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*What is the state of the world?*

To put it plainly, the world is in a drift.

Facing the financial tsunami threatening to engulf the world, we can't help thinking: why such things are happening to us? Why can't we prevent and predict them? This is not 1929, after all. We are supposed to be wise and experienced. There are Nobel laureates in economy inhabiting our world.

So how could that blind drift to disaster happen to us?

The same feeling of drift comes to you when you see the global foreign relations. It's the same picture there: things happen to us. We don't shape things. All too often leaders of the nations see changes that they did not expect, changes they did not plan for. The world has, plainly speaking, found itself not ready for the deep changes that began to happen after the end of the Cold War. You can see the obvious deficiency of the system of global management everywhere. You see this deficiency in economy, in diplomacy, in security. This deficit proves to be a growing threat to global stability.

Of course we all ask – why. Answers are many. I would contribute a couple, though. There is fear of change.

Big and small states are afraid of falling victim of a complicated transitional period. New powers are raising, old ones are afraid to suffer from these changes. There is no safety mechanisms to allay these fears. Some nations tend to revert to old methods of global management. The result is the reverse to what had been expected.

There is a lack of simple rules for this transition. Rules, like: there should be no second-rate nations with less rights than others have. There should be one law for all, one justice. One more simple rule that would make things better. No nation should impose its ideas and values, including religious ones, on other nations. The prosperity of the world depends on free competition of ideas and values. The global order means level field for ideological competition, as well as for the economic competition.

Our world has nothing of that, currently. It lacks many other things, called management. Russia and America's relations are a bad case of mismanagement. As a result, both seem to be not ready to what happens in their bilateral relations. Both would like, theoretically, to improve it. Because we gain more when we are in agreement. But there is always something happening to make things worse. Same problem is evident – we do not shape the events, we react to them, in dismay.

You think that Georgia is a one-time situation? I do not think so. It is always a big problem when small nations decide to promote their interests, using rivalry or misunderstanding of two big powers. Russia does not have to be one of them. It may happen elsewhere. But, as it is, it happened to our two countries. America is quietly telling Moscow that it tried to dissuade the Georgian President Saakashvili from his murderous attack on civilians, attack that had triggered the war. America had been telling Russia, years before that, that it would restrain Saakashvili from military provocations. It failed. But why the whole set of Russo-American relations has to be hostage of this misfire?

That loss of contact between Russia and the United States began after 1992. Both nations had been busy in the 1990-s. Russia was struggling for survival then. America struggled for its dominant role in the world. While they did it, they failed to establish a firm foundation for their bilateral relations in the new era, in the new realities.

As a result they stopped being adversaries but never became real partners. They lack an agreed set of principles of their new relations, they lack mutual obligations. It is a failure of both diplomacies. In the Cold War era the Russo-American relations were the axis of global foreign relations. Not anymore. They have lost their previous significance and gained nothing.

Can Russia and America afford that “nothing”, that vacuum of engagement? Obviously, not. We see that any moment the accumulating negative feelings may slide into an all-over confrontation. We must not let this happen. So we have to prepare ourselves for an all-over review of Russian and American interests. And this only one of the problems of modern world. There are many others.

*Where is the world going?*

There are 3 possible ways for it to go.

Option number one. The world is heading to a catastrophe. Any professional diplomat knows well that a catastrophe is always hanging over the horizon. A catastrophe is always theoretically possible – if we do nothing. Sometimes it is not theoretical, it just happens.

Option number two is fragmentation of the world. Governments go on listing other nations into categories. They start launching clubs: authoritarian states against democratic ones, and so on. Nobody really talks to each other, nobody listens. That option is strangely familiar. It used to be called Cold War. But at that time things were dimple. Now they are not.

Option number three. We have an ideal world where there are different sets of values, but one common understanding of interests, linking us all, and a lot of mutual support.

Practice shows that ideal situations never happen. But it also shows that the catastrophes happen, unfortunately. So we should try hard to improve the present state of things.

*What can be done to better the world?*

Old pattern of relations are coming to a logical end, we need the new one. We have, all in all, a chance to reinvent the world, comfortable for us all. And start it from a calm revision of what we already have. What resources are already here? What is the state of all these tools that meant to manage this world? Some of these tools and machinery works, some not.

First of all I mean the UN and regional organizations. Because there are three levels of responsibility in the world. A national state is one level, it is supposed to be responsible for what happens inside its borders. Regional groups of states were meant to manage regional problems. And the UN to manage global affairs. It is obvious that UN reform is stuck. And we need to speed it up.

It is also obvious that the regional organizations are in a kind of chaos. In European – or Eurasian – space there are OCSE, Council of Europe, the EU, NATO, CIS, Organization of the Collective Security Treaty, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the recent Alliance for Mediterranean. All of them were been created in different times and for different aims. I could name some more. But European stability and security do not look ensured.

It's time to start a process leading to an all-European conference on security. It is the process that matters, the process allowing us to revise all this jumble of agreements and obligations.

We need to know what works and what does not – in security, economy, law. What needs a bit of adaptation to modern realities, and what should be abandoned.

Other regions may also need the same approach.



Finally, there is, as I mentioned, the basic level of the global diplomatic pyramid. It's the bilateral ties. They need development, too. There were these illusions that multilateral diplomacy should work better. Well, it's not always so. One thing does not preclude others.

My ideas may seem to be too obvious, and even boring. But no one here has magic wand that will let us achieve the ultimate result right now. We may only hope that we take the right direction, and follow it, step by step.

But then, nobody else has that magic wand, either. Nobody else will make a world, comfortable to us all. There is only us.