst tackling of the issue in the late 2010s, but it fell short of solving the problem. It fell short primarily because the issue of migration needs to be solved on the ground between individual countries, not via the

UN's specialized, multi-lateral structures and platforms. Many countries, especially those perceived as migrant "donors," are reluctant to sign on to most arrangements at the global level which regulate these migratory flows.

There was a moment in the early 2000s when UN Secretary General Kofi Annan decided it was time to review various aspects of this issue after a particularly large surge in migratory flows. But only that — to review. In 2003, Annan established an independent Global Commission on International Migration whose mandate was to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive response to the issue of international migration. In addition, around the same time, we saw the creation of the Commission on Human Security as well as the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization within the International Labor Organization (ILO). However, these commissions relied heavily on data from the so-called Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) launched in the late 1990s. The migratory data, again, came from each individual country.

Nevertheless, the impact of these RCPs is still felt in the decision-making process for regulating these flows. And let's not forget that it's not just bureaucrats who run the RCPs; representatives from non-governmental and regional organizations have participated as well, mostly as part of the Budapest or Manila Processes or the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa.

A significant problem with these discussions was that migratory flows were merely one item on a much larger agenda; the topics of economic and other forms of assistance to poorer

nations overshadowed everything else. We did see some shifts in policy after a sharp rise in migration into the European Union in 2015, and then, in September 2016, another unprecedented surge forced the UN for the first time ever to give the issue separate consideration at a high-level plenary session on the sidelines of the annual General Assembly. Participants discussed migration and the granting of asylum as standalone issues. A bit earlier that year, in the spring, the UN Secretary General released a report, the first of its kind at this level, outlining a long-term vision for further international discussion on the issue (with no concrete plan of action, however). The report stated the need for a comprehensive approach to tracking internal and cross-border movement and migration in general, as well as for negotiations on shared responsibilities for accepting refugees and ensuring safe, durable, and orderly migration process.

These rather vague and limited proposals, especially in light of the unprecedented troubles we have seen in Europe, demonstrate once again that: (1) the global community and its international institutions were unprepared for a surge in migration, and (2) that the ten years that have passed since Kofi Annan's initiative have been almost totally wasted. All we need to do is take a look at how unprepared our international institutions have been for the current turmoil we are facing.

We saw the work of many regional forums intensify, forums such as the Colombo Process (several countries in Asia), the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (some European countries and countries from the Western hemisphere and Oceania), the Regional Conference on Migration (Canada, Mexico, the US, and Central America — the

Puebla Process), the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (between Persian Gulf countries and members of the Colombo Process), and initiatives from individual countries such as Switzerland's Berne Initiative which aimed to achieve better migration management at a regional and global level through increased cooperation between countries.

These forums, however, with their diverging interests and various points of view, were in a way forced to limit themselves to mere talk of shaping the international agenda. Time was running out for across-the-board decisions to establish proper legal procedures to deal with the issue, and all the while large numbers of migrants flowed into the world's leading countries (although these numbers did begin to decrease). What's more, as many analysts pointed out, by 2016, the existing system "operated with weak regulatory powers restricted by many international conventions that remained unsigned by the very countries whose borders were being crossed by the highest numbers of migrants." Therein lies the problem, and the global community has yet to agree on a solution. Should it pursue policies geared toward strictly enforcing international cooperation, or should it pressure individual countries and institutions (the EU) to adopt more comprehensive, robust legislation regulating migration?

And although we are seeing more buy-in on migration from an increasing number of formal and informal international structures, the issue is still often a very low priority on the agenda of international institutions (especially the World Health Organization). The situation has improved somewhat over the last ten years as these structures have begun working together more on global migratory issues.

When it became clear that international institutions were going to remain passive on the issue, leaders from non-governmental and community organizations decided to act. They became the driving force urging international structures and politicians to pursue policies at the international level designed to regulate migratory flows. It makes sense, then, that these community leaders are active participants in the RCPs. According to them, organizations which deal directly with migration issues are unable to gain a foothold within international structures; the structures tell them to address the problem at the level of individual countries.

The global community has yet to come to a consensus on what it means when it talks about "migration management" or "regulating migration." Researchers still study migration, perhaps due to inertia, usually focusing on issues of international sustainable development and resolving regional conflicts. The issue is now beginning to be perceived as a serious threat, in part due to the excesses of globalization and a rise in the number of conflicts.

But inaction on the part of our international institutions was welcomed by many countries. Unlike, for example, the financial and economic aspects of global governance, individual governments are not even close to agreeing on what an international treaty would look like. Would it loosen or tighten regulations on cross-border movement? Nevertheless, recent circumstances have heightened interest in creating platforms for dialogue on the issue. Although some countries still believe it should be handled domestically, others are beginning to take this unpleasant "surprise" more seriously. And they

are conveying their concern at the major global forums. The G20 recently approved a series of measures providing for employment assistance, educational programs, and language classes for migrants. The measures also streamline procedures for recognizing qualifications obtained abroad, provide legal advice, and remove barriers which hinder migrant entrepreneurs from entering local markets.

In countries that eventually experienced a large influx of migrants, both the public at large and many political leaders were outraged at how unprepared their government was for the new arrivals. The pandemic has only increased an already high level of dissatisfaction within leading nations and institutions such as the EU at the sharp rise in the number of migrants and refugees. This outrage will most likely remain even after the pandemic subsides. Yes, people support sealing the borders and introducing draconian visa measures, but do countries have the capabilities to do it? And it must be mentioned that the most disillusioned countries are also the ones that contribute the most to humanitarian aid and other assistance to conflict regions and the developing world. The need for such assistance will inevitably increase. Without it the alarming rate of migration from an increasingly turbulent world will only grow.

2.2.4 Global Value Chains

One of the key challenges which the pandemic presents is forecasting the prospects for developing global value chains (GVCs). We are already seeing that economic, industrial, and trade ties are fraying, causing disruptions in these global

chains. Countries are seriously revisiting their dependence on the outside world for essential goods, considering the issue priority number one.

Moving forward, if GVCs are to develop further, we will see increased risks both for countries not very actively involved in them and for the most eager participants (leading Western countries, China, etc.) In June 2020, the OECD issued a report stating that in the long-term, global trade will transition from *global integration* with highly developed GVCs to *global fragmentation*, where the GVCs are phased out to a certain extent. For now, however, let's not be too pessimistic. For the moment, the advantages of GVCs far outweigh the disadvantages for an overwhelming majority of participants.

Before the pandemic, those who opted to participate in the VAC were accorded substantial benefits for increased economic growth and development. With the help of VAC trade channels, these countries saw increased profits, higher employment, and additional opportunities for sustained development. Countries were motivated to participate when they saw they could reduce operating costs. The risks associated with moving production and tech cycles, distribution networks, and after-sales support to the international sphere were lower as well. But the effectiveness of a VAC depends on the quality of the business and trade environment in which they operate. Another important prerequisite is a well-thought-out strategy for attracting foreign investment. Transport costs and effective border-area operations also play a significant role. In short, participating in a VAC is a reliable way for small and medium-sized businesses to enter foreign markets.

The pandemic's effects will also be measured by how far-reaching the GVCs are within each individual sector. The shortest chains seem to be in the extractive industries. But it is perhaps wiser to gauge an economy's involvement in VACs by using industries with a large degree of fragmentation (and thus the longest VAC), for example the production of telecommunications equipment, the automotive and aviation industries, metallurgy, and light and electrical engineering.

It might prove difficult to encourage more intensive cooperation on this issue as more and more leading nations (not just Russia) resort to policies of import substitution. But GVCs also allow import substitution as one of the options available for embedding an economy within a division of labor on the international level. And it can't be ignored that small and medium-sized businesses are participating more and more in VACs and GVCs. These businesses play a huge role in national economies, especially in the leading countries of the world (see: the European Union). Businesses in many countries will suffer losses even if some of the chains are phased out and import substitutions policies are actively pursued.

Fragmentation applies more to those companies which are committed to the GVCs to one degree or another. Some of them will pursue policies aimed at globalizing operations and will look for new suppliers across the globe, especially suppliers of equipment and electronics. Those companies with lesser technological capabilities, like the textile and food industries, will look to replace suppliers and reduce their involvement with GVCs. The rest will turn to *reshoring* (moving production back

home from countries where costs were lower) and to a more localized production model and the hopes of finding suppliers that are geographically closer (pharmaceuticals).

2.3 Global Governance

Even before the pandemic, the need for collective efforts to meet global challenges had increased substantially, if only because no single country, whether it was Russia, China, or the US, was able to handle these issues on its own any longer. Even groups of partner states, what we hear referred to as *the West*, were not up to the task.

Many challenges and risks have become transnational, which limits the ability of stakeholders and individual coalitions to cope with them alone or in small teams. These challenges include, of course, the issues already discussed: climate change and the sudden surge in migratory flows. Now we add a pandemic to the list. A situation such as this cannot help but touch on the issue of sovereignty. That is the first thing that a country's leaders and advisors think of when assessing how necessary it would be to participate in collective efforts to overcome common challenges. Tensions rise with countries that are unable to contain epidemics within their borders.

The pandemic, however, is likely to increase support for global governance within official circles. The same holds true for subject matter specialists and NGOs. In all likelihood, we will see increased pressure applied on governments to be more vigilant when it comes to addressing cross-boundary global issues. Civil organizations can do more to put pressure on international institutions such as the UN. These institutions have been accused for years of dragging their feet in addressing global challenges, and the pandemic has caused an increase in this criticism.

But even in the years preceding the pandemic, new realities had created reason enough to modify outdated guidelines and establish new ones for conduct at regional and global levels within the expanding list of platforms for international cooperation. The genesis for global governance came in the 1980s, when international, financial, and economic organizations felt the need to improve relevant codes of conduct. Then the UN and other institutions, including NGOs, began to voice their concern about issues that were outside the realm of traditional security threats. Studies were initiated on the relationship between traditional and nontraditional threats, with government institutions seeming to still prefer proceeding from the former to the latter. It is likely that the pandemic will do much to put priorities in order when drawing up a new global agenda.

Principles of good governance

Hope remains that the pandemic will encourage the global community to improve upon existing rules and institutions or, perhaps, to create completely new ones to confront global risks and challenges. Such an endeavor should be based on five principles: transparency, maximum participation, accountability, effectiveness, and unity of action on the part of international stakeholders. Adhering to these principles will directly impact how well we are able to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. The tragic events of this pandemic have made it clear that certain international institutions were not up to the demands of the moment; adhering to the above principles will also help determine how serious these institutions are in enacting reforms.

Unfortunately, it has proven difficult to achieve true (not projected) unanimity on these five principles, although some progress has been made. Most subject matter experts have stated that it will be next to impossible for all two hundred countries to adopt the principles in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, if you look at certain UN documents from the early 2000s, you can see how countries slowly began to put the principles into practice within certain crucial programs, especially transparency and accountability. Major global platforms such as the G20 have also begun to implement them.

One of the biggest obstacles to across-the-board implementation is that many countries are concerned that these guidelines might constitute an excessive intrusion on their national sovereignty. This concern continues to influence how certain countries operate even after they announced they were in agreement (especially in international documents) with the following three conditions: adherence to all or one of the principles stipulated in the agreements, the need for a common solution to pressing problems (fighting poverty, overcoming economic crises, and reinforcing food security, etc.), and the realization that national and multinational mechanisms are not up to the task of dealing with present or future global challenges and must be reformed.

Maintaining the integrity of national sovereignty is, of course, essential for all countries. But as recent events have shown, if we cannot come to a clear consensus and these same countries refuse to adhere to the aforementioned principles, it is doubtful that we can make real progress countering common threats (in the area of global health security, for example).

And we should not forget that many countries are willing to transfer certain powers eventually to supranational entities and international organizations. We ought to realize that the nature and scale of certain global challenges are such that countries simply must delegate some of their sovereign rights if these challenges are to be overcome. Russia, for example, has delegated part of its sovereignty to the EAEU, while the members of the European Union have delegated even more to Brussels. Let us also not overlook the fact that many organizations and entities now forming require oversight and management from these supranational bodies.

The world has simply become more interconnected and interdependent. We must develop new tools and methods for dealing with problems on the transnational and global levels, altering them as needed due to the pandemic.

The UN within the Architecture of Global Governance

The “architecture” of global governance (in the absence of a generally accepted definition, I will put it in quotation marks) consists of formal (legitimate) international organizations operating across the world and existing within the UN system (for example, the World Health Organization) as well as of other institutions in this category (such as the World Trade Organization); formal regional and sub-regional institutions (the African Union, the Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)); informal (without legitimate status) high-level groups (the G20, the G8, now

the G7 again with Russia’s departure, BRICS), as well as other informal platforms with narrower, less ambitious mandates.

Within this architecture, the UN remains the foundation. No proponent of global governance abroad doubts this, but it also does not stop the search for more effective governance mechanisms under the auspices of the UN. Certain trends have begun to accelerate; we see more expansion of informal global platforms such as the G20, regional integration with the ceding of some authority to supranational structures, and growth in the network of NGOs. These trends not only reflect dissatisfaction with the egregious lack of action and excessive bureaucratization of formal institutions, including the UN; they are also changing the external environment for the UN’s work and are on track to push it towards reform. Obviously, in the wake of the pandemic, certain changes are expected at the UN, mostly at the level of some of its high-profile subdivisions.

Regionalization of World Politics

One of the first things that must be decided during the reform process at the UN is just how rigid the top-down hierarchy needs to be. Even some advocates of this hierarchy within the world’s leading countries are beginning to waver when it comes to this issue. They are questioning the benefits of a rigid vertical, especially if a key institution falls under the influence of one of the world’s “strongest actors.” Everyone remembers how that scenario played out in the past, when the world was divided into two poles of influence (the USSR and the US) and, for a short period of time, was run by only one (the US).

But as conditions continue to change across the world, the concept of the strongest may change; we may see a new

configuration of power, perhaps. Along those lines, we saw the US accuse China of having too much influence over the WHO. Doubts of this kind are what proponents of regional, rather than global, integration of world politics point to in their arguments; the pandemic is sure to strengthen this stance. At the same time, one should not forget that even before COVID-19, regional processes and formats had begun to change their content by considering the wishes of the regions themselves. Moreover, those established earlier began to move away from the models used when one or two superpowers held sway. Back then, regional entities had their agendas imposed on them by others, while now they can work without looking over their shoulder at large, developed nations and their coalitions.

Another difference from previous times is that regional formats are becoming more open. With that, we are also seeing NGOs become much more actively involved. It remains to be seen how the pandemic will impact this openness.

