

# “Will There Be a Role for Us Ordinary People to Play in the New World?”

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*In January 2003, when the first issue of Russia in Global Affairs was in the making, the year 2023 seemed infinitely distant to us. To be more precise, we had no idea what it would be like. The paradox of consciousness is that now, on the contrary, it seems that 2003 was literally yesterday.*

*Had anyone told us back then what would happen in twenty years’ time, we probably would not have believed it. But in retrospect, it seems that it could not have been otherwise, that everything was almost programmed not even then, but much earlier. Impressions from the unpredictability of the future and the lack of alternatives to the present, which follows from the irreversibility of the past, somehow go together quite well retroactively. But this does not work prospectively.*

*And yet, we have decided to give it a try. Since we are optimistic that the journal will keep coming out for the next twenty years, we have decided to ask our colleagues, authors and friends around the world what will be relevant for the first issue of our journal in 2043, and what will be the main challenge to humanity just in order to have enough time to order materials. Here is the result.*

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**Sergei A. Karaganov**

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It is a pleasure to make a forecast for 2043, because I do not want to live until I become frail and, if my forecast does not come true, thus tarnish my reputation as a clairvoyant. I really like the world of 2043. After the current earthquake in world politics, economy, and social life, which raises continents, cultures and new/old values, it will be a completely different place, which I find much more pleasant and diverse.

States will naturally remain, and authoritarianism will be the dominant form of government in them, that is, the most effective way of governing amid endless changes. I do hope that it would be a world of not only big cities, but also of people resettled around the globe in normal living conditions. The Internet will be segmented, which is right. People will travel to their country houses by drone.

Siberia will not only be the most important source of environmental, mineral, logistic, and food resources, but its southern part will become the most attractive place in the world for worthy and prosperous people to live in.

I am a little jealous of the future generation because it will be able to enjoy a host of blooming cultures—not only great Russian and French literature, but also Turkish, Indian, Korean, Chinese, Brazilian, and further down the list.

The Old World is the only dark spot in this picture of a brilliant future. The EU will die; Europe will see the return of nationalism and neo-fascism, which is already welcomed in one of the neighboring countries. Russia, if it makes the right decision, primarily on the development of its Asian part, will become a symbol, a balancer in the new multipolar international system.

It is a pity I will not live in that world. But for it to come, we must avoid a big thermonuclear war. This is the main task for now.

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**Russel Berman**

*Professor of the Humanities and Comparative Literature, Stanford University*

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To engage in this exercise in predictive speculation requires one to put aside the issues that dominate public discussion today—not an easy task—and instead to try to extrapolate from less prominent current phenomena that might nonetheless turn into the major challenge twenty

years hence. At this moment, the world stares at the problems of energy and the environment, often in such apocalyptic terms that the mere suggestion that something else might displace their urgency could be seen as sacrilegious. If, as some environmentalists claim, the end of the world is imminent, then any inquiry into 2043 must seem frivolous, since we are not likely to survive that long. Yet I will risk the thought that we will, in fact, find beneficial technological solutions, such as the return to nuclear energy, expansion of decarbonization processes, and development of unanticipated energy sources.

Instead, our major challenge will be different, but it will also have to do with technology, albeit its dystopic sides. The accelerated spread of Artificial Intelligence and the use of social media are already undermining the core components of the human condition, or what we have assumed that human condition should entail. In 2043, the very possibility of living lives we would consider to be “human” will face strong countercurrents, indications of which are already evident.

**First and foremost**, one cannot overlook the erosion of traditional experiences of privacy, due to the expansive use of surveillance to be sure, but even more through our willingness to share our private and personal information, emotions and thoughts on the Internet, for all to see and where they remain forever. The loss of privacy, where we can be alone, unobserved, and confident in some security, will transform how we experience ourselves and how we might participate in public life as citizens: without privacy, will there even be a meaningful public sphere?

**Second**, we are already witnessing the degradation of public discussion thanks to the Internet, with its structural predisposition to encourage polarization and hysterical overreaction. Instead of rational responses, communications technology gives us insults and outrage. No wonder that we see the efforts to cancel and to deplatform one’s opponents, instead of trying to convince them through argument. This will get worse. Add to this the effect of disinformation, the intentional dissemination of falsehoods, which, however, invites a solution that is even worse: censorship. Will 2043 bring us back to 1984?

**Third**, the Internet and increasingly virtual living, in the metaverse or its offspring, will lead to profound psychological damage. We are already

seeing the obsessive consequences of certain platforms which encourage self-destructive behaviors in vulnerable populations. More broadly, the shift from real-life engagement with flesh-and-blood humans to “online living” is undermining basic patterns of sociability. Cultural critics have noted how virtualization may be contributing to the postponement of marriage, just one part of the context for the declining birth rates in many countries. The more we lose ourselves in technology, the rarer real social contact becomes, and generational reproduction declines. In 2043, humanity will have to face the problem of managing its increasingly geriatric population: lots of frail seniors, too few babies. Planet Earth becomes an old age home, the real shape of decadence.

So: AI and the Internet are erasing our private sphere, degrading our public sphere, and reducing the prospect for our future—as families, as countries, as a species. Such is the technological challenge, already emerging, but that we will have to face full blown in coming decades. Can we solve these problems? Can humanity benefit from the tools it has created, or will it succumb to them?

