When Will the West Wake Up to the Fact That the World has Changed

The changes that are taking place in today’s world often are so rapid and unpredictable that they leave certain US and European politicians utterly confused. The state those people often find themselves in can be most accurately described as panic, as they feel the floor falling out from beneath their feet. They are unable to explain why the comfortable carefree life that they’ve enjoyed for decades is nowhere to be found, while the presumably unipolar world they’ve created suddenly looks multipolar. In their understanding, the sole superpower should be determining the way our world works, and this situation should be carried on indefinitely. Perhaps those gentlemen didn’t care enough to study Hegel back when they were students. When repetitive processes accumulate, they lead to a qualitative change in any system. It would be a mistake to assume that the changing balance of power in the world today can be sidestepped or ignored.

How can one fail to recognize the fact that China’s buying power has already surpassed Washington’s? Is it possible to ignore the fact that Russia’s actions in Syria have tipped the scales in favor of the legitimate government, creating preconditions for a political settlement of the conflict?

Additionally, it would be naive at best to underestimate the importance of demographic trends. Is it even possible not to take into account the rapid growth of India’s population, which has recently hit the mark of 1.2 billion, while this impressive population is making rapid advancements in high-tech industries? So by stating that the world would remain unipolar drives oneself into a cruel trap. This leads to the belief that events are taking place around the world randomly, unrelated to these changes taking really taking place. Then Brexit is an accident, Italians voting against constitutional reform is also an accident, and then, out of the blue, Donald Trump wins the presidential election in the US.

And how many more of such “accidents” are going to happen in the upcoming elections in the Netherlands, France, Germany, and across the rest of Europe? The easiest thing to do in this situation is to dig one’s head in the sand and take the ostrich position, but this will only complicate matters even further.

Sometimes, indeed, it’s amazing how deceiving Cold War stereotypes can be, as some political analysts believe that the West should dominate every aspect of human life until the end of time. Then you can push the blame for all of your failures on the behind the scenes machinations of alleged enemies.

Meanwhile, the list of domestic problems in most Western countries are only getting bigger after decades of exploitation of the people. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rich have cynically assumed that they were in no need to share profits with both the workers and the middle class. As a result, income inequality has reached
enormous proportions: the eight richest men in the world accumulated the same wealth as half of the world’s population. An average American or Brit is starting to realize that his expectations are much lower than those that his parents had. All these facts combined with demographic factors lead to a fairly explosive mixture, when ordinary citizens no longer trust their governments, while corrupt officials are not only simply unresponsive, they are annoying to the point of the people seeking alternatives.

As a result of these changes, Chinese and India are preparing to occupy the center stage of international politics, followed by a number of Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Meanwhile, some politicians in the West see Russia’s meddling behind these changes. For instance, the man behind the Hillary Clinton election campaign, Clinton Robbie Mock in his recent article for The Guardian noted that the biggest danger to the West is Russia’s political influence, therefore it must be eradicated. Is this anything short of absurd?

Further still, Foreign Policy magazine would publish an article drafted by two prominent experts who used to work for the Obama Administration: Hal Brands, a Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and Choline Kala, an associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. They would criticize in every way the thesis that Donald Trump has repeatedly voiced during his election campaign and even after becoming the new US president. The thesis that the US and Russia are natural allies in the fight against terrorism, and that it’s only natural that cooperation should begin in Syria. According to the above mentioned authors, a US alliance with Russia in Syria is strategic suicide for the United States. Without providing any arguments, those scholars argue that even if Donald Trump does nothing to intensify the fight against ISIS, Mosul and Rakka will be liberated in the next few months. This kind of alleged scientific analysis simply makes the activities of radical organizations easier, as they prepare new attacks. There’s a real danger that ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra will get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, and then what?

This brings us back to the UN General Assembly of October 2015, when Vladimir Putin demanded the West: to answer: Do you realize what you have done?

*Vladimir Mashin, Ph.D. in History and a political commentator, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.*