The more regionalized approach to global governance is also a byproduct of the dissatisfaction many have expressed at how little attention international institutions pay to regional problems. Many also feel that these institutions promote the strengthening of certain regions, such as the Asia-Pacific Rim, at the expense of others. In addition, the financial crisis of 2008–2009 intensified existing doubts that global financial institutions are even capable of solving regional problems; many also feared that these institutions would excessively interfere in local issues. It is unclear whether battling the pandemic and dealing with its aftermath will lower this distrust in international institutions. In any case, these institutions need

to do better in ensuring proper coordination in dealing with pressing issues, especially in areas hit hard by the pandemic. Special care needs to be taken to promote development as socio-economic conditions worsen there. We still do not know, however, if this trend towards regionalization will take firm hold within the governance structure of global affairs or if it will result in further fragmentation of the world order.

Issues of Inequality and of Clubs of the Chosen Ones

The pandemic has also brought to the surface issues of inequality. No one questions the fact that participants have varying capabilities and resources, something the world's leading powers should consider, especially with their level of influence within major global platforms such as the UN. This issue will undoubtedly impact changes within the global agenda and the current hierarchical leadership structure of global institutions. Attempts were made to address these issues of inequality some years back; the WTO, for example, issued guidelines for achieving consensus in decision-making processes. On the one hand, these guidelines help the world's leading nations (a minority) stake out a position, but they also protect weaker countries from being dictated to by their senior comrades. As a result of these very guidelines, however, the WTO has wavered; it can't act decisively to emerge from the crisis. The pandemic has done nothing but exacerbate the crisis, raising, as never before, doubts about the future of the World Trade Organization. De facto inequality persists. Moreover, in some key institutions, it is codified de jure. For example, the United States already has a blocking stake at the IMF and at the World Bank, and the European Union later received similar rights. The

veto powers which the five nuclear powers possess also grant them a legally privileged status. Unsurprisingly, emerging economies eager to flex their muscles are keen to join these “elite clubs.” Their eventual goal is a seat in the UN Security Council with veto rights or perhaps a vote within Bretton Woods institutions, namely the IMF and the World Bank. With these aspirations in mind, politicians and subject matter experts from the world’s leading countries would do well to seriously consider adapting international institutions to these new conditions and to be willing to compromise. The model to emulate here is the IMF, which agreed to increase the quota for many developing economies while preserving the decisive vote for the United States and its Western allies.

How events unfold in the future will depend on how much damage the pandemic causes throughout the world and the extent to which it impacts the ability of international financial, economic, and trade institutions to carry out their work. Meanwhile, many nations continue to push for a better seat at the table within these international structures, making things more and more uncomfortable for the chosen ones and increasing the dissatisfaction of others. In recent years, this has led to some countries bypassing formal international organizations in favor of less formal structures and more flexible mechanisms.

Competition among Formal Institutions

It is possible that the pandemic will give life to new international structures to deal with the various problems of our new reality. Such a development would likely intensify the competition among formal institutions that many have noted of late. It would also encourage reform within traditional

international institutions. This competition affects not only institutions with overlapping areas of responsibilities but also third-party structures within the purview of these institutions. We also have a group of countries unhappy with any institution designed to ensure the status-quo. This dissatisfaction is manifested in their attempts to create new structures or throw their support behind other, already existing ones, ones with different rules and mandates that are more to their liking. Competing institutions naturally come into conflict with others and can push them towards reform.

A rather recent example of this is the formation of the International Renewable Energy Association — IRENA. Its mandate — making significant improvements to the environment — puts it in direct competition with the International Energy Agency (IEA). The IEA’s mandate, in turn, is both to protect the environment and to promote the economic development of the member countries. Interestingly, with only a few exceptions, membership in IRENA includes all IEA member nations.

In response to growing criticism of the World Health Organization’s inaction, the World Bank has intensified its engagement in global health security. And it is seeing its influence grow.

Horizontal Ties

When weighing different approaches to countering common risks and challenges, countries often closely analyze vertical hierarchy chains. The same attention has yet to be paid to the development of horizontal ties; that is to say, relational ties among government entities as well as non-governmental

structures. An example of this would be recent cooperation between the mayors of our largest cities to solve some very specific problems. While coordinating with their home governments as much as possible, they are also strengthening horizontal contacts on a more autonomous basis. This cooperation is nothing new, of course, but the world is currently undergoing a particularly dynamic urbanization process, with major world cities contributing more and more to the global economy. It is only natural, then, that the leaders of these cities are beginning to have more input in regional and global decision-making, with these horizontal ties then expanding even more.

This expansion will likely include robust interaction between the corporate world and NGOs in discussions of regional and global issues. There is no reason for government entities to take part in these discussions, as the parties themselves are capable at times of solving problems that they identify on their own. They are thus also well-positioned to influence government bodies and international structures.

The launch of the UN Global Compact at the 2000 Millennium Summit is a good example of a group of NGOs increasing their involvement in formal international structures. The compact aims to encourage businesses worldwide to participate in international development assistance programs (with this assistance chiefly earmarked for poorer and developing countries), to protect human rights, and to bring in NGOs to monitor how TNCs are operating in the international space. By 2013, more than 7000 companies had voluntarily joined the agreement, committing to report annually on their compliance with obligations according to format guidelines.

Whereas UN administrative units are the driving force behind the Global Compact, in other partnerships with non-governmental and informal structures, they are either on the board of governors (GAVI – the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, REEEP – the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership), act as observers (GWP – the Global Water Partnership), or have assumed responsibility for carrying out collective decisions (the Global Mercury Partnership). In certain partnerships (such as the GAIN – the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition), the UN has little to no role at all.

Formal international institutions see a particular benefit to cooperating with non-governmental structures; the process elicits a sharing of knowledge and best practices. The pandemic, however, is certain to change the way these formal and informal entities interact.

Connecting Formats

It is becoming more crucial than ever in the wake of the pandemic to identify shared points of interest within various existing formats and to seek out the most effective channels and mechanisms for cooperation. To truly vanquish the pandemic, the global community must adhere to at least three conditions.

First, a general agreement must be reached on the level of importance of any given challenge, on its impact on other threats to the world order, and on the need to overcome it. In the pre-pandemic era, there was a preference for confronting only the most concrete threats, in part because reaching a consensus on these on the national level is easier and less costly thanks to resources from non-governmental organizations. But there

was also a degree of disharmony within and between various entities on how to conduct joint activities. It's hardly a surprise, then, that a different path was needed to deal with larger-scale, more important challenges such as climate change. The path proved to be long and not devoid of obstacles. The pandemic shows that two paths are possible: the global community could replay the Paris Agreement scenario or move in the opposite direction by creating barriers to achieving consensus on how to mitigate its aftereffects.

The second condition is to come to a general understanding of how these structures should interact and how best to distribute roles and resources among them. Studies are progressing quite well on this front, but the prospects for fulfilling this requirement, naturally, depend largely on the previous one.

Third, an appropriate balance must be struck between the productivity and inclusiveness of international mechanisms. Organizations are opening their doors to more participants and following democratic norms for representation. But this openness does not always result in the effective completion of a given task. Some participants end up confining themselves to a more representative role and shift their obligations onto others. This produces the kind of reaction one would expect from participants shouldering this extra burden. Compliance with such requirements in a group deal kind of scenario is extremely difficult. As the global community continues to combat the pandemic and its aftermath, we will see to what extent this difficulty persists.

Public-Private Partnerships

The role of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in addressing the pandemic and its aftermath is only likely to grow. PPPs are established when all parties involved, including federal governments, realize it is necessary to attract private funding and expertise when creating social goods and providing services within their borders. Based on national interests, these partnerships allow for a wider distribution of such benefits and better provision of such services. Federal governments have a wide array of instruments to maintain their national interests, but PPPs of late are playing a much larger role.

THE PANDEMIC IS AN UNFORGIVING ACCOUNTANT

A Conversation with J. Urbanovičs and I. Yurgens

While working on this book, Jānis Urbanovičs and I planned to arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss topics that do not quite fit within the strict format of a book of this type or perhaps require additional comments. A transcript of the dialogue, the idea was, could then serve as an appendix to the main text of the book. This is exactly the approach we took when working on Drafts of History, a multivolume history of twentieth-century Latvia, and it was met with much success.

But our Covid-19 world refused to let up; it proved simply too difficult to organize a face-to-face meeting. And so this chapter, the dialogue chapter, is epistolary in nature. But even in this form, it gets to the heart of the matter.

I. Yurgens

J. URBANOVIČS. Before we are to engage in a comprehensive discussion of these matters, we should perhaps mention a few things so that readers can get a sense of the big picture. The current system of global governance was established for the most part after World War II. There was a certain superstructure, however, that was added as the Cold War came to a close. It's these mechanisms within the system, introduced in the 1990s

that are most clearly breaking down at present. And here we should take another look at just how the Cold War actually ended. Let us turn to the past for a minute and recall the circumstances surrounding how it supposedly “ended.” Why supposedly? Because the Cold War never actually ended — its “frostiest” parts were simply sidelined for a bit.

Could there have been a different ending for the Cold War, different from the one that unfolded in the late 1980s and early 1990s? Not likely. If such an alternate ending were indeed possible, it could have only been a product of the wonderful era of détente of the 1970s, which witnessed the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the signing of the Helsinki Act. Back then, world leaders were truly engaged, even Brezhnev, who was not yet totally decrepit. The moral which the General Secretary of the CPSU voiced from the rostrum of the Conference, was, by and large, as follows: instead of preparing for World War III, let’s prepare for a period of long, sustainable peace. It was also around this time that Sakharov’s remarkable ideas on convergence gained traction — a rapprochement of East and West, of capitalism and socialism, and a uniting of the parts of the world divided by the Iron Curtain. But unification, mind you, was the best to be taken from each part. In other words, for socialism to gain access to capital (and capital is the best thing about capitalism), and for capitalism, in turn, to take on elements of a planned economy and managed development. In retrospect, this sentiment seems simply miraculous, but it existed at least in theory. Then things went south, and the world turned out quite a bit differently. We had Afghanistan, then Reagan’s “crusade” and his Strategic Defense Initiative, the

downed Korean airliner, the swift decline of Soviet leadership, and everything ended like it ended. The end of the Cold War resembled both a holiday celebration and a funeral. It gave rise, however, to sincere and great hope among the peoples of the world.

The Cold War ended abruptly, and world leaders were caught unawares. It was managed clumsily and unprofessionally, unlike, say, the diplomacy we saw at the end of World War II. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the institutions that emerged after the Cold War turned out to be so fragile and short-lived. A mere thirty years have passed and virtually nothing is left: the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is no more, as are any alliances between Russia and NATO or Russia and the EU.

And was there really ever a desire to end the Cold War? If yes, who expressed it? Gorbachev surely wanted to end it, as did Yeltsin most likely. There were probably some people in the West who wanted to end it as well. But people’s egos got in the way. Greed got in the way, too, as did the well-established practice of living at the expense of the weak and distant. This practice took root during colonial times, exploiting geopolitical resources and seeking out every opportunity for domination.

The colonial system allowed all countries that owned colonies to prosper. The attitudes and worldview behind the system have not disappeared; they have merely taken on more acceptable, civilized methods of interacting on the global stage. And the result of that is what we see today. Everyone wants a world with no hot war. But not everyone, it turns out, wants a world with no Cold War at all, and a lot of effort has gone into

maintaining this distinction. There are reasons to believe, in fact, that the Cold War never ended at all and that what we are witnessing today is merely a milder phase of the original one. Now let me address Sakharov and his ideas. The man was a nuclear physicist and genius theorist accustomed to a reasonable approach to the laws of nature, its forces, and their changes, and so of course he viewed his system of convergence as eminently logical and suitable for all. But the system was too idealistic. The system was not made for a world in which a different system holds sway, one which even today allows the strong to suffocate the weak. They exploit the weak for their own interests, exert their influence to the utmost, and use their strength, whether soft or hard, to their advantage.

I. YURGENS. I outlined my thoughts on a post-COVID world in the first section of our book. I would like now to start a discussion with my old friend Jānis on certain issues on which our views do not coincide. In my opinion, the dynamics of the Cold War and the circumstances which brought it to a close were motivated by somewhat different forces than the ones which Jānis so eloquently described. Politics is basically the search for an acceptable balance of power, be it on an individual or a government level. In this regard, the Cold War was not a continuation of a “hot war” that has never really ended on the Eurasian continent. It was a search for balance among power centers at various levels of development: emerging, strengthening, weakening. This search has deep roots in history: from Tamerlane to Napoleon to Hitler and Stalin, and it will continue after we are all gone.

We can say, then, that the height of the Cold War was the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the world found itself on the brink of nuclear war. And the events which accelerated its decline were the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and Gorbachev’s new thinking.

The search for this dynamic balance took place as the world’s superpowers built-up their nuclear arsenals. At first at least, the Soviet Union was playing a game of catch-up. But by the 1960s both competitors had reached a level where it became clear: a victory for one side in any future duel would be a Pyrrhic one; both parties would be destroyed. And then, in September 1967, US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stated in a speech in San Francisco that both the US and the USSR had acquired the capability to conduct a devastating attack even *after* being hit with a nuclear strike. The US’s defense policy had long been based on this First Strike Capability, and it now no longer worked.

McNamara writes, “We do not want a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union, primarily because the action-reaction phenomenon makes it foolish and futile. Yes, the United States possesses in ample abundance the resources, the technology and the will to run faster in that race for whatever distance is required. What we would much prefer to do is to come to a realistic and reasonably riskless agreement with the Soviet Union which would effectively prevent such an arms race... Since we each now possess a deterrent in excess of our individual needs, both of our nations would benefit from a properly safeguarded agreement to limit and later to reduce both our offensive and defensive strategic nuclear forces.” (see: R. McNamara. *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office*. N.Y., 1968, 61).

Brezhnev's conclusion? Nuclear parity had been achieved! Raw numbers no longer played a significant role. By the beginning of the 1970s, 15,000 Soviet warheads lay flat on the military-strategic scales against 30,000 American ones, and now both arsenals were sufficiently enormous. When both sides realized this, they began to lay the foundation for détente, the long process of coming to agreements on the reduction of nuclear weapons. But even as the détente process gained momentum, it did not end the Cold War.

If winning in a direct confrontation leads to untenable consequences, then countries must protect their interests in more subtle ways, such as seeking out diplomatic advantages and ways to augment soft power. This is exactly what Henry Kissinger did. To curb the growing ambitions of the USSR and preserve American hegemony, he included China in the "triangle of confrontation," as Beijing's conflict with Moscow had reached a climax by the end of the 1960s. In March 1969, things came to a head when a border clash broke out on Damansky Island resulting in dozens of casualties on both sides. In April of that year, at the 9th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong called on the nation "to come together and prepare for war." Prepare for a great war at that, against Social imperialism, the embodiment of that was proclaimed to be the Soviet Union. The USSR, in turn, deployed 40 military divisions consisting of one million soldiers and nuclear weapons to the border with the PRC. It cannot be said that the definition that Moscow's former partners from Beijing gave to the foreign policy of these Kremlin revisionists was completely without merit. The so-called Brezhnev Doctrine did indeed begin to take shape at the end of the 1960s. What transpired in Prague

in 1968 was given a theoretical justification *ex post facto*. Even more importantly, it became clear that Moscow, as leader of the world communist movement, was prepared to use military force, if necessary, anywhere within the Soviet sphere of influence. "The sovereignty of individual socialist countries cannot stand in opposition to the interests of world socialism and the world revolutionary movement."