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**Feng Shaolei**

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If worthy elites existed, they would manage to prevent the danger posed even by the biggest risks and challenges, such as world wars, economic downturns, or natural disasters. Numerous changes occur at a time of transition, and some of these transitions, especially those that happen during world wars, show that the responsible elite is able to make a miracle out of a decline and turn a fairy tale into reality. However, the next two decades will be a period of peaceful transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era. This is incomparably more difficult and less certain than the previous transitions that occurred through wars. The old world is gone, and a new one has not yet been built. Management models are chaotic, education systems are average, and information has become “post-truth without facts.” Without a mature idea, even a future war can look bleak and

helpless. There is an old saying in China: the times make heroes. However, it is difficult to grow the elite under the conditions described above. So the absence of elites is likely to continue to generate different kinds of evil for a long time.

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**Jomo Kwame Sundaram**

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Usually, I suggest that astrologers answer such questions because my ability to see the future is quite poor. We live at a time of extreme uncertainty: what has just seemed to be taken for granted is no longer so. Globalization, for example. The West, which was its main inspirer, is now backtracking on it, while China and other rising nations have become its proponents. One thing is certain: a multipolar order has set in, and the main problem in it is how to ensure lasting peace. Unfortunately, there are no great statesmen who would seriously reflect on this. There are people like Henry Kissinger who are very influential, but his approaches are also negativist. Adherents of the American realist school, such as John Mearsheimer, call for an end to the confrontation with Russia, but want to hurl all their effort into the fight with China.

Humanity needs something else. It needs a “third force” that will defend the world from a position of “pacifist non-alignment,” although I do not yet see where it may come from. During the Cold War, there was a rivalry of systems, but now we are dealing with different varieties of capitalism. Yes, one of the varieties implies capitalism with a significant role of the state, but things are not so clear even there. If we look, for example, at the presence of the state in many Western European economies, we will see pure state capitalism there. In fact, the share of the public sector there is sometimes bigger than in Russia or even China, and in Russia, the state plays a bigger role than in China. So, thinking in old categories is pointless. In order to understand what could be in twenty years’ time, we need to start a completely new discussion. And this is something your magazine can do.

**Anastasia B. Likhacheva**

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The year 2043. A world of habitually bad news. Natural disasters have become the sad norm of life: floods, droughts, entire peoples leave their countries. In many ways this is a typical storyline for the media. The generation of “COVID lockdown children” has graduated from universities and does not understand why their parents still flinch at the news of regular outbreaks of unusual diseases. For young people, pandemics are a common occurrence, and endless testing is a routine no one actually pays attention to. In fact, the giant and thriving industry of health control and correction has developed so much that it has been brought to automatism and causes minimal discomfort. All you need to do is go along with it.

States are still there and desperately fighting for their privileges, playing on citizens’ fear of inescapable instability: Trust us and live a life you consider normal, you do not need to radically change anything. This is the actual slogan of all governments, which have realized that civic activity and enthusiasm, regardless of their motto, are more dangerous than beneficial. This approach has been fully adopted by the Northern Hemisphere, but in the Global South they are also wary of the energy of the popular masses.

The phenomenon of the global information mainstream, controlled by the capitals of the Old (including demographically) West, becomes a thing of the past as the mood and interests of rising nations, whose population is getting younger, are drifting further away from it. India has long been the most populous country, and China in many ways is the largest economy. The most lucrative representative offices of leading investment funds are in the fastest growing megalopolises in Africa. But successful and profitable business in those countries does not mean their prosperity. Over the two decades since the actual end of liberal globalization, no breakthrough solutions have been invented to overcome inequality and get rid of other flaws in capitalism.

The lack of bread, often literal, is offset by the abundance of entertainment. The world is entering a series of pompous festivities

marking the centennial anniversary of independence. Twentieth-century decolonization is proclaimed a turning point in human history. But the first in line is the UN where work is in full swing to prepare for its own centenary celebrations. Its anniversary is timed to coincide with one of the cosmetic reforms, which became regular in the third decade of the 21st century. In many ways, the UN has become the new universal savior. Having failed to solve the problem of sustainable development, it has mastered the art of predicting its increasingly frequent disruptions and organizing post-crisis recovery operations.

The world has grown used to living in anxiety and anticipation of force majeure situations, but it is no longer afraid of the apocalypse. The main problem of humanity is the very habituation to problems and the paralyzing unwillingness to change behavior in order to solve them, as well as the desire to maintain at least the semblance of a comfortable status quo. Acquired helplessness on the global scale.

