

The World Is Not Just Diversified, It Is Atomized

Fyodor A. Lukyanov

Fyodor A. Lukyanov

Russia in Global Affairs

Editor-in-Chief;

National Research University–Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs

Research Professor

SPIN-RSCI: 4139-3941

ORCID: 0000-0003-1364-4094

ResearcherID: N-3527-2016

Scopus AuthorID: 24481505000

E-mail: editor@globalaffairs.ru

Tel.: (+7) 495 9807353

Address: Office 112, 29 Malaya Ordynka Str., Moscow 115184, Russia

DOI: 10.31278/1810-6374-2023-21-3-5-8

International politics is becoming increasingly intricate. A couple of years ago, no one could have imagined that a top-level mission aspiring to resolve a severe international conflict would go from Africa to Europe rather than vice versa, and the whole world would watch representatives of African countries urge the leaders of major European countries to stop the violence and begin negotiations. And

this is just one indication of how nonlinearly international relations function nowadays.

Do Africa and other representatives of the non-Western World Majority stand for Russia? No. In any case, their positions differ. But what really distinguishes them from Western countries is the understanding drawn from their own severe experience that the world is definitely complex and unfair. The

latter can be remedied, but this will require constant adjustment to each other and correction of imbalances. An ideal is hardly achievable, but one can try by taking into account different opinions and interests. This is a process that is essentially the creation of a world order in progress. It is a process because the result is out of reach.

The Western approach is the opposite. The more complex the world around, and it has consistently been trying to break out of any patterns, the stronger the desire to tuck it into a simple and clear scheme. Ideally, it must be two-piece: modern democracy claiming to be well-intended and opposing malicious and backward authoritarianism. The desire to simplify things is understandable not only humanly, but also purely instrumentally. Those who make decisions need some rationally comprehensible picture. In some ways, such a picture is better than none, even if it is wrong.

It is time to recall the international bestseller of the late 1990s, *The World Is Flat*, by American journalist Thomas Friedman. He wrote about total unification of all and everything as part of globalization. Today this metaphor is read differently: let everything be somehow simpler and flatter because it is impossible to fathom this frightening

multidimensionality. This approach is characteristic of present-day international relations, from where it spills into the domestic policy of any country. But within states, their own interests are closer to the heart, and real life takes priority. However, globally things are more ambiguous.

The recent G7 summit in Hiroshima has convincingly showed what efforts are being made to fix, or even cement, this two-dimensional scheme at the global level. For the first time, Russia and China have been unambiguously equalized in status: the enemy and the main threat to the world represented by the G7. The Ukrainian issue becomes, as is now customary to say, the “assemblage point” for the community that considers itself the “right side of history.” Vladimir Zelensky is doing a great job acting as a much-needed bonding agent. The need for a manifest and personalized unifying motive is quite understandable. In the absence of such elements, the community easily falls apart, because the world is not two-dimensional at all. It is not just diversified, but, in fact, it is atomized according to interests, ideas, or agendas; it needs maximum flexibility in responding to increasingly broad-ranging challenges. This makes it very difficult to maintain cohesion. It can only be done with the help




Valdai | Discussion
Club

valdaiclub.com



Valdai Papers

 **Valdai** | Discussion
Club

111


Economic Integration
in the Middle East:
Problems and Prospects

Dmitry Maryashin

valdaiclub.com
#valdaiclub

October 2019

Valdai Papers

 **Valdai** | Discussion
Club

112

Keynes Revisited:
Delivering Growth Impulses
in the Global Economy

Yaroslav Lissovskii, Kristina Ivanova

valdaiclub.com
#valdaiclub

February 2020

of heavy artillery, figuratively and, unfortunately, literally.

What should those against whom this consolidation is directed do? They should do exactly the opposite—seek maximum diversity, ensure multidirectional development, and insist on their right not to make a final and irrevocable choice. The “good-evil” dichotomy is understandable and morally attractive, but in most cases it has nothing to do with real international processes. A professional familiar with the history of wars and conflicts will confirm that they ended in someone’s unequivocal and full victory extremely rarely. Attempts to lend a purely moral dimension to a conflict require precisely such an outcome, because otherwise the “evil” will not be punished.

The era of ethical and ideological assessments, normative for all, lasted several decades. Today’s approach is much more relativistic,

with many different ethical systems fighting for their equal rights, partly because the rising world beyond the West is, by definition, heterogeneous and cannot be reduced to a common denominator. It cannot be consolidated, unlike the West which has been striving for like-mindedness, if not undivided authority, since the middle of the 20th century. The Global Majority will always strive for flexible forms of partnership, multidirectional policy, and hedging rather than universal subordination. Those in Russia who lived in Soviet times remember that the CPSU Charter enshrined the principle of “democratic centralism” formulated by Lenin: “The majority has made a decision, and that’s it. This is democracy!” Paradoxically, it is now the Western world that is seeking to live by this principle. It is paradoxical because the West is actually a minority on a global scale. But this is probably a matter of self-perception.