At the same time the US was pushing China to confront the USSR while remaining on its side, both Nixon and Kissinger continued to pursue a reduction in tensions with Moscow. With no one wiser, Kissinger and Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to Washington, began secret discussions concerning a treaty to reduce strategic arms — SALT-1 — as well as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM) Treaty and the Biological Weapons Convention.

In February 1972, Nixon became the first American president to make an official visit to China, thereby normalizing relations with Beijing. In May he and Brezhnev signed the ABM Treaty in Moscow. Aleksei Dobrynin recalls in his memoirs that Washington was developing "a dynamic game within the US–USSR–China triangle, and the 'China card' was an important component of the Nixon–Kissinger administration's policy towards the Soviet Union." Kissinger, in the spring of 1972 between Nixon's two visits, told the Soviet ambassador that Americans "wouldn't mind learning to eat Russian caviar with Chinese chopsticks." (A. Dobrynin. *In Confidence*. M., 2019, p. 226).

This dynamic game ultimately led to the summit in Helsinki, where the heads of 35 states signed a declaration that enshrined "sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in

sovereignty”, “non-use of force or threat of force”, “inviolability of borders”, “territorial integrity of states” and many other humane things.

This helped us live for 45 years without any major wars. But this balance is disturbed when one of the sides is weakened.

I will not dwell on an analysis of the totally classic case of the Soviet Union and its overextension of forces, which led to a collapse of the system. I agree with Jānis that Gorbachev was sincerely interested in this “new thinking for our country and for the whole world.” The prime motivating factor for these innovations, however, was a realization that the Soviet economy was weakening and was lagging far behind the advanced countries of the West when it came to technology. Internal reforms would be impossible without a shift in foreign policy. Gorbachev’s own biography played a role here as well; he came of age during the Thaw and the ideology of class struggle seemed anachronistic.

As for the current tensions we are witnessing unfold, the balance of power is undoubtedly changing. We see people starting to use the term Cold War more and more often and to search for new ways to reduce tensions. Henry Kissinger, a veteran of the first détente and creator of the dynamic equilibrium concept, accepting an award at the Economic Club of New York in October 2020, said, “our leaders have to discuss the limits beyond which they will not push threats... now you can say this is totally impossible [jointly defining these limits—author’s note] and if it’s totally impossible, we will slide into a situation similar to World War I.” (Kissinger Warns US and China Must Set Limits to Avoid a Blowup.—Bloomberg, October 7, 2020).

I am confident that the leaders of China, the United States, the European Union, Russia, and other large countries will find a new formula for this equilibrium. But competition will never disappear on its own, and neither will the struggle and unity of opposites that constitute the nature of development and progress.

It is significant that Jānis mentioned A.D. Sakharov in connection with the end of the previous Cold War. The man was the quintessential champion of disarmament and a strong advocate for bringing the world’s peoples together. He and John Galbraith, one of the leading economists of the twentieth century, were the first to propose a convergence of two world systems. This idea would have been an ideal way to end the major Cold Wars as it proposed the institutional merging of capitalism and socialism into a more rational super-industrial civilization. This new industrial society would see an active role played by the federal government, a system for global planning, and a merging of major corporations with the government.

Of course, these great academics were seriously ahead of their time, and forces of production of the 1970s were not prepared for such an advanced form of labor-management relations. But it was a worthy attempt, and now we see China, in its own way, going down that very path (with the characteristic ideological conditions in place). In many countries, academics and practitioners who work with global governance theory have also not forgotten about convergence. For those interested, I highly recommend the Club of Rome report entitled *Come On! Capitalism, Myopia, Population, and Destruction of the Planet*. Using the concept of a *complete world*, the authors conclude that the world needs a new economy, a *new Enlightenment*, and

a shared civilization for the entire planet. Human civilization formed within an *empty world*, a world of unexplored territories and an abundance of resources. Modern-day human civilization has entered a phase called *complete world*, with highly uncertain prospects for securing more territory or more resources. If we continue to live according to the laws of the *empty world*, a disaster is not very far off. Among other things, the authors consider the strategy of guaranteed mutual destruction in a nuclear conflict to be madness. They call for a new strategy of “guaranteed planetary security and survival.”

Speakers and organizers at the Paris Peace Forum in Davos, and at other major high-level gatherings, have come to similar conclusions. Let us hope that a new *détente* is not that far off, even if it seems hard to believe at the moment.

J. URBANOVIČS. Politics is essentially continuous movement. You can compare politics to riding a bike: if you stop, you either fall and hit your head or you get back on and have to catch up. The pandemic has offered up a new, interesting perspective on European integration, a process that has really lost a lot of steam of late. What is going to happen with it? Will it fall, will it come to a stop, or is Europe still headed towards federalization? The dynamic, forward-looking movement of the peoples of Europe from 10-15 years ago is still fresh in our minds. Let’s not forget, each participant had his own reasons and motivations. At one end, we saw over-accredited and over-subsidized French farmers with guaranteed sales at guaranteed prices. Further back, we saw a poor, naïve Latvian, afraid to take out loans and just beginning to feel a little stability in his business. Together

they marched along, and all were pleased with the effort. They could sense that this path offered them an opportunity to fulfill their hopes and dreams. The specifics of their shared future were hazy, but the optimism remained unwavering. Then the mood within the movement shifted, partly due to the coronavirus but for other reasons as well. The time had come to stop gazing into the future; it was time to safeguard what had already been achieved. What had already been built, grown, and acquired. And, of course, everyone had something of their own.

There are new members of the European Union, and there are old ones. They all have their own truths and self-interests. For example, a no-nonsense Pole (here, the word pole is a common noun, a kind of symbol for super-egoism in the national sense) realizes that nothing else can be gained from the European Union. There are no more investments to expect, and so he gives up on it. He is not the only one.

Of course, it would be great to be able to receive something more, but the coffers are now empty. And so, everyone has decided to hide in their room.

This is what happens when prospects for improving social welfare begin to fade and disappear and the “distribution center” closes up shop. Latvian has a wonderful expression for this: “First we’ll eat your food, then everyone is on his own” (“No sākuma ēdīsim tavējo, pēc tam—katrs savējo”).

What is happening *now* with European integration? Have we made a pitstop on the road or are we at the final station? The integration movement, the process of rapprochement and merging within Europe, has not died, of course — it has not stopped dead in its tracks. However, if new incentives are not

created, old, unresolved issues will prove large enough a burden to eventually knock this man to the ground. The same holds true in life: if you keep moving forward fast enough, your problems remain somewhere behind you; you can return to them if you want to and make some decisions, or you can keep moving. You outlasted them and left them behind. But if you slow down, the unresolved issues will catch up. And if you stop completely, you will end up surrounded by old problems and sore spots. This is exactly what happened in the US — the wait is over and now it is their turn. The Americans face a tough road ahead and it might just prove to be the most dramatic test of the twenty-first century.

The European integration process initially laid out some very pragmatic, specific tasks. Have they been removed from the agenda? Put aside for now? The current integration movement began in the middle of the twentieth century to prevent any further wars. Then its mandate expanded to include improved trade and the elimination of borders and tariffs, all in an effort to allow goods, labor, and capital to move more or less freely. Then the most difficult, social stage of the process began.

So why did everything come to a halt precisely at this social stage? Because people are different; our tastes and our needs differ. This is simply a fundamental fact: people are born different. With different temperaments, talents, capabilities, and requirements. This fact makes communism simply impossible, meaning a *leveling* with universal equal prosperity. And because of these differences, it is not possible to create a society that makes the whole of Europe happy.

Moreover, there are certain national and regional particularities, even instincts, to consider. For example, one

man likes to be oppressed, another likes to be the oppressor. The latter usually does not bother to hide his preference. He likes to arrive in a foreign land and establish his own rules. He thinks his rules are the best. He likes to dominate.

Another reason why the integration process ran aground is that European pragmatists have essentially abandoned pragmatism. From the very beginning, their words and deeds pointed towards a ridiculous level of self-interest, and at some point, they tried to cover it all up with hypocrisy. Over time, the hypocrisy reached unimaginable levels. What does hypocrisy mean? It means you can beat your wife but not talk about it in public. The lying became too much. What lying? Well, for starters, that the EU is expanding and developing not so that Deutsche Bank has more profits and more clients, but so that we all feel good. Or “I work and make money so I can share it with others” and not to get even richer. What total nonsense! Instead of strengthening the economic foundation, making it healthier, more efficient and modern, European politicians began to speak like shepherds. It is as if Gobseck and Krupp had become Lutheran pastors and headed up some local communes. I don't believe it!

However, it is also true that there are certain invariable constructs throughout history, and they periodically repeat themselves. Take Germany, for instance. The German people and nation have suffered greatly through many wars and conflicts, especially during the Thirty Years War and the Napoleonic campaigns. The country ended up fragmented and it took much effort to unite it. And then it broke up again and again united. It wasn't until the twentieth century that Germany twice chose the wrong path in pursuing a foreign policy geared

toward domination. The first time it was smacked down hard. The second time — even harder. Nevertheless, it remains the driving force behind any unification movement. Such is the pan-European passionarity of the Germans: they like to unite everything!

Let's take Latvia for example. It has been a full-fledged member of the European Union for 20 years now. Has a single eurocent been invested in the country since it joined? Well, yes, it has, in roads, because that is considered military infrastructure and a method to transport European goods. There were no plans, however, to invest or create competitors or establish a branch of a major European company on Latvian soil. With the pandemic, they won't be setting up shop anytime soon. It feels like even the locations that have branches — the Czech Republic, Turkey, Russia — will see them begin to close rather soon.

Brussels views Latvia as a newbie (in the good sense). Its stance on newbies is, roughly: We are feeding them. We are teaching them. For now, that is sufficient. After they are all grown up, we will take another look. But for now, we will let the strong and experienced countries, the ones with capital, take the lead. The Swedes get the banks, the French get sugar production and other agricultural products, somebody gets the fisheries, somebody gets aviation... The European Union shows its gratitude for such *concessionship* by providing teaching to Latvia and countries like it; it trains them, brings them up to the proper standards. Someday, perhaps, something will change, but not during our lifetimes.

Maybe waiting it out isn't worth it? Maybe Latvia should become part of Germany? A good, solid idea, especially

considering that there are strong historical and cultural ties. From the point of view of economic and societal development, it's a wonderful idea. It would also allow us to move past the national issue. It's another matter entirely that no one wants us there. On the contrary, we Latvians are doing nothing but irritate the Germans and the French. How are we irritating them? By doing just one thing: being afraid. Over the course of our history, we have become accustomed to being afraid. This feeling of constant fear has spoiled us greatly.

It's not only that we have always obeyed the stronger guy. We actively seek him out. We kiss up to him, looking up at him while trying to anticipate his desires. But this cannot be just any guy: he must be the strongest. At various times in history, *he* has been the Poles, the Swedes, the Germans, and now — he is the Americans. And whenever a conflict arises between the Germans and French on one side and the Americans on the other, we betray our fellow Europeans in a heartbeat. This despite the fact that the Americans have not invested a cent in our country and never will. Because the Americans do not invest. They only take — whatever they want wherever they want. The Germans' response when they see this? "Take a hike, then!"

In the Latvian collective consciousness, the balance between the real and the ideal and between theory and practice has been disrupted. When Valdis Dombrovskis sequestered the budget during the 2008 economic crisis, a joke began making the rounds in Brussels: the Latvians are willing to walk around naked as long as they have that little EU flag in their hands.

What can be done to bring us to our senses? I don't know. It's because we are young and wet behind the ears, probably. One hundred years of independence is not all that much,

especially when that independence was brutally and continually interrupted. The peoples of other nations have national self-interests (derived from personal self-interests). Unfortunately, the Latvians have a gap where this should be; we are willing to cripple ourselves and bruise our foreheads from supplication just to please Big Brother. And now that Euro-integration has slowed a bit, we can see just how different its various members are. There are mature, independent members who work, earn money, and help others, and then there are countries that, unfortunately, merely follow the lead of everyone else. And all of them are traveling in the same vehicle, but there should really be a first-class section and a second-class section (even in terms of income, GDP per capita, and other measures).

And right now, no one is talking about the future of the EU because no one is in a position to say anything intelligible on the topic. There's simply a lack of vision and a lack of leadership. Alas. The top European politicians are just not ready to say, "I have a clear vision. I would like to see the European Union do this and this and this" or "I will dedicate my life in order to achieve this and this." In fact, we have just the opposite: no one is expressing themselves clearly, no one is offering a clear, tangible vision of a Europe of the future. Instead of a clear vision for the future, we get more bureaucracy. There are some processes that have been agreed upon and prescribed, some procedures, but no real vision.

We might be able to work things out if Germany were ambitious enough or France self-confident enough. If they envisioned a path forward and had a clear vision for the future and were willing to be the driving force behind Eurointegration.

At the moment, however, this has simply not been possible for the two countries. But there will come a time when the Frenchman and the German are able to come together. They will come together with a clear vision for the future of Europe and ideas for an overarching objective. When that comes to pass, they will turn to the other EU members and say, "those of you who share our ideas and strategies, our plans for the future, please, join us on our journey! Those of you who do not, 'get out of the carriage!'"

Whenever there was a big war in Europe or in the world at large (at least in modern and recent history), the bigger and more terrible the war was, the more effective the mechanism was that was established afterward to prevent another war from breaking out in the future. After the Napoleonic wars we had the Vienna Congress. After the Crimean War we had the Paris Congress. And after the Franco-German war, the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente came on the scene.

After the First World War, there was the Treaty of Versailles and the system of the same name. This, by the way, was an example of poor decision-making; the treaty resulted in the creation of the League of Nations which was unable to accomplish anything of note in its 20 years of existence. This ineffectiveness was at least partially caused by the US's decision not to join, even though the organization was created by Woodrow Wilson. The US congress voted 'no' on the matter, and the enterprise simply became a discussion platform with negligible influence.

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were quite harsh, nevertheless. One could even say they were cruel and unfair

to the losing side. The response in Germany to all of this was Nazism, which gained a foothold in the country not so much on the basis of a misanthropic ideology or xenophobia or everything else, as much as of a desire to take revenge or, if you like, restore a sense of fairness that had most definitely been violated, at least on certain matters.