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**Mark Leonard**

*Director of European Council on Foreign Relations*

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Henry Kissinger said that global order rests on two pillars: a set of commonly accepted rules that govern relations between states, and a balance of power that discourages countries from breaking them. Both these pillars are eroding. The risk is that in twenty years we may see the world marked by fragmentation and polarization. In place of the dream of a single rules-based order we will get a patchwork or overlapping ordering projects—global frameworks by China, the U.S., and the EU, and activism from middle powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Brazil. Rather than being structured along universal ideas of the future, our societies will be increasingly polarized between different identity projects. These projects will define domestic politics and use the international sphere to build their domestic legitimacy. The net result of fragmentation and polarization will be further erosion of order. In its place we will see the weaponization of all ties that bind countries together. Whereas the post-Cold War period was marked by peace between great

powers, the world in twenty years will be marked by Unpeace. There might not be formal Cold War between two blocs but there will be perpetual competition and inability to see interdependence as anything other than vulnerability. Lack of trust between great powers will have catastrophic consequences for the global economy and our ability to find effective solutions to address climate change, pandemics, regulation of technology, and governance of the commons.

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**Raza Muhammad**

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Artificial Intelligence will be the main challenge. Its perfection will provide a new level of comfort for people. But it will also bring a lot of anxiety. There is no longer such a thing as privacy—we do not know who exactly is watching us and when, but we can be sure that someone always does it. This will become pervasive in twenty years, and we do not yet fully understand how to live in such an environment. The second point is that we will move in the opposite direction from globalization and unification in the next twenty years. The world will become less whole and more fragmented; the trend towards homogeneity, which began after World War II and continued until recently, is turning in the opposite direction. Competition will increase, and that is normal. We are unlikely to see the decline of the United States in twenty years, but it is inevitable later on, in twenty-five to thirty years, with others filling in the resulting vacuum. This does not mean that, for example, China will take the place of America as a hegemon, but other countries or groups of countries will be coming to the forefront. The technological level will be the decisive factor. There may be abuses by non-state actors, which happens even now, but in general, states will become stronger and retain control over processes. As individuals, we all want more freedom and openness, but on a global scale, the time is coming for a realistic approach: states, national interests, competition, and, I think, bloc confrontation again. Countries with internal problems that do not have enough resources to be independent will have to make a difficult choice and decide who to align with. It will be hard.



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**Andrei A. Iserov**

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As usual, in the hot summer of 2043, farmers will be expecting unprecedented harvests. People have got used to global warming and new breeds, and so no one is surprised to see cherries growing in Yakutia. After a series of wars, young politicians, with almost unanimous public support, have handed over the reins of global power to Artificial Intelligence, a special program with the control center on the Moon. Artificial Intelligence has even been instructed to develop a new language common to all inhabitants of the earth, devoid of superstitions, prejudices and “micro-aggression” intrinsically built into the vocabulary and syntax of the old order. Superstitions, prejudices and “micro-aggression” are now defined by Artificial Intelligence as well since it was no longer possible to entrust such an important task to weak and self-confident people who, as history has proved, wrongly believed that they were able to govern themselves. And one day there came an order from the Moon: Ban new art, destroy and forget everything that miraculously survived the past disasters. “Stop that worrying and moping,” read the text. The way to a serene world of pure joy was opening up to the good guys...

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**Serguei Alex. Oushakine**

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Your question is a “we are all a little bit of Cassandra now” sort of thing, of course. I would probably prefer to say what problems I would not like to see in 2043. Some of them are obvious: climate change caused by what in the 1960s was called the “humanization” of the environment (following young Marx’s notes, as a matter of fact); uneven development and, accordingly, dramatic inequality between the Global North and the Global South; ontological destabilization associated with what Lev Shestov once described as “the apotheosis of groundlessness,” and what we know

as “postmodernism”... But I think there is one problem we are unlikely to solve. We struggled with it a lot in the 20th century and it came to the fore as real as ever in the last ten years, namely the establishment of a balance between the general and the specific, between the local and the global, between ethnic and cosmopolitan. All attempts to find an acceptable solution have so far ended in failure—neither communism nor globalization has succeeded: either the “specific” did not fit into the general framework, or the “general” was not the general, but the imposed “specific.” We are unlikely to succeed in twenty years either, even though I would very much like to hope otherwise.

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**Oleg V. Kharkhordin**

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Conventional wars will transform for two reasons. **Firstly**, climate change will lead to a new battle for territory and resources, and to new blocs of states (for example, those with vast forests, or with flooded coastal territories, or with people forced to migrate due to frequent temperature jumps above 50 degrees Celsius). **Secondly**, the introduction of AI elements in the management of both war and efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt to it will lead to faster reactions to events. The Internet of Things, which is on the rise now, threatens to turn into the Internet of “natural things,” that is, natural processes, the connections between which will be mediated by machines and people trying to intervene and correct these reactions and feedback chains.

The craving for a global government will increase, but no world Leviathan will be constructed. Instead, more likely is the development of confederate inter-country mechanisms based on self-regulating technologies such as blockchain or various types of parallel (meta) universes, communication channels in which are used to correct the relationship between the key political players (not necessarily states) in the main (physical) universe.

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**Thomas Graham**

*Distinguished fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations*  
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What will be the main problem that humankind will confront in 2043? Most people, at least in the West, would say climate change. The widening consensus in the West is that if we do not take radical steps now to mitigate its effects, the world will face an unrelenting series of socioeconomic and political calamities by 2043, if not earlier. But I would argue that we will face an even greater challenge that is profoundly existential: What does it mean to be a human being? Bioengineering is unlocking the secrets of human development, enabling us to interfere in this process, which can lead to a healthier and more vigorous life for everyone. But it can also enable us to create “bioengineered” individuals to perform certain tasks with exquisite abilities at the expense of other qualities that make a person truly human. Similarly, Artificial Intelligence is rapidly developing a novel type of intelligence that could be combined with human intelligence to create superhuman intelligence. Combined with bioengineering, this intelligence can create a new species of humankind. What will be the role for people like us in that new world?

