

What does the end of the post-Cold War era mean?

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While addressing an informal briefing of the General assembly in 2020, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the world is facing looming threats of epic geopolitical tensions, climate crisis, global mistrust and downsides of technology. He further called them the 'Four Horsemen' that endanger the 21st-century progress and imperil 21st-century possibilities. Later Covid-19 pandemic joined the global agenda.

It looked like nontraditional threats got top priority in the whole spectrum of the challenges and threats that the world community faces these days however geopolitics are back today.

This August Secretary-General Guterres highlighted increasing geopolitical competition and a more real risk of nuclear confrontation compared to previous decades. These statements focus on the necessity to address the issues of where we are moving, what trends are coming to surface that shape the world security agenda and what should be done to avert dangerous slide towards further confrontation.

The current international situation can be described as an on-going transformation towards multipolarity. According to some policy-makers and experts, the situation had changed its nature by 2014. As the US Secretary of State Blinken held, “The post-Cold War era has ended”. It means that the epoch of the unipolar world went down into history. Today one of the major trends can be characterized as an unfolding rivalry and widening split among great powers and first of all, between the US and its allies, partners and entities like NATO or AUCUS on the one hand and Russia, China and entities like BRICS and SCO on other one. In Western works and assessments since 2021 this trend has been called a strategic competition. It means that collective West is aimed at pursuing a long-term and large-scale strategy to preserve its dominance and at the same time an attempt to constraint growing role of non-Western countries in the world affairs.

There is a evident trend to depict the split as the fight between democracy and autocracy. This kind of approach is too simplistic and does not reflect the complexity of the current situation. The world process is multi facet, multilayer and non-linear in its development. Non-Western world is so complex and diverse that it cannot just fit into this paradigm “democracy vs autocracy”.

What should we do under such circumstances if we do not want to slide to real war? In order to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding it is necessary to remain open to each other. We should focus on what brings us together rather than takes us apart. I tend to believe that humanitarian sphere including science, education, culture, health care can work as the common ground to continue cooperation. Person-to person contacts, tourism are also important factors to ease tension and distrust.