The end of World War II, as we know, saw the creation of the UN and the beginning of a long period of peace in Europe which has lasted to this day — if you do not count localized conflicts like those in Cyprus or Yugoslavia.

The UN is perhaps one of the only institutions that has stood the test of time. It remains a force to be reckoned with and is a manifestation of the moral and political results of the last world war. When a country signs the Charter and joins the UN, be it Latvia or Croatia, it accepts the results of the Second World War and the political, historical, and moral conclusions drawn by the founding countries. It also accepts the special rights of the Security Council.

Even so, many countries are still afraid of a war. This fear is a natural one with solid grounds. You can't say the same for fearing a virus. When you go for a walk, for example, in the forest on the Riga coastline, you aren't afraid of anacondas because you have never seen an anaconda in a Baltic forest and you do not know how it would react to you. You're afraid of ticks, or bears, or maybe wolves. Here we have the same thing. How can you be afraid of Hollywood fantasies?

But the pandemic appeared anyway. In a certain sense, this is a trial run for a global catastrophe. Or, to be more precise, it's a warning sign that one is coming — a *practice* pandemic. It's not a medieval plague, it's not cholera, and it's not the Spanish Flu

which killed off entire swaths of Europe. But that does not mean that we won't bring about something like that in the twenty-first century. And we are actually "lucky" that COVID-19 affects the lungs and the respiratory tract. What if, for example, it affected people's mental health and turned millions of people into lunatics? No one thinks about things like that.

The period when people were legitimately scared of the pandemic was actually quite short — at the very beginning. It's interesting to recall the reactions we saw in various countries when we began learning about COVID-19. In China, where it all began, the government shut everything down immediately, didn't say a word to anyone, and, true to form, tried to protect themselves from the rest of the world with a wall. In this case — a wall of silence. In so doing, they turned a global problem into a domestic one and dealt with it quickly.

When Trump was informed of COVID, he said it was nonsense. America is bigger than this virus and we aren't going to bow down to any disease. He wouldn't wear a mask and refused to take it seriously. He only later understood the threat and began wearing protective equipment. And then both he and his wife fell ill.

In the UK they said, yes, we have a pandemic, yes, it's dangerous, but we're not going to do what other countries are doing; we will go our own way and develop herd immunity. British leaders later changed course and fell in line with the rest of the world.

Everyone's favorite *bat'ka*¹⁷ in Belarus ordered his people to treat themselves with vodka and then, on the sly, came down

¹⁷ Lukashenko is often referred to as "bat'ka," a colorful, largely positive moniker loosely translated as "daddy."

with “walking” COVID. Italy decided to go ahead with a pre-scheduled fashion sale attended by throngs of Chinese. Then the entire country fell ill in dramatic fashion while the world looked on. The Spanish went to Italy to watch some soccer and then also got their ass kicked by the virus.

Latvia banned almost nothing. The citizenry started to wear masks and gloves on their own. They stopped using the trams and began tattling on those who broke the rules of self-isolation (this is not a joke: the municipal police even asked Latvians not to be overzealous about this). The end result is enviable: some of the fewest cases in the EU. This is what tends to happen in a small country: an instinct for self-preservation takes hold.

In Russia we heard: “They’re hiding something from us again. We don’t believe these figures, we don’t believe these facts, we’re being deceived again, we’re being manipulated.” We basically saw a recurrence of the distrust of authority and of data made available to the public that we saw in Soviet times. We heard the same conspiracy theories and had the same heart-to-heart discussions in the kitchen all over again, only now, in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, construction crews got to work and built dozens of truly excellent, state-of-the-art hospitals.

Unfortunately, only war or an event equal in scale to it — which, I believe, is bound to happen sooner or later — seems to be able to teach us a lesson. The entire world is witnessing our mechanisms for containment and global governance fall apart. Things are also beginning to spark in places outside the major cities. Selfishness and greed are on the rise.

The situation could explode at any moment and at any location. On the Korean peninsula. Between India and Pakistan. Things could explode in Europe, too — Yugoslavia was never really settled. Ukraine was never really settled. There’s still a lot of resentment in those places, a lot of unsolved issues. Not to mention a lot of weapons. These conflicts have been merely tamped down for the time being. Catalonia has not been settled, either. And in Belarus, things have not even begun...

The world today is an unstable system. And although the major players are trying to keep things under control in a responsible manner, there are more regional powers that now need to be reckoned with. These countries come with the baggage of old, unresolved conflicts, either with their neighbors or within their borders. Several of these regional powers are also close to possessing nuclear weapons — with this many pockets of instability throughout the world, things are about to blow.

There is one other problem — a psychological one. We see that despite the wide variety of news sources available, the public pays attention only to the crises that are covered the most extensively. Over the past 20 years, conflicts have arisen numerous times in parts of the world or within systems that no one pays attention to, and they received little news coverage. An example of this would be black racism, an outbreak of which is happening right now in the US. This phenomenon is a by-product of white racism, but there is more to the story.

Regional conflicts have not disappeared. But whereas there are some controls in place between big countries and the superpowers, in the provinces, so to speak, very little is effective.

A long post-war peace in Europe became possible because the allies rode everyone hard and everyone was afraid of them. And then we had the Bomb. And allied troops stationed literally everywhere in Europe. The victors had true moral authority and real strength; they were feared by all. There were certain restrictions placed on the former aggressors that were in effect for quite a while. The allies, whether from the west or the east, effectively controlled these countries.

These memories are all a bit fuzzy now; the war was a long time ago and will soon be forgotten. Government leaders conduct their affairs according to their own dictates and do not respect the structures of international governance. The only thing in their way is the “architecture” put in place after World War II: its “daughter” institutions with their regulatory and moral principles. They are in the way but also fading into the background. And of late really just falling apart at the seams. There has been talk of reforming the UN for years, but in fact the present state of affairs is good for all involved; member nations have simply adapted. With no serious threat looming, there is no reason for anyone, whether it’s a major player or a regional power, to take on the task of creating some new supranational institution.

Military leaders and politicians alike are preparing for the last war. The pandemic and issues surrounding it demonstrate once again that they would sooner purchase a super state-of-the-art howitzer than build a state-of-the-art hospital or research laboratory in the microbiology and virology fields.

As for Latvia, if the day comes when NATO stops expanding the military base in Adazi and replenishing its forces there,

instead deciding to build a regional medical center or technopark, we’ll know a paradigm shift has occurred. In the meantime, the old mindset is still in force, dictating the purchase of guns, cyberweapons, innovations in social engineering, and strike weapons in general.

One interesting thing worth mentioning about the start of the pandemic — the first few months were in fact very entertaining. They reflected the national character and customs of each country. And then what happened? Government officials across the globe began to say almost the same thing, and they said it in harsh, abrupt tones, with much excitement even, as they say in the theatre. We heard it here in Latvia, we heard it from Merkel, Macron, Putin, the EU, even Xi. And that’s when the entire world legitimately got scared.

The fact that these statements were all made at the same time and with such intensity, followed by such severe containment measures, led many to believe that the pandemic was a man-made phenomenon. They thought COVID was perhaps a weapon and that our elected officials knew something about it that they were afraid to tell their citizens. If they all spoke in such a seemingly coordinated manner and reacted the same way to the outbreak, it meant they knew more than they were letting on. It frightened everyone for about a month. It was an interesting study in mass communication and its effect on peoples’ psyches.

Another interesting thing: the ruling elite throughout the world adapted quickly to this pandemic. It provided them with a sort of comfort zone. First, tons of money were allocated to contain the virus and reverse its effects. Countries were able to

obtain these funds quite easily and with little oversight. Latvia received two billion dollars, for example. The one in charge of administering these funds would run out of friends before he gave it all away. And you can't spend the money appropriately, in consultation with colleagues or members of the public. It's not possible to build new factories or production facilities in just a few months. It's not possible to hire and train new people. You can only make decisions that will affect markets and the stock exchange and perhaps lead to an increase in some shares. Capitalization grows, but nothing really changes. Maybe the shares of a dairy plant or a factory producing ball bearings, tractors, or mobile phones will be worth one and a half times more. But that doesn't lead to one and a half times more cheese or one and a half more transmissions. We can safely say that under current conditions the ruling elite are as comfortable as ever.

I. YURGENS. Yes, there is, on the one hand, a feeling that everywhere you look the pandemic is causing a crisis of confidence in our leaders. But no matter what steps governments take during this crisis, those who are happy won't say a word. The unhappy ones will make all the noise. But what we are really seeing are legitimacy tests. And while Germany is passing it rather successfully — well, ok, we saw a protest and some imperial and Russian flags, and, oh, didn't they try to storm the Reichstag? But then they went home and the country lives on — the regime in Belarus, for example, has been teetering on the brink since the presidential elections. And the pandemic, or rather, the feeling of abandonment that Belarusian society was

faced with in the spring, played a not insignificant role in how events developed throughout the country, events that proved to be so unpleasant for the regime.

On the other hand, some government officials feel that since the world is busy with the pandemic, they are free to do whatever they want. Authoritarian regimes take advantage of this and fortify their instruments of control. Those who have long dreamt of the opportunity to have it out with their neighbors without interference are also seizing the moment; we see this happening right now in the Caucasus. But this is nothing new. The dictators are doing what they were doing in 2019 (perhaps with a bit less success). Tensions are rising in areas of conflict where they were always smoldering.

J. URBANOVIČS. Since we seem to be on the brink of a global disaster and perhaps will soon have the opportunity to completely recalibrate how the world is aligned, it might be prudent to revisit the unresolved issues of the major players whose say in world affairs is most valued. The main conflicts in the United States are internal ones. Entrenched white racism has given birth to black racism. The famous melting pot which allowed immigrants from Eastern Europe, Italy, and Ireland to become Americans stopped functioning. Maybe it got clogged or something. In any case, it went out of commission and might explode at any moment. Actually, let's be thankful that it hasn't exploded yet. For now, it is functioning like an old volcano: when it accumulates enough lava and gas, it starts to rumble and spits them out. That's what happens: the pressure builds to a bursting point and then it erupts; after that things calm

down for a bit. But sooner or later, everything just might blow sky high.

The problem is an enormous one and no one has a way to solve it. American morals are no longer usable; the American monocentric model is also no longer an option. The American people, out of a lack of fear or out of pure selfishness, no longer buy into the usual government talking points, which, by the way, began to resemble Soviet propaganda. No one believes anymore that the US is the best nation or that it is “a city upon a hill.” The man of lesser means responds, “I don’t give a damn about your shining city upon a hill. I live in a different America.” Let’s not forget about the huge numbers of unassimilated Latinos as well as a significant influx of Arabs and Muslims from Asia.

They gathered like hedgehogs on the sharp tips of conflict and brought their problems and issues across the oceans to the United States and dumped them there. But the US was unable to deal with the cargo.

The biggest issue to deal with is, of course, racism. The battle against it has yet to be won. It has been fought since the days of Lincoln and even before. There were some glorious moments in the battle — during the two world wars for example, when a large number of colored troops joined the military. They finally had a chance to excel and make a career. After the war they were able to move up on the socio-economic ladder. The fight against racism continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Racial barriers were removed in the South and Martin Luther King came on the scene. And still, the issue was never fully resolved; it was merely pushed to the side and painted over.

I remember meeting with Max van der Stoel in the early 1990s. He was the High Commissioner on National Minorities

for the OSCE and Europe’s chief ombudsman. When I pointed to state nationalism and the obvious infringement on the rights of non-citizens, he argued that as Europe becomes more integrated and more democratic, these problems would disappear, including the issue of statelessness. I told him that the oppression of ethnic Russians (including on issues of citizenship) is a time bomb waiting to explode. He replied that it was all an issue of growth. I was young and hot-headed back then and told him that it was not a problem of growth but a growing problem. Looking back, it seems I was wrong. The problem does not grow; it merely solves itself, in a natural manner. The non-citizens either leave or depart this world entirely. But the source of the problem has not departed. It remains with us and within us.

The national question in Latvia has stood in the way of its development for a long time and will continue to as it diverts strength and resources from creative projects. It also reinforces doublethink and compels the ruling class to lie to the rest of the world and pursue watchdog policies within the country. The mine is still there and could explode at any moment, especially as our part of the world continues to heat up.

We saw it explode in the US. They no longer have good cops and bad cops; they have white cops and black cops. The same goes for representatives and senators. Everything is clear and simple, as usually happens during revolutions. The system of revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary justice is working. And through it all, the US remains atop the heap, with its reserve currency, SWIFT system, and so much more. But at the same time many of the core values which lie at the foundation of the United States, values inscribed in the

Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, are being discarded.

A similar phenomenon is taking place in Europe. Schiller's "Ode to Joy", the EU's informal anthem, contains the following lines: "Embrace, ye millions! Join together within the joy of one!" But no one wants to embrace anymore, and no one wants to join together. The motto of the EU, "Varietate concordia" (Latin for "United in Diversity") sounds almost seditious these days.

I do not agree that the current troubles we are seeing overseas are associated with the rise in consumption and living standards that, according to economists, has slowed down recently. The Americans still have plenty of cookies to go around; after all, it's the rest of the world, which, to one degree or another, sponsors or has sponsored the US, that pays for them. This has happened sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, by providing them with resources, land, or people.

Perhaps we will see an end to this process in the foreseeable future. The pump that the Americans have used to extract resources since the 1930s (or at least since the middle of the twentieth century) has begun to crack, just like the melting pot. Gunboat diplomacy doesn't work anymore because other countries have learned to build and deploy gunboats, too. And there is no single global currency either. There is the euro (with only modest ambitions for now), the yuan, the ruble, and the yen. Everything invented in America or first put into practice is repeated and developed further by others. To paint you a picture, the United States is like a pedestrian with a heavy backpack on his shoulders. As long as the pedestrian is walking

quickly, inertia keeps him going. If his pace is good, the heavy backpack even pushes him forward a little. But when a person slows down, the inertia of the backpack continues to grind into his back. He might easily fall. He could topple over and break his arms and legs. In this case, the backpack is a hindrance. It's a problem. It's a threat.

For the longest time, the United States had no difficulty in imposing its policies and worldview on others because people saw the country as super-successful and prosperous. It was the land of opportunity for all—everyone from a talented engineer to someone like Forrest Gump.

The United States showed us how people from all over the world, totally different types of people, can successfully cohabitate. Democratic values, tolerance, liberalism, "the great American dream," a rich history, social welfare programs to get ahead, the Big Apple—it doesn't matter what served as the successful foundation for this. What matters is all of these things plus many others enabled the US to unite and succeed in diversity and equality better than other countries.

But now we see that this is no longer the case. People in the US are no longer living in harmony, at least not in the kind of harmony that until recently was shown constantly around the world. One cannot help but conclude that if the Americans are unable to deal effectively with this vital issue, their moralizing is worthless. The US is losing its authority in all of its prominent roles: world policeman, judge, parent, rich relative, and generous financial backer.