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**Andrei A. Sushentsov**

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Although the year 2043 seems far away, it is not. Twenty years ago, in 2003, the main factor of human life was American military hegemony, which had destroyed the order in Europe, in the Middle and Near East. Long waves of world history prolong international phenomena, which is why the American dominance instinct will not go away. But now it will drown in a much denser international environment instead of going like a hot knife through butter. And although the same players will remain on the world stage in 2043—the U.S., China, Russia, India, and the EU—a bunch of new ones will appear as well, including Brazil, the Arab East, Iran, Turkey, Africa, Indonesia, Vietnam, etc. Each of them will look for benefits in the whirling torrents

of international competition. New mainstream trends will complicate the picture: digitalization of management will turn electronic networks into a battlefield, and the demographic thrust from the South to the North will challenge the traditions of the welfare state in Europe and Russia, and the ability to feed the population and curb global pandemics. The polycentricity of the world will turn from a slogan into routine, and many in the Global North will not like it. Unpredictability, indeterminacy of development, and seemingly spontaneous crises will become the new norm. It would be nice if we could get to that point without a big war, but we will certainly not be able to avoid regional ones.

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**Barry Buzan**

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Exercises in looking ahead cannot avoid the problem of what Harold Macmillan once famously referred to as: ‘Events, dear boy, events...’. Some events, such as recessions, or changes in leadership, or demographic turning points, are foreseeable in a general way without being able to know their particular timing or circumstances. Others, like various cosmic disasters or a major encounter with aliens might happen tomorrow or far in the future, or never. Events such as the fall of the Berlin wall, or 9/11, or the COVID-19 pandemic, can undo the apparent trajectory of human history in ways small and large. Think, for example, of the impact on the twenty years between now and 2043 of whether or not Vladimir Putin decides to use nuclear weapons in Russia’s current conflict with Ukraine and the West. In some of those scenarios, there might be little left of humankind to worry about.

With those caveats in mind, I nominate global warming as the most likely challenge to be dominating global society in 2043. Even now, sooner than most people expected, global warming is having serious and visible consequences. Sea levels are rising steadily, threatening both low-lying land and many big coastal cities. Glaciers and ice sheets are retreating, both changing the planet’s reflectivity, and threatening water supplies on which

large numbers of people depend. Extreme weather events—droughts, storms, floods, and heat-waves—are becoming more frequent and widespread. Familiar patterns of climate, disease, and the distribution of plants and animals are changing. A sixth great extinction is underway. Concerns are rising that we might be getting close to a tipping point, at which a self-reinforcing cycle of climate change will be triggered, such as the release of greenhouse gases from seabed clathrates, or thawing permafrost, or the collapse of tropical forests.

Humankind is taking measures to mitigate global warming, but it is widely accepted that these measures are inadequate to achieve quick and decisive results. There is a historically remarkable move away from fossil fuels and internal combustion engines going on. States have accepted collective responsibility to take action to reform carboniferous capitalism and halt climate change. But a quick move from unrestrained to sustainable development across the planet remains difficult. Both the poor and the rich continue to demand development whether sustainable or not, and we no longer have enough time to make the transition in a gradual way. It is therefore a fair bet that over the next two decades the countermeasures humankind takes will continue to lag behind the advance of global warming. Humankind will continue to push the planet beyond its carrying capacity, even if at a slowing rate. That means that what is in prospect between now and 2043, is a steady worsening of the pummeling that the planet is already giving humankind. Within that timeframe, we will have to be lucky to avoid hitting a tipping point that shifts us into a “hothouse earth” climate that will be difficult to reverse.

How will humankind respond to a relentless collective pounding that worsens year after year? Heat deaths will rise. Agriculture will be disrupted, and some people will go hungry. Some island states, river deltas and coastal cities will become uninhabitable. Mass migrations will pour out of the worst affected areas. Will this fight-back by the planet push humankind further into division, and fighting for control of the remaining habitable territory? Or will it push us into cooperation of sufficient depth and intensity to enable us to address the problem collectively? By the time things get bad enough to put that question on the table, it will almost certainly be necessary to resort, at least for a while, to planetary geoengineering to stem

global warming. If done unilaterally and competitively, geoengineering will itself generate conflict over the uneven distribution of its consequences. If done cooperatively, it might trigger a step-change in the world order, as humankind takes on planetary management as a permanent collective obligation.

With the exception of nuclear war, almost whatever other events might happen in the meantime will not disrupt the intensification of the global warming crisis. Perhaps before 2043, but certainly not long after it, global warming will have transformed the world order. Whether for better or for worse still remains open, and up to a point subject to the choices we make in the years ahead.

