

ANALYTICS AND INFOGRAPHICS

“Dialogue among civilizations” concept by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami

“Dialogue among civilizations” concept, as an alternative to S. Huntington’s “Clash of civilizations”, was originally proposed by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the 5th President of Iran.

Dialogue among civilizations is the principal need of the international community; it is a way to maintain the security of the world¹.

S.M. Khatami’s idea has rapidly gained popularity and support due to its coherence with concept of world without polarity and power blocs as it was estimated after 1991. Khatami did not consider the collapse of the USSR the “end of history”, but he saw an opportunity to establish and maintain dialogue as a substitute to great powers’ dominance and pressure.

During his speech at the round table dedicated to United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations at UNESCO, Khatami emphasized

The ultimate goal of dialogue among civilizations is not dialogue in and of itself,

but dialogue towards attaining empathy and compassion.²

Khatami characterized the new system of relations that correlated with UN’s mission and ideals. This has brought a global support of the concept and creation of multiple initiatives among which was United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) (platform for intercultural dialogue in 5 areas: youth, education, migration, media, women and their rights).

Chinese vision of Dialogue among civilizations

China, as a civilization, already exists for over 5000 years, though in the 19th-20th centuries it was plunged into a long period of multiple challenges and wars. This, however, has brought Chinese state to transformation, prosperity and flourishing in modern times.

The report announces the start of the «New Era», features the details of further development of Chinese civilization, based on synthesis of both Chinese achievements and borrowing accomplishments of others and adapting them to the Chinese reality. New Chinese civilization must be based on synergy of socialism and traditional Chinese culture, on unity

¹ The Message of His Excellency, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000124449>.

² Dialogue among Civilizations The Round Table on the Eve of the United Nations Millennium Summit. URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000123890&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_d9c19a4b-e217-46d0-a35f-8e51f53094b3%3F_%3D123890eng.pdf&locale=ru&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000123890/PDF/123890eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%3A165%2C%22gen%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C%2C685%2C0%5D.

and respect of pluralism of civilizations, on mutually beneficial exchange and coexistence, thus being prepared for hard resistance and confrontation if an existential threat occurs.

Dialogue among civilizations in Asian region is possible via organizing the forums and establishment of regional system of balance of interests. These components are extremely vital due to the presence of multiple ambitious players in the region, including nuclear-weapon states (NWS). Obviously, in such position, it is required to decrease the tensions in the region and conduct balanced policy, what predetermines priority of dialogue over confrontation.

Based on Xi Jinping's report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 18th, 2017³

Turkish vision of Dialogue among civilizations

Unity of values, priorities, cultures may serve mutual goals and interests that must be secured via consolidation in front of the challenges of the 21st century. The key goal is to transform Organization of Turkic States and to enhance its role as:

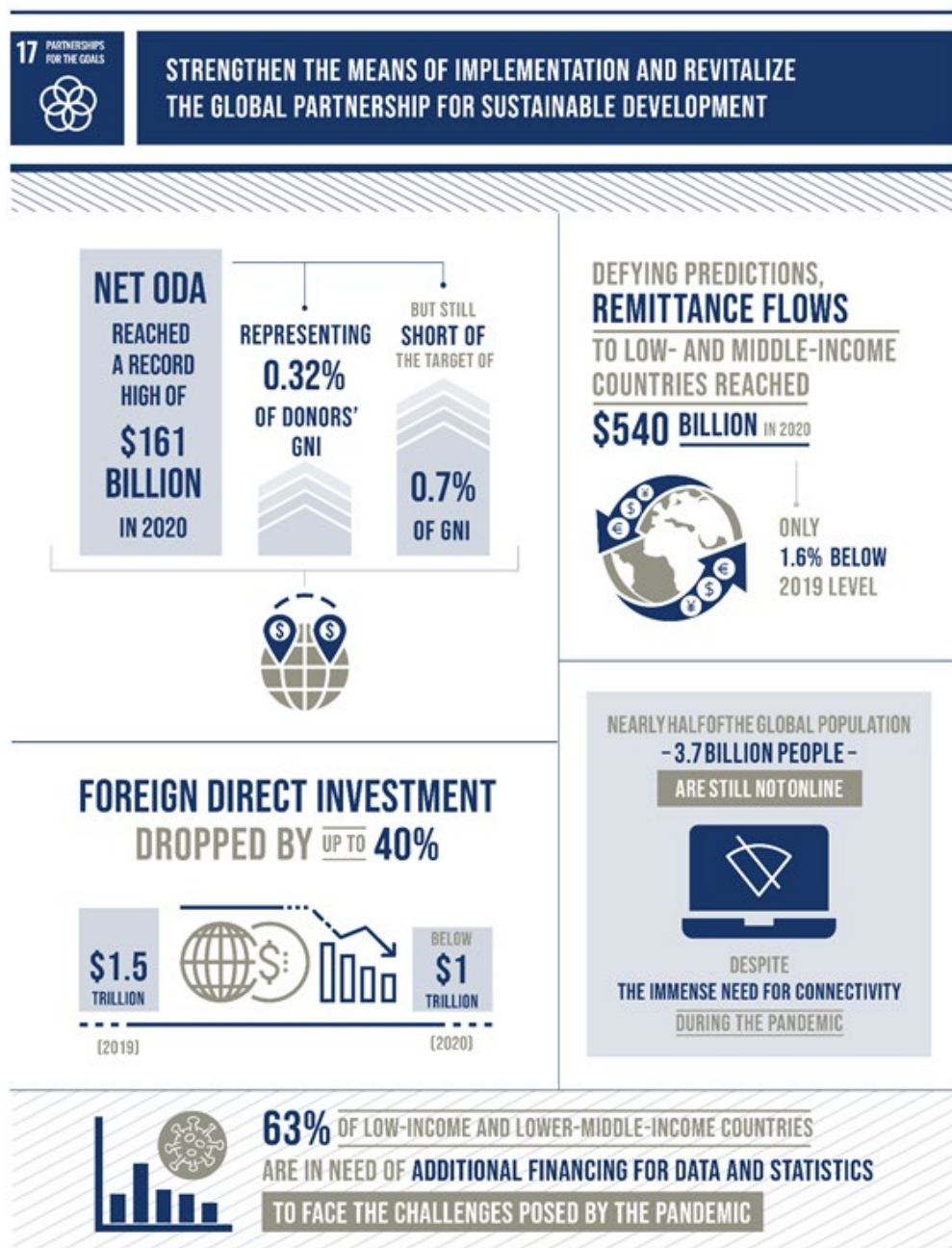
- A platform for regular and constant dialogue and cooperation in the following areas: political cooperation (i.e. increase the synergy and integrity via ensuring effective cooperation and coordination with the Turkic Cooperation Organizations for advancing collaboration);
- security cooperation (i.e. regional threats resistance);
- economic cooperation (i.e. harmonization of economies, integration of product markets with free movement of commodities, capital, services, technologies, strengthen cooperation among various types of economic zones with future perspective of customs union);
- sectoral cooperation (energetics, tourism, healthcare, ecology, etc.);
- people-to-people cooperation (in the areas of education and science, culture, sports, information and media, diaspora).

This cooperation inspired by Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) achievement is aimed at unification of the Turkic world and its further cooperation with the EU, OSCE, OIC, Visegrad Group and others. Turkey, as a core member and initiator of this union, estimates 2 stages of establishing the dialogue: within the civilization and then with other civilizations. Consequently, the main inspiration of this strategy is a trend on strength in unity and consolidation of states in order to improve their representation and status in the world in order to be competitive with traditional great powers.

Strategic document «Turkic World Vision 2040»⁴, approved by at the 8th Summit of the Organization of Turkic States held on November, 12th 2021.

³ Full text of Xi Jinping's report at 19th CPC National Congress. China Daily. URL: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm.

⁴ Turkic World Vision – 2040. URL: <https://www.turkkon.org/assets/pdf/haberler/turkic-world-vision-2040-2396-97.pdf>

Figure 1. SDG No.17 achievement progress infographic, 2021

Sustainable Development Goal 17 and Dialogue among civilizations.

Priority of dialogue over conflict among civilizations is stated in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted by the United Nations in 2015. Goal 17 is determined as “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. The UN states that the SDGs may only be realized with strong global partnerships and cooperation. Consequently, Goal 17 acts as a consolidation unit of the efforts in global humanitarian cooperation contributed to the other 16 goals.

Dialogue among civilizations is primarily implemented in cooperation on humanitarian issues.

Humanitarian cooperation is a field where there is place for a compromise due to mutual comprehension of the problems and ability to find common ground for solution. Despite the ideals declared by the UN, international humanitarian cooperation regularly faces the complications and restrictions, caused by various political interests of the states, and, accordingly, their different level of involvement. The US policy during D. Trump’s presidency perfectly depicts the matter: withdrawal from Paris Climate Agreement⁵, WHO actions condemnation in 2020⁶ due to COVID-19 pandemic. Although, a policy reversal has been seen after November 2020 elections and followed J. Biden’s presidency, the US example demonstrates possible risks and threats to cooperation for sustainable development goals achievement.

Prepared by:
Yury Tikhonov,
research assistant
of National Research Institute for Communications Development,
email: yp.tikhonov@igsu.ru

⁵ Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord // The White House Official Portal. 2017.

URL: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>.

⁶ President Donald J. Trump Is Demanding Accountability From the World Health Organization // The

White House Official Portal. 2020. URL: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-demanding-accountability-world-health-organization/>.