The Americans' main problem is that everyone can see that they haven't been able to solve their main problem. It turns out

they are incapable of solving something that they themselves once started from! It's no secret that the US was first settled by religious fanatics and radicals. Because of their radicalism, they felt uncomfortable in the UK and in other countries in Europe and looked across the ocean for a place to live. They were the true founders of the country, and their strict religious fervor and sense of moral integrity were palpable in the US for a very long time. It wasn't that long ago that certain topics were taboo in Hollywood films and certain film scenes could be censored based on how these religious leaders interpreted them.

The American way is based on the morals of the first settlers, a life-affirming, leveling stew. All who arrived in the US purified themselves in this stew and that's how American values took hold — the patriotism, the work ethic, and so forth. Everyone was dipped in the stew: Native Americans, Chinese, Germans, Indians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians, Catholics and Protestants. Everyone was leveled, so to speak. But now the stew has gone bad.

Can the US pull through? Americans have succeeded up to now because when racism began to hinder progress, society and the country as a whole took a step forward. I am talking about the Civil War, FDR's policies, the civil rights movement to end segregation after the war, 1968, and everything that followed—all the way up to the first black president. These were all important, tough measures designed to solve specific problems the US was faced with at the time. So even though the worst of the fires was put out, racism still smoldered. After a while it flared up again in new ways and for new reasons.

Will the US be able to cope with the challenges of racism this time around? And do it while keeping its empire? I think we can

say yes to the first question but no to the second. I am convinced that we are living in the era of the last great empire, and this empire is destined to meet the same end as all its predecessors. And the point here, of course, is not the talent and competence of those at the top, or lack thereof. The senators and emperors of Rome were no fools, the British Empire, over which the sun never set, was not run by wimps, and the Politburo of the Central Committee in the 1980s was not comprised of a bunch of idiots. Of course, there is no shortage of fools in politics and government. More than once I have had the opportunity to observe that the higher you climb on the political ladder, the more fools you meet on the way up. I believe this is an empirical law that applies everywhere, not only in Latvia, Russia, or the US. Specific individuals are mere embodiments and manifestations of this law. The foolishness of these people lies in their arrogance and excessive pride. The gypsies in Latgale have a curse: "May you become too proud." Pride is probably the worst thing you can imagine. Pride blinds you and turns you into a moron.

So why is all this happening right at this moment in the US? Because for some incomprehensible reason, the focus of public interest shifted to the interior of the country, to their very own, and what everyone saw made their hair stand on end. It is like if you are in the attic in the winter. You shine a flashlight on a nest of sleeping black flies. They wake up and in a frenzy fly towards the light, thinking it's the sun. Summer is here!

On the subject of leaders, I do not want to belittle any of history's great ones, but do you really think they didn't make any mistakes? Serious ones even. So why were they so successful? I propose the following: the greatness of leaders from Caesar to Lenin and further on was their ability not so

much to comprehend as much as feel the main currents in society, the general movement of history in the period in which they lived. They then got to the front of this movement and took on leadership positions. They harnessed the current and rode it like a steed.

People say that Trump was able to mobilize “for the last time” the so-called old America, meaning those who live outside the big cities and are not immersed in liberal culture and liberal values. They work, earn their money, and lead a more or less traditional way of life.

It is thought that the influence of this old, conservative America has waned in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries due to globalization, liberalization, etc., and that Trump will be the last one capable of attracting these people to the polls and persuading them to vote for him. It's thought no one else will be able to do it and that the era of such traditional Americans is a thing of the past. The future belongs to more liberal, more global, and more democratic forces, concepts, and leaders.

But wait — Trump has also harnessed the steed of history. It was moving along, and he jumped on. He could sense its moods, its direction, and its power. It swept him along with it, both upwards and forward. Therefore, for all the talk that we would see Biden triumph easily in the 2020 US presidential election, it turned out to be even tenser than the one in 2016. After all, there has been no major course correction in history — it simply does not change as quickly as the American electoral cycle. The current of history continues with no change to its character; its gradient remains unchanged. And even if the more polished, wiser Biden — the guy next door for a lot of people — does prevail

and take residence in the White House, Trump will continue to live there and within him, within Biden. No matter what the leader of the Democrats says before the election, by the second, third, or fifth week in the Oval Office, Biden will be forced to continue many of the policies that Trump began.

Trumpism is a true embodiment of its time. It has something for everyone. Trumpism is both an ideology and its practices; you can put the car in reverse and go from the global to the concrete and the local. This reverse, inward movement, a movement back to one's roots, is also an indicator that imperialism in the world is decreasing. Its reach and its potential are becoming more limited, and its influence on domestic affairs lowered. How will it all end?

The United States, as part of humanity as a whole, has now passed through a certain cycle and has lost a significant part of its passionarity, its unity, and its rigor. Over a relatively short period of time, people from all over the world seeking a better life have journeyed through. This is what created America. America is the sum of everything, no matter what people may say about it. It has everything — the good and the bad — and people love it for their own reasons, the way men love women. One man loves a woman because she can whip up some cutlets, another because she is tender and affectionate. And this is not a woman's problem, and, naturally, not America's problem. This is your problem. Your attitude toward it is the problem.

I should also mention China here. A discussion needs to be had not just about the China of today and the China of tomorrow, but about all 5000 years of Chinese history. No other country has such a long and, at the same time, consistent history. Countries

change just like people. And China has changed throughout its history, it's just that it has changed very slowly. The Chinese themselves called their country *The Celestial Empire*.¹⁸ Initially, they used this term to refer to the Great World as a whole. Only later did it come to mean the territory that the Chinese emperor ruled over.

And it does not matter which form of government is there at the moment and how the ruling class refers to itself — the CPC Central Committee or the Imperial Court — or what the elite calls its influence clubs and forms of self-organization. The idea that all power in China rests in the hands of a single Communist Party is also an illusion. The Chinese laugh when they read this in the foreign press.

Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai became Chinese and founded the Yuan dynasty in ancient times. Despite the origins of its founder, it was still a Chinese dynasty, and the Tatar Mongols were its vassals.

Mankind owes a lot of its developmental successes to China. The Chinese invented money. The Chinese invented gunpowder. They came up with an entire system of accounting. They also discovered that the most efficient way to collect taxes was to declare they had the right to do it.

Like all empires as they expand, China is acquiring more and more vassal states. A government program designed to vassalize Eastern Europe (government investment for government bonds) is under way. Given its size, its capabilities, and its level of influence, China is able to lend anyone any amount of money, as long as it helps Beijing expand its vassal zone.

¹⁸ In Russian, the term Celestial Empire is often used to refer to China.

The policies and objectives are the same as they were for the British and American empires. But why are they doing this? Because they know that if they want to preserve "Greater China" (and the country is very diverse, even contradictory), then they must pursue an imperial policy. This is the only possible solution for them. Their size and diversity, along with the need to preserve the integrity of this diversity in some general form force China to pursue this type of policy. And it does not matter who is leading the country. The communists took over in 1949, occupied Beijing, and proclaimed the PRC. If history had turned out differently, and Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang had stayed in Beijing rather than fleeing to Taiwan, government policy would not have been any different.

It is well-known that China was united through the written language. The spoken language is completely different in the north in Beijing than in the south in Shanghai. It's the hieroglyphs they have in common. I saw myself once how Chinese from the south could not understand the Chinese from the north. I don't know Chinese at all, but I could tell they were not speaking the same language. Sometimes they have to ask each other to write down something that was just said. Only when it is written in the hieroglyphs does it make sense to all involved.

It is impossible to understand China, you can only feel it. But it is always about imperialism — a traditional imperialism born of necessity, perhaps, but still imperialism. The Chinese learned long ago not to rush anything. If you don't understand something, wait 500 years and then you'll get it. And accept it.

China truly has everything — slave labor, exploitation of the poor by the rich, and exploitation of the rural by the urban.

The country industrialized using Stalin's handbook; that is to say the villages were destroyed and labor migrated to places with horrible living conditions. They could afford to do this because the country is so big. A little devastation in a few places due to industrialization was not felt all that much. In fact, China can afford a lot of things other countries cannot due to its size, its history, and its patience. China has everything that existed before and exists now in the rest of the world. Sometimes countries have difficulty coming to terms with their size; some think they are bigger than they really are, some smaller. China, on the other hand, is very comfortable with its enormity. It does not know how to exist in any other way.

The Chinese are Chinese wherever they go. They do not dilute themselves very well. And because there are so many of them and they follow the tenets of collectivism so closely, they are often met with hostility. Like other diasporas, they have their own gangs, their own intelligentsia, and their own business communities. This Chineseness is so strong and so concentrated in every Chinese person, in every drop of this enormous ocean, that they can form enormous waves while remaining one vessel, or a couple of vessels still in contact with each other. They remain tied to one another even during disasters and unrest. The Chinese maintain their unity and a colossal amount of inertia, in the best sense of the word. They take lessons from others. They always have. And on the subject of our book, it needs to be stated again that the coronavirus to the Chinese is like a piece of grain to an elephant. They have overcome entire civilizations. They will overcome this virus as well.

What, then, is the true nature of the problems between China and the US? The Americans created a network of vassals. The Chinese did the same thing and they are constantly expanding their circle. This is rather expensive, however, as you have to pay these vassals. This constant pursuit of imperialism is an expensive endeavor. When an empire is in place, it takes away resources from its vassals, its colonies, and its imperial territories. But it also must provide something. It needs to fatten up the elites among the vassals and support them. It must build roads, develop an educational system, and train the talented young people. This all costs money, which is the essence of the problem.

We have already discussed that the moment an empire stops expanding, it begins to collapse. There is ample enough evidence for this law throughout history, something both the US and China realize. But China is in no rush. What some countries experience over the course of a few decades, China experiences over a millennium. And yet China is, in many ways, the same as any other country. It has many of the same needs, passions, and instincts. That means that it, too, could fall into a trap or step on a mine. It could choose the wrong fork in the road and the Chinese empire, too, could begin to collapse.

The Chinese version of Gorbachev could appear on the scene. He'll realize that reforms are needed but will launch them in such a way that a parallel process called End of Empire will also take place. There was a time not so long ago when China was developing quite rapidly — under Deng Xiaoping in the late 1980s and early 1990s. China saw such dynamic growth during this period that it kept the figures from the rest of the

world so as not to scare anyone. By the end of the twentieth century, China could be compared to a kid from the wrong side of the tracks. He was teased when he was little and then, when he grew up, he told everyone to get lost. But all the while, he was learning and training with others. Other people raised him.

Why are the Chinese so successful at globalization? There are many reasons, but one of them is that China has very good bureaucrats. The Chinese, in fact, were the first to invent good bureaucrats when they needed to conduct a census. The census has an impact on almost everything: whatever planning is able to be done, tax revenue, the military, the allocation of resources, and much more. In order to carry it out, the Chinese invented an effective bureaucracy and the tradition has continued to this day. Another reason is that the Chinese are hard workers. They need very little and are willing to do whatever is required of them. Of course, they have their own techniques, so to say, but are willing to allow themselves to be exploited. They like to learn and know how to adapt. They are also very good students. They readily grasp concepts, eagerly adopt the best methods created by others and implement them with ease. Then they simply move on.

So, are smooth and equitable relations between Russia and China even possible? Russia lost its empire in 1991, and thus is now doomed to lose the rest of its independence. It could conceivably become a vassal state of either China or the US. A third scenario, less likely but theoretically possible, sees it become a vassal or a part of a united Europe. Russia no longer has a choice — it must become a vassal whether it wants to or not.

I. YURGENS. I cannot agree with my friend Jānis when he writes about empire as it applies to the US and the PRC. If I understand correctly, he predicts the former will come to an end rather soon and the latter sometime in the future. I'd like to discuss in this regard Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev, the prominent Russian ethnologist and philosopher and son of two great Russian poets, Akhmatova and Gumilev. The younger Gumilev proposed a passionary theory of ethnogenesis. For all of its inconsistencies, the theory quite accurately outlines the stages of life within an ethnos: the rise, the prosperity, the overheating, and then the breakdown. The Americans and the Chinese have yet to reach their apex. Thus, they cannot have entered the breakdown stage. The current problems we are witnessing in the US — Trumpism, racism, or their *spoiled stew* — do not seem to me to be existential ones. The embedded institutions in the United States will be able to overcome them. The economic and military might of the US has yet to be matched. Of course, like any other country, the Americans will go through what is known as the subpassionary period, a time of relative decline. But this will likely not happen anytime soon; according to Gumilev, not for at least another 150 years.

It is harder for me to write about China, a nation of 1.5 billion people. Over its 6000-year history, Chinese civilization has passed through various stages of passionarity. Most historians date the beginning of China's subpassionary period to the middle of the nineteenth century. It was then that China lost the opium wars and the Qing dynasty came to an end. The revolution of 1949 shook the nation; the ensuing Cultural Revolution slashed through the bureaucracy and prompted an

unprecedented level of activity by the masses at the cost of millions of lives. Deng Xiaoping's reforms tossed the slogans and programs touting self-fulfillment and wealth accumulation into the furnace of the people's will. My trips to this country always gave me the impression that there is a tremendous amount of grassroots activity. And unless Xi Jinping's counter-reforms, which include his policies for "restoring order" and attempts to unite autocracy, technocracy, and the spirit of nationalism, put an end to this wave, China's passionarity will last for quite a long time. This would also guarantee a level of stability for a new pole of power in global politics and economics. The unity and struggle of these two poles will remain the main manifestation of the first law of dialectics in global politics this century.

J. URBANOVIČS. Yes, and the final outcome of this struggle is still a long way off. Moving on to Europe and Russia, it is most likely that one part of Europe will become vassals of America and the other part —vassals of China. Thus, a fairly durable peace will be established, in which there will be two superpowers, built on the principles of empire.

Russia lost its right to be a superpower, and the roots of this loss can be found at the end of the eighteenth century, when Russia supported the American colonies in their conflict with the mother country. The French did the same thing, and the groundwork for a future loss was laid.

Europe was the site of the largest integration project of the twentieth century. Why did this project fail and how can we assess the current situation? It is well known that some of the bloodiest and longest wars in the history of mankind were fought in Europe.