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**Polina V. Kolozaridi**

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The main problem in 2043 is how to distinguish history, imagination, memory, and feelings. Following the freedom of religion and citizenship, the freedom of cultural experience and own history will befall people. And just as the creation of modern states or religious groups was accompanied by religious and interstate wars, the isolation of cultural experience will not go bloodless. Numerous versions of stories, chronicles and languages describing the same things will compete with each other. Most people will be closely tied to their place of residence and work, mainly due to the fact that this belonging will give them an unconditional basic income. But competition and inequality in such a world will remain very high, and states and corporations will compete with each other for the number of citizens/users, leaving the actual management of life out of the picture. Since people will interest them not as a labor force, but as a resource increasing their power, questions of cultural affiliation and identity will come to the fore. In the multiverse, Charlie Chaplin will sing in the voice of Vladimir Vysotsky, and perhaps it will not be a movie, but part of augmented reality. We can already see that in the computer-animated movie *Wall•E*. The technicality of cultural changes will no longer be noticeable, and so the question of one’s

own history or belonging to history, land, or culture, the ability to distinguish what is common and true, and what is made to satisfy immediate needs and has no connection with other elements of reality will become almost impossible. Science in its current quasi-religious state will clearly not be able to answer such questions, but what will arise in its place remains a mystery.

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**Kanwal Sibal**

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The major challenge to the world in 2043 will remain essentially the one it is today, that of accepting that all of us have a shared destiny, living together in peace and harmony is an imperative, power should be distributed equitably within global political, economic and financial structures, inequalities within and between countries must be reduced, technology should be prevented from dehumanizing societies, development must remain sustainable, the environment should be protected. The success or failure of the combat against climate change would be apparent by then. Would the advanced economies come close to being carbon neutral by 2050? Would the required changes in lifestyles in the highly consumer-oriented Western countries occur? Would the massive financial resources and technology breakthroughs required to address mitigation and adaptation issues and make the transition to renewable energy be successfully achieved? Would the world be facing new pandemics on account of release of pathogens triggered by climate change? Would parts of the globe facing desertification or successive natural disasters, causing refugee flows and confronting the global community face new humanitarian crises? It is by no means certain that these desirable objectives would be achieved by 2043. People-centric, not power-centric, globalization being inevitable in any unified stable world order dedicated to the welfare of all, the world in 2043 must be a cooperative one, not fractured into blocs. This multilateralism, under great stress today, will have to be reinvented by 2043 on a more equitable basis, with respect for diversity, a new information world order, a reform of the UN system, and cooperative multipolarity as a foundation.

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**Evgeni A. Varshaver**

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The cartel of nation states and the symbolic dominance of this organizational form, boosted by interstate conflicts, will come under fire from different sides. Free traders, constructivist sociologists, transnational communities, and international organizations will reach a consensus that “a nation state is some kind of medieval relic.” The UN, which maintains this order at a symbolic and organizational level, will also be under attack. But states will not give up quickly and will try to delegitimize rebellion against them on all fronts: ethnicity studies will redeem and justify primordialism; unconventional armies will be declared terrorist in increasingly complicated military conflicts; pro-state ideologies and theories, both left and right, will find support in economics and political theory. The front line 2043 will separate nation states from all other forms of organization; the parties will dig trenches and begin to arm themselves with increasingly sophisticated discursive and real offensive and defensive instruments. But the results of this war cannot be seen through the smoke of battles.

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**Andrei A. Teslya**

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I think the main problem will be the excessive number of people—not in the classical Malthusian sense, but their (our) uselessness, the absence, at least in the existing coordinate system, of a pragmatic answer to the question “Why are there so many of them?” (in a world where most of the previous activities become automated, and new ones do not require as many people). So people will turn more and more (and essentially have already turned) into a burden rather than a resource. This sets off a chain of questions arising, among other things, from the fact that “humanism” has already largely lost its pragmatic foundation and increasingly gives way to other



versions of understanding. The most common of them is “environmental consciousness,” all conclusions from which (including the unprivileged position of human beings) have not even begun to be extracted.

What is also important is that people will increasingly view their work as senseless—understanding oneself, building one’s identity but not through work, realizing one’s uselessness. And perhaps the most important thing is the pace of changes, when their speed does not allow people to get used to them, when people simply “do not notice” them like the changing background, and cannot find new answers to new questions along the way. The new reality has every chance of coming too quickly to be perceived as “natural” and, being unproblematized, as the basis for one’s self-understanding. Therefore it will be incompatible with the ways of being and with their meanings inherent in modern people.

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**Zhang Shuhua**

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The ability to curb humanity’s boundless selfishness and greed is the main problem and the biggest challenge to face society in the future. The craving for wealth, power, and fame can, of course, contribute to development, but they will cause disasters for everyone. The desire of some countries and their politicians with millions of bespelled people, blackmailed by selfishness and greed, to conquer, enslave, and plunder other countries has led to revolutions and wars. They incite social change and affect human society.

The next twenty years will surely be marked by great achievements, unless politics provokes devastating world wars or innovations. The first one would be going beyond Earth into the Universe of the starry skies. The second one is the achievement of longevity, the development of biological and genetic technologies changing the nature and appearance of people. The third one is the upgrading of Artificial Intelligence, which, together with human intelligence, will form a two-element interactive society. In twenty years, the use of artificial functions by humans would lead, on the

one hand, to equality and freedom in human society and to the “oppression” of Artificial Intelligence by humans. On the other hand, the biggest problem and risk is whether Artificial Intelligence will not get out of control to join the side that opposes people.

