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My name is Igor Yurgens, I am the Head of an independent think-tank in Russia, and I keep a couple of positions in business organisations in my country. The title of our roundtable was 'Russia in 20 Years', and since some of my compatriots insist that Russia is a country with an unpredictable history, it is much more difficult to predict Russia's future. From that point of view, we started with some statements like, 'Imagine 1997, 20 years ago, we are discussing what will happen with Russia in 20 years'. Most of the speakers, both from the Russian side and from the European and American side, would say Russia aspires to get into the European Union, Russia wants to be an associate member of NATO, and there will be peace and friendship on the European continent. We have four spaces – remember Mr Lavrov and Mr Putin negotiated with Mr Solana: common economic space, common space of democracy, common space of security and even common political space. So 20 years later, where we are, shacks and shambles of that concept, and we are almost fighting in the Ukraine, in Syria, and some other places, with the West.

From this point of view, to predict what will happen in 20 years is pretty difficult. Most of the speakers on the Russian side were in favour of the concept of bipolarity. New bipolarity, where China will lead autocracy countries, including Russia, Iran, some others, and the West will be led still by the United States and democratic countries, and this bipolarity will be determined as a factor for Russia to position itself as the major ally of China and this bipolar world.

Where do we stand now, from the point of view of the future role of Russia in the world? The Soviet Union produced, at its peak, about 19% of the world GDP. Russia now produces 1.5%, aspires to 2%. That tells a lot of the economic weight, so to say. In GDP production, we are at the 10th place at the moment, and the linear model shown by one of the Russian participants gives us the 15th place in 20 years, so we are going down economically. Russia at the moment needs human capital and lacks it, demography is not so good, investment capital and lacks it, because of the sanctions from the West, and lacks of its own structural reforms, and technological capital, because the abundance of oil and gas for the last 15 years brought us to the situation with scientific investment, they find the mental research and educational systems did not receive enough attention.

From this point of view, we are in a position where the independent and autonomous development of the Russian federation does not bring much, so you must build up alliances. If we are neglected in the West, some participants would say, let us go to the East. Some other participants would say that this is a very bad idea, because even Chinese autocracy would require from Russia serious structural reform to be a reliable ally of China, so better put your own house in order first, and then go out and choose.

From the point of your choice, Western participants of our roundtable would say, it is much better to visualise the reset of Russia with the European Union, and with the West in general, because we need you, and you need us. How to do this is a big question mark at the moment, because President Putin definitely feels himself offended by Western behaviour. He started in 2000 as a friend of Bush, as a friend of Solana, as a friend of the West. He opened up his possibilities after September 11th to the Americans on the hinterland of Russia, among the alliance in Eurasia. He helped in any way he could in Afghanistan, in the fight against the Taliban. He closed up the Cam Ranh base in Vietnam, a big military asset for Russia. He closed down a big base in Cuba – a huge asset for Russia militarily, and from the point of view of intelligence – aspiring to get something back. For example, no NATO advance to his own borders. Nothing of that kind happened, so at the moment, he feels offended.

He does not trust the West, it is obvious. I am sorry to speak about the policy of the country, speaking about one man, but that is the way autocracy and Russian tradition is built genetically. He is running for the next term in March next year, and the fight of two concepts inside Russia, with Russia, to autocracy or to democracy, is a very serious one. It cannot be neglected, and it found its reflection, even during our roundtable among Russian participants. So it is not a done deal, Russia joining the bipolarity on the Chinese side, but we have to keep in mind Brzezinski's theory that who controls Eurasia controls the world. It is a very serious concept, and from this, we cannot neglect the One Way, One



Belt theory, we cannot neglect the attempts of the Western democracies to get its way into the Eurasian hinterland. So Russia will be in the position to think about its role in the future, but this role will not be made up by Russian people only. The position of the large West – United States and Europe – and the position of the People's Republic of China will largely influence future decisions, and here I would say that the theory in the West about Russia's future, and about Russia's role in the world are totally different. I met people who said, 'Russian people are part of Europe, no question about that, and we will get over the difficulties, even during Putin's time, with some intuition and with some measures of reset', but there are some other people who say, 'Never with Putin'. We have to confine and contain the present administration. We have to be very strict on sanctions, and all the other isolation measures, vis-a-vis Russia. That would of course mobilise the patriotic nationalist and military cluster of our population, and then of course, I think that by pushing us into the embrace of China, this unnatural marriage will take place.

There are negative and positive scenarios for the development of this bipolarity, if we are pushed into this embrace in 4-5 years. The negatives will be, as the previous speaker told us, assertive China, nationalism, socialism imposed on its allies, and so on and so forth, and Russia helping militarily and from the point of view of the geopolitical position. But there is another scenario, and this is of course more of a dream than a practical scenario, which academician Sakharov, the father of Russian democracy, which American economists like Rostow, Galbraith, like Levine, Stiglitz, are playing with, this is the scenario of conversion. We take the best of socialism of China and ex-USSR: social justice, the drive to breach the disparity between the wealthy and the poor, and we take the best from the economic efficiency of the West, and gradually, through normative and analytical methods, we build up a model of global governance which is not confrontational. At the moment, it looks like a dream, but many people are working on this dream from this normative and analytical point of view. There are models of how that could be done in principle, in the future. It does not look realistic at the moment, I do understand that, but for many in Russia, there will be no other way, because we do not want to be the frontier in the fight between Chinese and Americans; we want to be a player of our own. We want to control our own Eurasian space, our own in terms of living together with those nations, with which we have lived together in friendship, in cooperation, be it the Soviet Union or before.

Negative scenario: in 20 years, we are in a real fight between autocracy and democracy, and positive scenario: we manage to build bridges, to create new ideas, and we make a huge step forward in terms of global governance, of togetherness. Thank you very much.