World War I was especially frightening for Europeans. It caused massive amounts of damage, claimed countless lives, and lasted a very long time. Its culmination, an unjust peace treaty, essentially resulted in its continuation in the form of World War II. Fear of more war was the impetus for the United Europe project after 1945. The process of uniting Europe began with the creation of common institutions. A bad peace is better than a good war. That was followed by economic integration in the form of trade unions, the most basic ones at first (coal and steel), then more advanced ones. The European mindset could handle this stage quite easily: we need trade, we need to earn money. Let's trade without barriers, without unnecessary charges. And they began to remove the barriers. Then they realized the significant potential of a fuller economic integration and began to do just that (if we integrate, we will outpace everyone). The Common Market countries nurtured one another and moved it forward. It was when a social welfare subproject was added that things began to slow. And again, it was people's egos that got in the way. A single social welfare project for all of Europe simply did not work out and the crisis we are witnessing today (and have witnessed for an entire decade) is actually a crisis of the social subproject. Its driving ideology was faulty. You simply cannot improve the lot of the poor at the expense of the rich (poor countries at the expense of rich countries and poor people in poor countries at the expense of rich people in rich countries).

People began discussing the redistribution of wealth and resources. This is a social issue; some might even say a *socialist* issue. A farmer in Germany has always been paid more per hectare than a farmer in Bulgaria or Latvia. And the German farmer doesn't want to have to share with others for no reason.

He doesn't want to just give his money away with no real expectation of being compensated. The poorer, smaller, and newer countries acted selfishly and tried to suck as much as they could out of the cow known as *Europka* and then still wanted more. When it comes to their own contributions to the common cause, they are suddenly quiet (other than issuing occasional moral support).

It certainly appears at the moment that neither the Germans nor the French are going to be the driving force behind the integration of Europe (at least for the foreseeable future). The process has simply come to a standstill. If the EU had not decided to expand in the 1990s and 2000s and had retained only countries from *Old Europe*, which, by the way, contains some rather poor countries (Ireland, Portugal, Greece, parts of Spain, in other words, not only the wealthy north but the less wealthy south), then the development process would have gone much more smoothly. Instead the EU accepted new countries into its body and endowed them with the same rights. And ended up with a new set of major problems.

You could say that these new countries upgraded from a cart to a train. And not just the train — they sat in a class of cars completely inappropriate for their status. They also began to behave in an unseemly manner, especially after realizing that the US is strong and Europe, at least at the moment, is not. The irony, of course, is that Europe is weak precisely because it accepted these countries into the union and now must spend a significant amount of its resources to pick up their slack.

In the previous vassal system, the “new Europeans” were used to fearing and obeying the stronger countries because

strong equaled scary. Trump is scary because he can blacklist just about anyone. He can initiate a bank investigation and confiscate everything. And, for good measure, hang a couple of criminal cases on the schmuck as well. No one is afraid of Euroenthusiast Angela Merkel. But people are afraid of Trump the Republican even though Merkel is the one giving out the goodies and Washington gives nothing to anyone. And people actually listen to Washington (at least in Eastern Europe) while virtually ignoring Berlin. Europe these days simply lacks sufficient will and a coherent vision. It would be great if strong leaders took charge in Europe and said, “Europe should do this, this, and this.” They would need to clearly outline their goals and the best path forward for Europe. For this to happen, we would need a nearly fearless Germany or an arrogant and ambitious France to lead Europe into the future. The reality, however, is that France and Germany are very different. A Frenchman will always be extravagant and gallant. He will always pursue pleasure and a beautiful, robust life. A German will always be organized and disciplined and will follow the *ordnung* at all times. And so, it is often difficult for the two countries to come to an agreement. It's not a bad thing, of course, that they are different, and, in many ways, they complement each other. But it is not easy for them to agree.

Broadly speaking, it would be beneficial if Old Europe would come together again in some kind of formal or even informal club. By Old Europe, I mean the Germans, the French, maybe the Belgians, the Dutch, the Danes, the Anglo-Saxons, the Swedes, and the major countries of southern Europe. That is to say, those countries with an imperial past and a rich,

acknowledged history. Countries experienced in long-term decision-making that have had the opportunity to evaluate those decisions. These countries have a strong tradition of decision-making (and the traditions may vary from country to country, sometimes even wildly). They are internally stable and have had both successes and failures in the past. Once gathered, they could tell us, “We are doing this, this, and this. We have the leadership, the resources, the strength. Here are our objectives, the timelines. This is what we would like to accomplish. Those who would like to join us, we welcome you. We will fix up our “jalopy” as we go. Over time, dear young passengers, you will also come into your own. It just takes time, and you need some experience. A tradition needs to take hold. Until such time, to be blunt, that you mature into rulers and leaders, we do not recognize your right to decide our common fate. You can watch and learn, however.

This is perhaps the most believable scenario for European integration. It is completely undemocratic, of course. It is even outrageously undemocratic. But where have you ever seen a total democracy? When and where were people truly equal? Nowhere. Except perhaps in Ancient Greece, but they owned slaves. There has never been a time or a place when true equality and total democracy existed. And it certainly didn't exist in the places where it was most loudly touted, and where it was proclaimed that everyone was equal. Saving Europe and preserving the European Union as both a process and an ideal will require leadership. If a group of leaders does not usurp power soon in the ways I have outlined, we will continue to decay. The same way that all countries are decaying at the moment, large and

small, experienced and amateur. Europeans are in the process of turning into a bunch of simpletons, and the reason for this is an acute lack of leadership. Old Europe has traditionally had its problem countries, mostly in the south, but not exclusively. They are generally small states with complex, not always illustrious histories. They like to play the victim card as they trudge along in the rearguard of Europe's convoy. As long as they make up the rear of this convoy, all the invective and foul odors which they carry with them from the past stay back there and eventually dissipate into the air. Not the most pleasant sensation, but at least everything up front is nice and clean. On the whole, our European wagon train had a rather grand and dignified look to it.

Now that the process has slowed to almost a complete stop, the rear part of the convoy has gotten bunched up at the front. It's almost right there with its cluttered rooms and base passions and selfishness. And all it wants to do is swindle and steal. This is an effect of the inertia of a moving vehicle; the train comes to a halt and the luggage falls off the shelf onto your head. If there is no progress, what we get is regress. There is no third option. Social educators have a favorite phrase for this from a work by Lewis Carroll: “We must run as fast as we can just to stay in place, and if you wish to go anywhere, you must run twice as fast as that.” In the regression phase, anything that has yet to be resolved or overcome begins to weigh heavily and even cripple.

There is massive demand for leadership in today's world. Everyone understands this, but no one wants to discuss it in public. That's the problem. Because it's unseemly. I mean,

how is it possible that after we all came together in support of democratic values and studied the “correct” lessons from history, that people want authoritarianism... Just another form of hypocrisy. Someday this bubble will burst and begin to ooze pus. Someone will have to call a good doctor.

I. YURGENS. The European Union is a difficult topic for me to discuss. Jānis knows better, of course, as an EU citizen. I am not as pessimistic as he is, however. I can say that one of the most vivid descriptions I ever came across of how the European Union is viewed outside of politics was in an editorial seven years ago in *Le Monde*.

“There is no need to despair. All is not lost for the EU. Yes, it is drowning in the depths of this crisis and choking under a mountain of its members’ debts. Trying to remove the heavy foot of recession currently on its throat. Falling lower and lower in public opinion polls. Being told to go to hell via protest votes in various countries. Forced to reduce its budget to the lowest common denominator of its national egotisms. And yet it still is able to move forward.”¹⁹

And how can we forget the “no-nonsense Pole” on one side and the enlightened, enterprising Macron on the other.

As just as a layperson, I think I should point out: despite all the difficulties of integration, I have yet to meet anyone in my overseas trips who is firmly convinced that their country should leave the European Union. Even in the UK, my friends who supported Brexit had thousands of conditions under which they would have stayed put.

¹⁹ Les bonus des traders europeen sa la toise: Editorial.—Le Monde, 2013, 3–4 mars.

And as a Russian citizen, I must state that more than half of my country’s trade, scientific, cultural, industrial and financial ties and interests are with the European Union. Our success depends in large part on the economic success of the European Union, this in spite of the sanctions regime which hurts us both. We are a European country, no matter what our Eurasians say about the uniqueness of Russian civilization. But we are a very large, headstrong member of this family and therefore family life can sometimes be difficult.

On June 20, 1880, one of the geniuses of Russian literature, Fyodor Dostoevsky, gave a speech at the unveiling of a monument to another genius of Russian literature, Alexander Pushkin. In this famous “Pushkin Speech,” Dostoevsky insisted that, on the one hand, “beyond all doubt, the destiny of a Russian is pan-European and universal” and that “to become a true Russian does indeed mean to aspire finally to reconcile the contradictions of Europe.” On the other hand, perhaps anticipating criticism from the Slavophiles, Dostoevsky in his commentary to the speech, warns against attempts to “slavishly copy” the European system because, after all, “the entire civil foundation of all European nations, everything has been undermined” and “in Europe it will collapse.”

Over the century and a half that has passed since then, we have been friends, and we have been at war, but our political thinkers and leaders have never ceased their talk of a common European home. We came closest to integrating in our lifetime in May 2005 in Moscow when President Putin, European Commission President Barroso, and EU High Representative for Foreign Policy Solana signed a road map for four common

spaces — a tool for creating a common European economic space. The stated goal at the time was to create an open and integrated market between Russia and the European Union. The economic component was complemented by a common space for freedom, security, and justice, a common space for external security, and a common space for science and education, including a cultural element.

A simple list of what has been done to fill these roadmaps with specific content would fill several volumes. The fruits of these efforts are still being felt in the economies of Russia and the EU, despite the current cold peace and the freezing of political contacts after events in Belarus and the poisoning of Navalny.

The U-turn took place with Putin's speech in February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, in which he stated:

- *Russia is not willing to exist in a unipolar world led by the United States*
- *NATO is deploying its advance forces close to the Russian border contrary to assurances that were made when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved*
- *The EU Energy Charter Treaty disadvantages Russia as an energy exporter and is a unilateral diktat*

When a break in tensions seemed to appear, Medvedev took advantage of it and made attempts to build on some of the positivity that had existed in the early 2000s. He made a lot of progress, but several events ended up deciding things in favor of the hardliners: the behavior of his partners in Libya, the persecution of the Russian security forces after the passage of

the so-called Magnitsky Act, and a worsening of relations with the UK. As Andrei Kolesnikov from the Carnegie Moscow Center later wrote, the Munich Speech was Putin's attempt to "frighten the West with his frankness, in the hopes that his 'Western partners' would take his concerns into account and meet him halfway." Putin essentially presented a list of grievances and then seemed to be waiting for some sort of consoling or perhaps assurances that he is a man worthy of the utmost respect. What followed was the exact opposite, but this option B was a blunder: if you don't want to do it, then don't. Russia will transform itself from a small piece of the West into a supersovereign island. You can try to transform yourself into an island, sure, albeit a very, very large one. But the entropy of the Great British Empire, "on which the sun never sets," clearly shows what that will lead to.

J. URBANOVIČS. What about the rest of the world? I mean, we have India with more than a billion people and nuclear weapons. We have the Islamic world, which stands in defiant contrast to Europe. India is a separate continent that is still poorly understood. It has everything, including a lot of things we know nothing or very little about. Maybe we have heard some talk, but that's it. There are Hindus and Muslims, of course, but there are also hundreds of other religions that differ significantly from one another. Even the names of a lot of the local cities remain unknown to Europeans. There are villages (by local standards) deep inside India with six million people whose inhabitants are completely different from those in the village on the other side of the mountain. They look different, they have a completely different way of life.

In fact, India quite recently instituted monetary reforms in regions where no money had ever been in circulation and where the locals had no idea what it was. So, the government introduced currency, an accounting system, some basic financial functions.

India indeed has everything — from the totally primitive to the ultra-modern. At the same time, a rule still exists where a person can say in a police station: “I swear that I was born in such and such a year in such and such a city.” This will be taken as the absolute truth, and no one will check it.

The most popular sport in India is cricket, a complex and somewhat dangerous game. A cricket bat can kill a person. And the fans and everyone else involved don’t care in the slightest where the Indian national team ranks internationally or how it performs in international competitions. The only thing that matters is beating Pakistan.

It’s a very complex part of the world. India has problems with its borderlands and with neighboring countries. The British colonizers drew the borders like real imperialists — creating more problems than they solved. And so many people would like to redraw the borders, naturally, to the detriment of the country next door.

Thank God what’s transpiring in India is contained on the subcontinent — in Hindustan. When things begin to move beyond the borders of India, especially the negative processes, we won’t know what hit us.

There are Indian diasporas on all coasts of that ocean. In fact, I am certain, the ocean gets its name not from the *country* which is located on its shore but from these very strong diasporas — from East Africa to Australia. Indians abroad have

accomplished a great deal; they are well-represented in fields such as trade, medicine, and business. We might even say that Indians have essentially occupied the shores of the Indian Ocean. And by and large, no one knows what to expect from India. But we certainly need to be prepared for the Indian effect.

The Islamic world is also a subcontinent stretching over a vast area west to east (from the Maghreb to Central Asia and beyond). The region contains many different countries and just as many conflicting views. Historically, these conflicting views have been settled with swords and bloodshed. In the twelfth century, Salah ad-Din, a Sunni Kurd by birth, defeated the crusaders. However, he treated these crusaders well and was more forgiving of them than of his internal rivals. These fundamental contradictions, along with the cruelty and the anger, are quite profound and have existed within Islam for a long time.

Unfortunately, this applies not only to the Islamic world but to human beings as a whole; a direct analogy can be drawn between human behavior and the principles of the animal world. Animals are often much more tolerant of members of other species than of members of their own. This could be out of fear, or because they have no desire to mate with them, or for some other reasons. You haven’t seen an animal fight until you’ve seen two hares go at it. The same thing happens with mankind. We are always the cruelest towards our own.

We have no clue what will happen when Africa begins to see some economic growth. There is no domestic growth in Africa at the moment. Instead we have the Americans and the Chinese, and, to a lesser extent, the Europeans competing with

each other. They are able to create jobs because there is cheap labor and free solar energy.

But this is just a prelude. The main event will begin when we start to see independent economic growth driven by domestic sources and efforts. This will spur on a host of unresolved issues, and only then will we find out what Africa really is made of.

What do we know about Africa today? That it's full of dark-skinned people in an exotic landscape, and each of them has a pineapple or a banana in their hands. When they are at war with one another, a Kalashnikov makes an appearance, which they then include in their national emblems. Africa's time has yet to come. It's a way off, in fact. It will not have an impact on the happenings of today or tomorrow, so we should heed the advice of the rabbi who said: "Have the strength to change what you can change, patience to endure what you cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference."

...Is there still room for classical politics in the world as a whole or within individual states? Of course, there is. Politics includes everything that influences or governs society. Even our conversation will have something of an impact and inevitably lead to warped interpretations in the public sphere (whether we like it or not). The French writer Charles de Montalembert once said, "You might not be in the business of politics, but politics is in the business of you." It is very important to determine the levels of politics that are associated with the proportionality of certain things, with their correspondence to mutual influence. We've read that a butterfly, or rather its death, can change the world (in the Ray Bradbury story, "A Sound of Thunder"). A fundamental paradox needs to be considered here: wise, sensible

politics, as a rule, takes time. It needs to overcome innumerable obstacles cleverly put in its way. But stupidity can simply jump or fly over these obstacles. In other words, stupidity can result in dangerous and unexpected consequences. Therefore, politics requires a great sense of responsibility. And you can't ignore the little things in politics, either.