More than two and a half thousand years ago, Confucius said: “Governing by the power of virtue can be compared to the Pole Star, which remains fixed in place while all the other stars orbit respectfully around it.” There is good and evil in politics, hot and cold, big and small, etc. Politics must take into account the timing, degree and effectiveness. According to most people, and in the long term the whole of humanity, this can be called good politics. So, good politics will be the key to dealing with various risks and challenges to confront humanity in the next twenty years.

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**Artemy V. Magun**

*Professor, Director of the Stasis Center for Practical Philosophy, European University at St. Petersburg*  
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In 2043, humanity will have almost no problems to solve: either it will disappear altogether, or it will calmly focus on the environment and the fight against viruses. The current crisis is extremely acute not only for Russia, but in the future for China as well. There is a complete lack of understanding between liberals and conservatives, with the left stuck in anarchic “post-colonialism.” If we do not resolve this crisis by immediately ending the war and hysteria in general, and do not start designing new structures of international law, I repeat, things will look very gloomy by 2043.

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**Anatol Lieven**

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If we can avoid a war between the U.S. and China over the next generation and all its longer effects, then by mid-century it will probably be entirely clear that the biggest threat to humanity will be climate change—unless

we are saved by some presently unforeseeable technological breakthrough. Unless the scientists are completely wrong in their analysis, by then the situation in Western Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East will be becoming truly dire. The consequences for agricultural yields and international food prices will spread instability beyond these regions. The Chinese and still more the Indian state will be under intense strain. In the West and Russia the direct physical effects will be much less noticeable, but increased migration from Africa (due to the combination of climate change, population growth and state collapse) and the European reaction against it will threaten European democracy with destruction. The only good thing about this disastrous outlook is that it would render tensions between the West and Russia insignificant by comparison.

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***Oksana V. Sinyavskaya***

*Deputy Director of the Institute for Social Policy, National Research University–Higher School of Economics*  
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Given the complexity, interdependence, and strong sensitivity of social phenomena to the external context, predicting them for a period of more than one to two years is an extremely ungrateful business. ***On the one hand***, there is inertia generated by demographic processes and the structure of the social insurance and pension systems. We can say with relative certainty how many people in twenty years’ time will still be active and working, how many will qualify for a pension or permanent care, and how much the states will have to spend on social needs. This inertia often inhibits social policy reforms: more money should probably go into education and children, but the governments cannot ignore their standing obligations regarding social security and pensions. Any attempt to restructure social rights faces a potential increase in discontent among those who lose from such restructuring.

***On the other hand***, inertia is illusory because it does not take into account not only the cataclysms and shocks that have been so frequent in recent years, but also the effects of many routine but transformative events in technology, economic policy and governance. While everyone was

discussing the socioeconomic challenges of aging, the Fourth Industrial Revolution radically changed both the demand for labor and the nature of labor itself, making it more flexible and less protected. Today, in order to make an appointment with a doctor, register a child for school, apply for welfare benefits or get a passport, a person needs access to the Internet and at least minimal core digital skills. The influence of various health improvement technologies (from nootropics, vaccines, cosmetic surgery or reproductive technologies to gene therapy tools, neurostimulators, neural implants and biogerontology) is not yet so noticeable, but it is likely to become more pronounced in the next twenty years.

Nevertheless, given the above reservations, I venture to assume that the most important social problem of the next twenty years will be inequality. Until recently, the rapid economic development of China and India helped reduce the inter-country gap and, as a result, inequality at the global level, as borne out by the World Inequality Report 2022. However, inter-country inequality will worsen again in the coming decades, including due to pandemics. The income and wealth gap in countries has been growing since the early 1980s, partly due to the neoliberal turn in economic policy, but particularly so since the 2000s. In Russia, the growth of inequality was catalyzed by the reforms of the 1990s, and so far it remains a country with moderately high income inequality and one of the biggest wealth gaps in the world, especially obvious in the top one percent of the population. Economic sanctions against Russia and the global economic turbulence provoked by them will also add to the growing inequality in all countries whose economies suffer from the adopted political decisions. What is even more important is the increasing relationship between inequalities in different areas, especially non-monetary forms of inequality. It is non-monetary inequalities in education, health, and access to digital and health improvement technologies that will set—through their relationship with differentiated access to labor income—the trajectory for inequality changes until 2043. Growing inequality will trigger social tensions and conflicts. The question of which states and to what extent will be able to quash them and ensure sustainable socioeconomic development amid the crisis and the search for new paradigms in many modern welfare states remains open.

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**Zhao Huasheng**

*Professor, Fudan University, China Forum expert*  
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In the next twenty years, the global problems that humankind is now facing will not disappear, such as global warming, environmental pollution, ecological problems, food problems, resource problems, and so on. Some of the problems will be even more serious.