The British economist Ernst Schumacher published a book of essays entitled *Small is Beautiful*. And there is a saying in Russian that I really like as well — "Fyodora is large but a fool; Ivan is small but what a guy." The same thing happens when you walk your dog — the small dogs always think they are bigger than they are. A small pug can chase off a large Central Asian shepherd. And the small dog is not just small — it's crazy as well. Similar insanity sometimes takes hold in small countries; they simply do not understand proportionality and are incapable of foreseeing consequences. When the big boys are at a loss or can't do something, every little punk from the schoolyard rushes to the front.

This has generally been the pattern throughout world history whenever big changes take place, something new appears, or something old is destroyed. These paradigm shifts and dramatic changes in society bring out the riffraff to the city streets and squares. Even in a refined, well-groomed bureaucracy there are marginals — "moral dwarves" you might call them — which are suitable for these cases and are prepared for them.

The situation becomes perilous when the big boys are incapable of doing something and are then unable to carry the burden of being big any further. The vehicle slows down or even

stops and confusion sets in. The forces of inertia (which we discussed before) scatter the cargo all over the wagon train. The cargo breaks loose of its fastenings and tumbles into a ditch or onto the side of the road. In this particular case, we are talking about the smaller countries as well. But someone will still have to stop and collect it all. We are witnessing such a scattering right now. The train is disintegrating, vacillating. There are doubts, fears, madness. It is a very alarming situation.

I. YURGENS. Both in our correspondence and in his final article, Jānis speaks at length about his concerns regarding the future of international relations and his skepticism of globalization in its current state. The pandemic has been an unforgiving auditor. It has revealed just how severe some of our problems are and that they can no longer be ignored. His concerns are completely justified; it's just the degree of concern is somewhat overblown.

Whatever people think about this crisis, or, as some say, the failure of globalization, the process is ongoing. World financial markets have been globalized, successful value chains have been globalized, accessible information (and disinformation) has been globalized. To call the attempts of local regulators, even at the presidential level, a defense of national interests and markets is useless; these are temporary convulsions. The challenge is to find reasonable and acceptable forms of global governance as we are faced with both opportunities and threats. Writers and filmmakers have found a way to do it and do not hesitate to show the world. Now it's the politicians' turn. Of course, they have to do it while under pressure from the broad masses and a boatload of problems.

Russia's response to these challenges avoids the "besieged fortress" scenario. The most likely path will be Eurointegration 2.0, no matter how difficult it might be to initiate at this stage. Of course, it is vital that we pursue alliances with China and the US, as well as with our neighbors to the south in the Caucasus and in the Middle East. However, this striving to include anything and everything might force us into the classic trap of overextending ourselves. It might already be happening, in fact. Russia does not have the means to check all the boxes of a superpower like the United States or the USSR. A search for tactical priorities will inevitably lead us to our closest neighbors in the West because, as Chancellor Bismarck said, the deciding factor of history is geography.

Globalization is one of the most significant phenomena of our time; it is embodied in thousands upon thousands of concrete projects. Some of these projects have suffered during the pandemic, and some will not make it to 2020. But this only means that the ones who do survive or decide to start afresh will have better opportunities to get out ahead of everyone. All crises — V-shaped, U-shaped, even the ones that result in a collapse — eventually lead to a boom one way or another. But it's crucial for us to know ahead of time what opportunities this boom is capable of providing so that we can make the most of it.

I would like to conclude our present conversation with some specifics instead of abstract phrases. The specifics of the future, if you will, which perhaps are more deserving of our attention at the moment than any transitory, day-to-day issues. Back in 2019, we began organizing, with our Latvian colleagues, a permanent forum for freight shipping officials from Russia and the Baltic

countries. The goal of the forum was to transform the Baltic ports into the *gateway to Europe* for cargo flows going to and from China through Russia. The transport and ground shipping industry has long been the locomotive driving the external development of the service sector. Even under the constraints caused by the sanctions regime, the export of ground shipping services grew steadily up to 2019, increasing 10–15% annually. It was only last year that this locomotive began to slow down somewhat. The prospects for further development are enormous, but we need certain resources that remain hidden, so to speak. Only a targeted economic policy can set them in motion. Quarterly figures for the current year are, of course, even more modest. But nothing fatal here — the short-term negative effect of the pandemic, which mainly impacted foreign economic activity, did not exceed 10%. Meanwhile, it's actually the railway statistics that are the most positive. In the first half of 2020, freight shipping using the Russian Railways network to reach seaports increased 3.3%; container traffic grew by 15% (if we include transit containers, by almost 24%). Railway officials themselves believe that the existing capabilities of the system would allow 2–3 times more containers to be shipped.

Even during the pandemic, freight turnover with China through the Manchuria–Zabaikalsk railway crossing increased by 15% over six months. The speed of China-Europe container trains on the Russian Railways network in June showed a 29% year-to-year increase (1,328 km per day). The Eurasia high-speed highway, which promises “three days from Ürümqi to Berlin” is still a distant prospect, however. Nevertheless, the momentum is real, and on-time delivery rates (that is, the

percentage of shipments that arrive on time) is 99.5%; this figure would be virtually impossible to attain for transport by automobile. Insurance claims for ground shipping are 15 times higher than those for rail shipping.

According to International Trade Center estimates, Russia is consistently in the top-20 (currently #14) countries for the export of freight shipping services (Norway, Greece, Poland, Spain, Turkey, India also have market volume in the range of 17–23 billion dollars). However, our growth opportunities are much wider than those of our nearest competitors on the list.

This growth can only resume, however, if we tackle the weak spots in our national transport system. I am talking about building modern infrastructure, encouraging the development of auxiliary markets, and streamlining transport logistics (we are far behind in this area). We also must reach a level of digitization on par with the world's leaders.

For now, it is difficult to predict what the dynamics of global trade will be over the next 5–10 years. But you can be sure that the shift in flows we are seeing from Atlantic and Pacific routes to trans-Asian ones will continue. So will the shift from sea transport to land. There is huge potential here for our freight shipping services and for the Baltic transit corridor. The corridor can be widened substantially from what it is at present considering the flow of goods between Europe and Asia. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin spoke at length about the bright future which lies ahead for transit container traffic during a speech to the State Duma this past summer. Hopefully, a significant percentage of these containers will pass through Baltic ports.

Yes, a general overview of global development here in the fall of 2020 can't help but alarm an observer to one degree or another. And so, in a sense, getting down to the level of specific tasks is an excellent form of therapy. These might be projects designed to reform global governance or, even better, to create the right export stimulation conditions — we have plenty of room to operate and plenty of opportunities for growth.

Jānis Urbanovičs

IN PLACE OF A CONCLUSION

The material contained in this book is dedicated to the pandemic which presented itself to the world in the year 2020 from the birth of Christ. But not only to this pandemic; it is also dedicated to its impact on such things as the current crisis of global leadership, the long overdue changes needed in the world, and the opportunities to implement them delicately and without bloodshed.

Our already existing issues — the demand for actual leadership across the globe and in politics, the potential for a different set of world leaders to come on the scene, and a possible globalization reboot — were put into the context of the pandemic (“our guest, the contagion”) and its subsequent consequences. This pandemic appeared unexpectedly but was at the same time quite expected: epidemiologists in various countries had put out warnings some time ago that they expected something like this to happen.

The “pandemic storms” found new ways to show us just how out-of-date and fragile many of our global institutions were. The global governance system currently in place is showing its age with every wobbly step. You would have to be in a coma not to realize changes need to be made. As these problems increase, so

do the discussions around them — the search is on for someone to blame.

The fear which the pandemic has caused is palpable across the globe: in news reports, the halls of government, and in the homes of ordinary citizens. And maybe this is a good thing in a way.

There is a line of thought that believes that generations take shape in the face of wars, disasters, or revolutions. The current generation is the second or third in a row which has not encountered a war, a disaster, or a real revolution. Therefore, the fear of war is rapidly disappearing, and the very attitude towards it is going virtual. People are less determined to follow international treaties and respect the international institutions created to avert war and global disasters. The structures established to prevent war in the Old World planted the seed for the European Union. The UN was created, but on a global scale, for the same purpose. Over time, however, it lost its moral purity. The member nations, including the founding ones and those with seats on the Security Council, began to show a certain level of duplicity; they waged war in some part of the world, often near their borders, while also making grandiose speeches at the podium about peace, justice, and prosperity. And eventually fewer and fewer believed these speeches. The same thing began to occur with the new members. They joined the organization, thus officially agreeing to recognize the outcome of World War II and to resist the return of Nazism in any form. But all the while they were thumbing their nose behind the institution's back. "We are willing to sign any document, but that doesn't mean that we will actually comply with it." And this inevitably

leads to the degradation of a unique global institution. Although there has been no end to discussions over the need for reforming the UN, many are now saying that it is obsolete and needs to be replaced with something else. Meanwhile, the Americans say they don't want anything at all, and the Chinese say they will just build a new Silk Road and cooperate via this grand project.

The fear of war that cemented global institutions more than half a century ago is becoming a thing of the past. Revolutions, wars, and disasters are now something you see in movies and photographs or hear about from grandpa or grandma. But the younger generation, in part because of the traditional conflict between fathers and sons, rejects and devalues these experiences. They want to experience something of their own.

In this sense, perhaps the pandemic can serve as a warning against such frivolity. But this does not seem to be happening. Maybe because it's not a real pandemic? Just a practice one?

What we are seeing right now, by the way, strongly resembles the "beetle in an anthill" principle. "Out of pure scientific curiosity, some clever guys put a beetle into an anthill and are now diligently registering all the nuances of ant psychology — all the subtleties of their social organization." (The Strugatsky Brothers).

The coronavirus has the potential to play a significant role in globalization processes. The only way to overcome even this "practice" pandemic and its aftermath is if the entire world joins forces. The disease does not take into account borders of state or class, and it must be fought in the same way. On the other hand, the pandemic is very adept at fragmenting and separating, forcing countries and people to fence themselves off

from one other and self-isolate at all levels. Case in point: over a six-month period, many global logistics and production chains were disrupted. And there we were, left alone and forced to take a closer look at ourselves and to focus. And so, we rethought a lot of our principles, changed our habits and courses of action, and saw on occasion the most unexpected of results. The pandemic has magnified our leadership crisis and made us realize that the crisis is truly of a global scale.

Our current political elites are now nothing but shackles on the feet of history. We see how they are trying to stop it, or at least slow it down, but, of course, this is impossible. I am first and foremost referring to those who are completely fine with conditions as they are. Unfortunately, that's what makes them the elite — they are always fine with conditions as they are. They do not advocate for progress or fight for reforms. Perhaps they give lip service to wanting some sort of change, but on an ideological and practical level, the elites are inclined to support a continuation of the conditions which surround them. At best, they might support some kind of superficial modifications. It's possible, of course, to find new leaders from the ranks of the old elite, but this will be an exception, not a rule.

Unfortunately, you can only get rid of these shackles by experiencing a true disaster. Only a disaster can convey the necessary lessons. Only a disaster can rebuild and repair. Disasters solve systemic problems —those that have formed within the system and cannot be resolved by the system. I believe it was Einstein who said that you would never solve a problem if your mindset was the same as those who created the problem. And that it is utterly pointless to do the same thing

over and over again and expect different results. A disaster overcomes systemic contradictions and systemic crises through sheer destruction. When one occurs, the support structures propping up the system, structures which caused the crisis and hinder development, are essentially dismantled. The results are sometimes chaotic, always dramatic, but there is no other way to overcome this ossification. It might take the form of a revolution, a war, or even a famine or an epidemic. One way or another, the old system breaks down — in whole or in part. And then a miracle happens: in ways no one could have predicted and according to laws no one has heard of, new institutions begin to emerge to solve the problems that caused the disaster in the first place. Therefore, Marx was right when he said, “revolutions are the locomotives of history.” It's not just a nice sentiment. We just need to change *revolutions* to *disaster*. Among other things, disasters have another useful consequence: people who survive them are then very wary when it looks as though it might happen again. As the Russians say, “once bitten, twice shy.”²⁰

We have reached such an advanced level of development in our civilization that people are now especially anxious about their chances of survival during a large-scale disaster. Seemingly distant dangers and threats almost immediately cross borders and impact the rest of the world. There is nowhere to hide. This is simply one of the aspects of globalization; the world is still ruled by selfishness, however. It is hardwired into our genetic code. Selfishness was instilled in us at the dawn

²⁰ Literally, “burn your mouth on the milk [once], the next time you blow on the water.”

of history. It is a form of self-defense, self-preservation, and self-love. Selfishness is even promoted in Scripture: “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” This code manifests itself in all civilizations to one degree or another (the only question is what form it takes).

A multitude of fables and fairy tales have been written on the subject of selfishness and their existence is evidence that it is indeed an original sin. It cannot be defeated. A human being simply must preserve himself as a system. Certain circumstances, however, warrant the emergence of a leader. A leader is required when an individual realizes that he is unable to protect or feed either himself or his family, household, or clan. Or perhaps he needs assistance during a flood or a famine. Then this individual unites with his own kind and issues an enforcer badge, delegating protection duties to someone else. In return, he sacrifices certain moral or material benefits (by paying taxes or accepting tyranny). The leaders who arise are endowed with general rights and are then responsible for everyone. They are therefore revered and can act with almost full impunity.

Occasionally they are endowed with the right to act as tyrants or simply to be insane — as long as they are acting in the interests of the common good. Leaders are, in a sense, expected to be eccentric or insane; sometimes it’s welcomed. In fact, the larger the threat or the challenge, the more a certain level of insanity or even demonism is welcomed. The same can be said about other global structures. They take action only on other’s behalf. They are designed to stop threats, manage risks, and protect people on behalf of large groups of people. These days most global structures are not terribly interested in such efforts.

They are ready to take action when needed, but their authority is undisputed only in the most difficult of times, perhaps only in times of disaster.

When people begin to relax and decide an era of prosperity and peace has begun, they proclaim the end of history as we know it. And then we immediately begin to move backward.

Humanity comes to its senses when confronted with a disaster, whether it be a war or a disease. Only in moments such as these can personal selfishness give way to collective selfishness. People come to realize, thanks to both their intellect and their instincts, that they must come together; they must fight the good fight as one.

We live in a time when everyone, be it an individual or a country (even a tiny one), believes they do not need help and that they can go it alone. No one needs newspapers because we are all bloggers — a newspaper in and of itself. Military alliances are no longer needed because no one believes in war. A general sense of morality is also not necessary because everyone now has the right to be who he wants to be and to conduct himself as he sees fit (of course, with certain limitations, but these limitations are constantly in flux).

The generation that lived in fear of war is truly a thing of the past. Fear of war has faded into the background. The pursuit of creature comforts is first and foremost now, not a struggle for survival. People want to eat well and eat healthily. They want to learn new things and pass this knowledge to the younger generation. Everyone wants a comfortable life, whether they live in the city or the country, and they want to protect the environment and keep the planet clean. That’s why we see the

influence of various green parties and other neo-radicals. That's why we see such a drive to protect the environment and to lead a healthy lifestyle. That's why we have Greta, the Swedish environmental activist, and other examples of eco-modernism.

The average person is psychologically equipped not to think about danger, like a child who closes his eyes when he's scared. When his eyes are closed, he is no longer scared. It's a natural phenomenon — something like a dream. It's the body's normal reaction and an indicator that it needs to rest. If we were always on the alert, focused on dangers and threats, we would lose our minds. The psyche needs to rest. That's why you hear people say, "I don't have the energy to think about that today. I'll think about it tomorrow."²¹ Society is the same way. Threats from nature and natural disasters existed even before man began to wage war on his fellow man. People assessed the threats and came together to build walls, dams, and roofs to weather the troubles ahead. Today we are on the brink of disaster again. I can safely predict this based on the fact that humanity today is afraid of nothing and does nothing in a united fashion. Humanity has forgotten everything; it no longer remembers the last war and its horrors and victims. Instead, humanity gets bogged down in the details and interpretations such as, "who started it, and did they conduct themselves appropriately when they did it." We believed wars were a thing of the past and that a golden age had begun. But war inoculates people, at least for a time, from excessive selfishness. Wars occurred when selfishness reached obscene levels and began to get in the way, giving rise to racism, religious intolerance, and ethnic strife.

²¹ This is a paraphrase of a line of Scarlett O'Hara's from *Gone with the Wind*.

Unfortunately, wars have been the engine conditioning human progress. Bridges and railroads were built to wage war so that troops could be delivered to the front faster and cheaper in order to kill more enemy soldiers. The field of medicine, surgical facilities in particular, developed for the opposite reason: to save as much cannon fodder as possible in order to throw it back into battle again. You deploy a soldier once, he comes back wounded, and you restore him to combat readiness and send him back to the front.

The pandemic has served as a convenient excuse for ruling elites in the face of mounting problems. They are practically jumping for joy. The Russians have a saying for this: "While some are dying, others are making a profit."²² But signs of change are evident within this jumping up and down — an end to the era of leveling. For an extended period of time, say from the early 1990s or even the late 1980s, there was a certain amount of order to the ruling classes. They exhibited the ability to act in a coordinated manner and largely kept a low profile. There were a set of unwritten structural rules for government officials: similar reactions, similar stances on issues, similar vocabulary, even a similar outward appearance.

With this set of rules in place, if someone appeared with a slight independent streak, someone whose views did not completely align, the system simply ate him up. He was sent away to take up an unimportant ambassadorship or told to go teach somewhere. These days the leveling criterion for elites has noticeably weakened. A unique personality is more and more in demand. You don't have to be merely "gray and well-

²² Literally, "some cherish war, others cherish their mother."

read” to make a go of it in politics these days. People now enjoy a certain flair and penchant for independent thought. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but there are downsides. For one, the unprecedented speed at which information is now disseminated no longer permits politicians to weigh decisions carefully and consult with their peers to hear different opinions. Before information began to travel at the speed of light and television and the Internet had not become global phenomena, politicians had a certain amount of wiggle room when asked to respond to things.

Let’s take another look at the Cuban Missile Crisis, for instance. Even in the face of a barrage of negative press, Kennedy had time to consult with his advisers and the military to discuss possible responses. He even had time to correspond with Khrushchev himself. Khrushchev also had plenty of time to ponder his options. Although even then, time was of the essence: as we all know, the Soviet government response, which accepted the conditions for resolving the crisis, was broadcast live on Moscow radio.

But today we live in the era of politics and diplomacy by Twitter. The motivating principle: do it as quickly as possible. When something happens, there’s a response to it within half an hour. It really doesn’t matter if the response is laden with emotion or restrained. It doesn’t matter if it’s well-thought-out or spontaneous. It even doesn’t matter if it’s silly or clever. The important thing is that it’s quick. More often than not, it is impossible to assemble a cabinet meeting or a party council; at best, a discussion can be had over the phone.

As a result, individual leaders often dictate how politics are perceived. For example, in the United States, few people

know the names of their congressmen and senators. Perhaps they know the heads of some key committees. People know Trump, Biden, and maybe five other people. The same goes for Germany. If Merkel issues a statement, she speaks for all Germans. Everyone, including a country’s leader, his electorate, and the society he represents, exists in a semi-virtual world with its own rules and regulations. Action and reaction take place in the blink of an eye, and you simply have to adjust.

On the other hand, leadership always involves conflict. A strong leader is needed in times of conflict. In other times as well, but especially in times of crises and conflicts, when decisions need to be made quickly and then carried out effectively. People love leaders who are able to act quickly and decisively and produce a striking effect. But then people get tired of these leaders, and they lose both the people’s hearts and their trust. This shift in attitudes is interesting as a practical matter as well. We see a good example of this in today’s Belarus, where a majority of people were once extremely enthusiastic about their president but now have completely cooled to him (which does nothing to detract from Lukashenko’s accomplishments as a pioneer of modern leadership). The need for leadership is growing, an indirect indicator that premonitions of disaster are appearing in the collective consciousness. People unite around a leader and follow him when they sense trouble. But it is these leaders who are capable of leading humanity to the brink.

The “swamp” is the undecided, vacillating portion of any society. It’s those ordinary members of a party, the general electorate. Those people without clear-cut views on issues. The non-extremist citizens focused on living their lives. They are granted the right to vote and they gladly delegate power to

whoever is the most convincing. But the “swamp” is not capable of starting a war. It may start some kind of regional conflict over a boundary dispute, but that’s about it. “The devil made me do it,” they’ll say, or something like that. Then we might get some fisticuffs or maybe out come the gizmos made of lead. But then everyone sits down together for a meal followed by fraternization. This isn’t a conflict — it’s a fight.

Leaders, however, are capable of starting wars. And, as history shows, the time between periods of peace and a period of hot war can be quite short. Let’s take the beginning of the twentieth century for example. We began to see ships made of iron that did not sink, and birds made of iron that did not fall from the sky. Incredible breakthroughs occurred in all fields in the exact and natural sciences — from chemistry to physics. From time to time, humanity is overtaken by illusion: things look great when you look out the window, we are living in an era of rapid scientific and technical progress, how could there ever be a war? But humans are human, after all. World War I was a shock to Europe and devastated the continent. This first truly brutal war caused massive damage to culture and morality. People began to realize that humanity (including Europe, its cradle) is incapable of moving forward at an even pace. Some move quickly, others more slowly and with a lot more exertion. To make sure this movement continues without any hiccups, you need some kind of system to link everyone, something with a rig and a harness. We witnessed the invention of one, namely the League of Nations, although it all came to naught.

Then we entered a period of calmness, even complacency. In the 1920s and 1930s, people tried to get over the war by spending

their money in a search for fun and pleasure. They realized that you only live once. You have to live life to the fullest and not put anything off until tomorrow. And God forbids there’s another war; in that case, not all of us will even have this one life to live. Disasters occur from repenting and then after repenting. And then they are replaced by more repenting.

Churchill and De Gaulle were great military leaders. Both were called upon during major periods of crisis. For Churchill, it was after Norway fell using lawful parliamentary procedures. For De Gaulle, it was after France’s defeat. If you think about it, he actually was a dissident. He boarded a plane in Bordeaux and flew to London to avoid being party to the armistice negotiations. From the other side of the English Channel, he called on the French people to resist and continue the struggle.

Both Churchill and De Gaulle brilliantly executed their roles in history. As soon as the war was over, however, they were immediately removed from power. Churchill’s party lost elections in July 1945—the ink not yet dry on the quills used to sign Germany’s surrender. General de Gaulle tried to rule a country in peacetime like he ran his army, and he also ended up being removed. The message? “We are tired of your leadership. We need serenity. We just want to live and have fun. We want to have our delicious meals again and not have to read your motivational speeches. We don’t want to live in fear of your outlandish actions.”

This shift from calls for a leveling in global politics to calls for strong leadership is something we see on the eve of major change, revolutions, wars, and disasters. During a pandemic, a leadership crisis is especially acute, although it would be more

accurate to call it a “crisis without leaders.” But the leaders will come; it is inevitable. Then we will see a “crisis *with* leaders” for sure, with the requisite inflated egos, toxic, frantic energy, spirit of Bonapartism, but also ample strength and solid capabilities.

Regardless of the country or the regime, a real leader follows no law. He does not care what the constitution says. Why? Because no piece of paper can keep pace with life itself. And constitutions and laws are important insofar as they are put into practice, that is, interpreted. “A constitution should be short and obscure,” Napoleon said to the writers.

The disconnect between document and real life is especially stark these days. Parliamentary and legal institutions such as constitutional courts lag behind the fast pace of modern life. Therefore, when we talk about the kind of elites we need and a shift from uniformity to true leadership, it should be emphasized that they must be able to manage the affairs of today and not try to do what worked in the past.

People wonder if there is a *bench*, so to speak, of back-up elites waiting to take over. In other words, do the elites have a source from which to choose potential leaders? I am certain that we will need to seek out this source separately because the current elites are no longer capable of creating anything new. Despite what they might say, they are interested in only one thing: preserving the status-quo. This is a characteristic shared by all fading elites.

Once they reach the top of the food chain and shove everyone else aside (there is so little room at the top), the elite lose interest in major change. They may decide to initiate certain superficial, non-essential changes such as moving from coal to

green energy, but they do not address anything substantial.

Why does this happen? The status that elites have achieved, either on their own merit or thanks to previous generations, feeds them, provides a high standard of living, and gives them access to the levers of power and direct control over budget allocations. The thing these elites are most worried about is that something might change that keeps the hen from laying the golden eggs.

There is no sense in expecting a leader to emerge from this type of environment. *New Leadership* is the enemy of the current order. The elites will stifle these new leaders at the earliest stages, while they are still young and immature. And so, these elites will inevitably have to be destroyed.

Who will emerge as a leader? Who will it be, and where will he come from? There is no reason it couldn't be someone who was formally a member of the previous elite, for example, a deputy or an ex-minister. Nevertheless, he will be a dissident and rebel by nature. As he moves up, he will begin to reject the environment which produced him (perhaps, at first, without knowing it). There are plenty of such examples in the annals of history. From recent times there was Boris Yeltsin, a quintessential member of the communist party and first secretary of the Sverdlovsk regional committee. He was then transferred to Moscow to help with perestroika. At some point he placed himself in direct opposition to the elites of the time and exacerbated a conflict which was, as always, an internal one at first. He went out to meet the people and simply did what he needed to do. He led the revolution until he no longer had the strength of mind and body to do so.

It must be said that it is not uncommon for “crazies” to be recruited into leadership positions. People love the crazies, especially in politics. The degree of madness has to be within a certain range, however. I cannot help but think of an example from recent history in Latvia. It happened in the early 2000s. By this time the Latvian people were truly sick of privatization and how the Soviet legacy was being divvied up. They wanted a sense of order and hope and at least some kind of justice. With these sentiments in mind, Latvians voted in Einars Repše, the former head of the central bank from the early 1990s. In this position, Repše stabilized the national currency in no time at all by destroying 90% of industry. In retirement he took up painting and flew over the forests and fields of Latvia in his own gyroplane. The Latvian voter deemed him crazy enough that he would not be afraid of a fight with those who had robbed him, the voter. During his time as prime minister, Repše acquired the nickname “the Martian” because of the way he conducted business. He would lock himself in his office all day, communicating with his ministers and subordinates exclusively by email. His ideas were at times preposterous, but the people loved him in spite of his authoritarian tendencies. Repše’s term ended when no one could agree on how best to fight corruption and his coalition collapsed.

In essence, many people in the US voted for Trump precisely because they considered him crazy enough not to be afraid of an open struggle with the Washington political swamp and its nonsensical liberal fantasies.

In conclusion: just what is globalization anyway? I think globalization is a series of rapid convergences and mutual influence and interaction. Nothing more. Sometimes these

convergences result in positive synergy, other times in destruction. The problem is the good, the bad, and everything in between are contained in these convergences. And the process is unmanageable, at least until you obtain a tool or a strategy to control it. It is akin to a policy of controlled chaos. In a sense, globalization is chaos.

It wasn’t that long ago that newspapers shaped the consciousness (and through that, the objective reality) of society and its inhabitants. They did it using their own viewpoints and experience. Now newspapers have been held hostage by television, the Internet, and bloggers. Traditional media are finding it difficult to function in today’s world as outlets are increasingly viewed as passive objects instead of as actors. Actors create and disseminate information and context quickly. They do not have to spend time on typesetting, printing, and distribution in the traditional sense. You simply sit down at the computer, write a post, and that’s that. Competition in the creation and dissemination of information is simply a question of who does it quicker.

Politics on the grand stage has also been taken hostage by speed. Global leaders and their governments often find themselves in situations where they simply do not have time to consult with colleagues and make informed decisions. Even in a small country, a tiny party does not have the ability to call an executive session to come to a decision on policy. This increases the role and responsibilities of leaders throughout the world. It demands new leaders.

The public also expects quick responses (this is not populism; it is a real demand) instead of reasoned decisions. This objectively reduces the time between when a crisis is

acknowledged and the announcement of its solution. Quick, single-handed decisions are possible only in a monarchy, a form of rule which can go under many names and take many forms. But there is always a risk that the monarch can go mad at some point. There are examples of this throughout history. We are thus again confronted with the problem of implementing democracy. Right now, we seem to have window dressing democracy — it's purely decorative.

One of the lessons of the coronavirus is that the world realized it could save money on bureaucracy and the running of a government. Sessions and meetings in physical office space are not as essential as once thought. Problems can be solved from your computer or smartphone with no need to go to an office building, wait in line, and state your business.

The capacity for self-government is developing and changing. A piece of paper that you once had to jump through hoops to obtain is now available quickly. An army of bureaucrats is simply no longer necessary. The current state of modern technology will soon allow us to hold elections or plebiscites at least on a daily basis. The way things are going, several layers of bureaucracy will become obsolete and die out. That said, those leaders and officials who manage to survive will see their responsibilities increase.

It is also true that it is the state-bureaucratic apparatus (both local, national, and European Union) that will oppose these changes. It will try and slow down the process as it realizes what it has to lose. We are faced with a difficult, painful process. The more we come to understand its nature, the sooner we can achieve positive results.