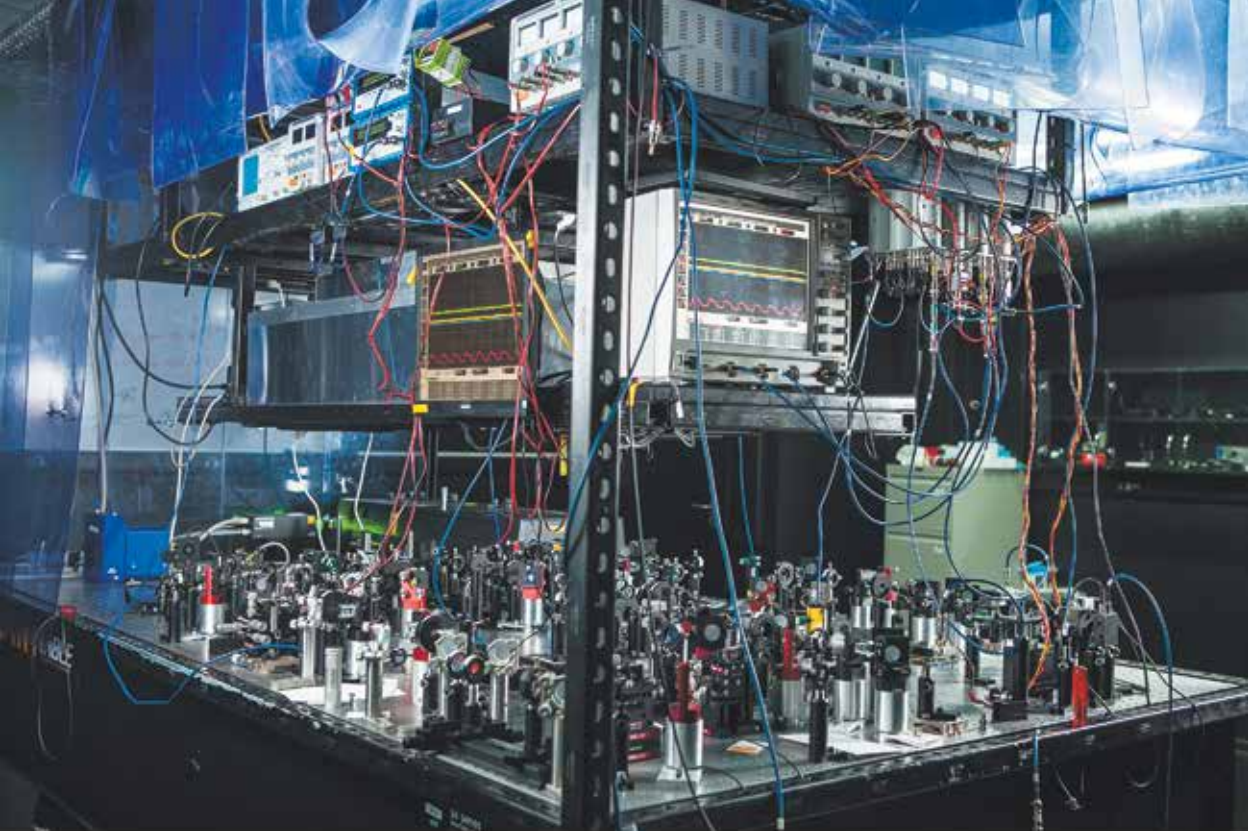
In the next twenty years, there will still be the same global social problems, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, poverty problem, demographic problem, migration, extremism, and so on.

In the next twenty years, security will still remain a major concern of the international community. The problem of war and peace will continue to haunt humankind, and the shadow of war, even large-scale, will even grow stronger. Proliferation will be even more problematic. The crisis in Ukraine will give some quasi-nuclear states an incentive to keep their weapons and others an incentive to develop them. The threshold for the use of nuclear weapons may be lowered, increasing the risk of their use in the event of war.

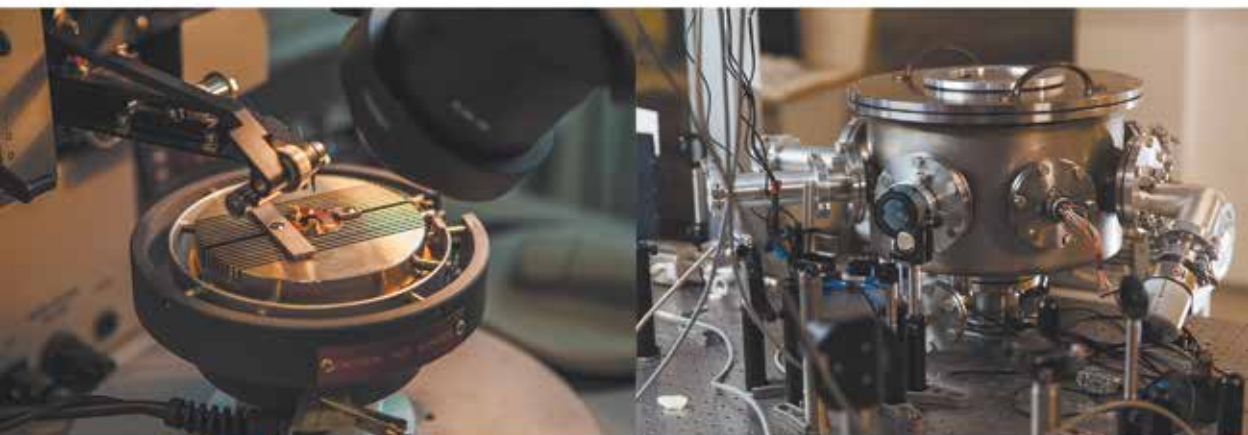
All these will be serious challenges for humankind in the next twenty years. However, the biggest one for the next twenty years is how to find a mutually acceptable format of living together.

The world is in a period of changing eras. The post-Cold-War era is passing and a new era is beginning. If the trend of the post-Cold War era had been characterized by the pursuit of convergence in political culture, economic system and values, then the trend of world development in the next two decades will be diverging in all these spheres. After the “end” of history a new one is starting again. Non-Western countries will not be confused about whether to choose the Western model. They will be more determined to follow their own path, defend their own development model and values, and not accept the transplantation of an imposed foreign political system. They will become more independent and confident in themselves. The diversification of political systems and ideologies will become a common practice for the international community.

At the same time, international politics will undergo major changes, with the rise of some countries and the relative weakening of others. The trend



**Quantum technologies** embodied in microchips and lasers have already changed our world at least once. Now they are about to change it again by controlling matter and light at the level of individual particles. **The second quantum revolution** will be new materials and ultra-secure communications, superlative accuracy in measurement and efficiency in calculation. **The Russian Quantum Center** is steadily riding on the crest of this new technological wave.



towards multipolarity will be accelerating and more power centers will be emerging. Objectively, the world will undergo a complicated and painful process of rebalancing in the distribution of international power. Emerging countries demand more right to make the distribution of international power more reasonable and just, while the former dominant countries are reluctant to give up. A long-term game between the two is inevitable.

In a world increasingly divided in terms of politics, economy, security, and values, what kind of model the international community will choose to live with is crucial. If it can establish an inclusive and commonly accepted model of interaction, then all can live together in harmony, by close cooperation they can solve global problems more effectively, have more energy to solve social problems and ensure domestic development, reduce the possibility of conflicts and the risk of war. On the contrary, if humankind fails to choose such a way to live together, then all the challenges facing it will be amplified, global problems will become severer, confrontation between countries will become more likely, and the risk of conflict and war will increase significantly. Therefore, the greatest challenge facing humankind in the next twenty years is whether it will be able to find a mutually acceptable model of living together, which is, in a sense, the so-called international order.

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There are examples when the world agenda changed dramatically over decades. Game-changers, events and phenomena that can turn everything over are possible today as well. However, the problems of the past (as well as current attempts to resolve them) prevent us from getting out of a rut and moving into a future that is not associated with the problems of the present. Growing ideological heterogeneity interferes with common solutions to global problems, and the “cramped” material interdependence exacerbates

competition. The knockout game is beginning in world politics. Among leading powers there will certainly be one that will not be able to cope with the intensity of international competition, bring its external and internal affairs into line with each other in order to create a consistent system, or combine the basic interests of sovereignty and development. Its fiasco (not a physical collapse, but voluntary-forced isolation, self-exclusion from the world system, in fact, suicide as a great power) may be the central topic in world politics twenty years hence. It is not so important when exactly this will happen—during the loser’s decline and convulsive attempts to hold out or during the rearrangement of the world system after the loser is gone. The fiasco of a top-tier power may become a pivotal international theme of that time.

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**Ram Madhav**

*Member of the Board of Governors of India Foundation, National General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014–2020*  
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India has a very clear goal of building a strong and prosperous country. In 2047, we will celebrate a centenary of our independence and our democracy, and this is a major milestone. And of course, India hopes that by that time, with our participation, a new world order will be established, which will truly meet the interests of all countries. For more than seven decades we saw a world order that did not serve the interests of all countries, but only some of them. So in the next twenty years, it is imperative to create something that will encompass the interests of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the Global South. Many states should have a share in this order. Not one or two as we have become accustomed to. India, Russia, ASEAN, Gulf states, African countries—everyone should have the right to influence. Then, in twenty years’ time, there will be more justice, prosperity, and solidarity in the world. I am optimistic, because in the next two decades, it is us Eurasian and Indo-Pacific countries that will play a crucial role. Everything depends on us, and our values, in all their diversity, will make the difference.



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**Boris G. Kapustin**

*Professor, Senior Lecturer of Ethics, Politics & Economics at Yale University*  
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Predictions can come true only if the future—as something different from the present—does not come but turns out to be just the prolonged present. I do not want the present to continue, and I hope that the forecasts made here will never come true regardless of what they say. In relation to 2043, I can only share my hope, not forecast. I do hope that the current “end of history” will come to completion by that time, because it is the main problem of the present. The fundamental mistake of Fukuyama and a number of other forecasters is not that they predicted the “end of history,” but that they saw it as uneventful boredom. In reality, the “end of history” can be stormy and even bloody, but devoid of its moral and political meaning that only the progress of human freedom can give history. It will be the “end of history” that combines grotesque with horror. I think this is exactly what has happened in our global present, and I do want it to end. At the same time, I want some things from the present to be kept and carried on, including this wonderful magazine. Happy birthday, magazine, and many years ahead to you!