

FOR E SIGHT

forging common futures in a multi-polar world

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# Russia's role in a multi-polar world

Between change and stability

ELENA JURADO



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## About FORESIGHT

Foresight is a new international programme of investigation and debate structured around the challenge of forging common futures in a multi-polar world. The last decade has seen a major shift in the distribution of power away from the OECD towards other regions of the world. Organised by the Alfred Herrhausen Society, the International Forum of Deutsche Bank, in partnership with Policy Network, the international progressive thinktank, Foresight aims to ensure a smooth transition by encouraging better multilateral understanding and promoting a fairer and more functional international order.

## About the author

Elena Jurado is the head of research at Policy Network. Previously she was a junior research fellow and lecturer in politics at the University of Oxford, where she also obtained a PhD and MPhil in international relations. Recently, she has also worked as an administrator at the Council of Europe, with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

# Russia's role in a multi-polar world: between change and stability

## Introduction

In 1998, at the peak of Russia's economic crisis, there was a popular joke that capitalism in Russia had achieved in just eight years what the Soviet Union failed to do in 70: threaten to bring down the whole capitalist system. In that dismal year, as the value of the rouble hit rock-bottom, wage delays, food queues and general insecurity were the order of the day for the average Russian. Ten years later, the country

President Vladimir Putin bequeathed to his successor had been completely transformed. From aid recipient during the 1990s, Russia has entered its tenth straight year of economic growth, thanks to high oil prices and a relatively cheap rouble, but also to increasing consumer demand within Russia, and investment. The indignity and humiliation of the post-communist years have given way to a booming Russian economy and a renewed sense of political confidence.

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The wave of optimism sweeping over Russia is not, however, shared by all other countries, particularly those situated on Russia's western border. Here a generalised suspicion of Russia prevails, illustrated this week in the western media's coverage of the escalating conflict between Russia and Georgia over the breakaway province of South Ossetia, situated within Georgia's internationally recognised borders. Indeed, Russia's "disproportionate" use of force in this conflict has been widely reported as evidence of the destabilising effects of Russia's re-emergence as an international player.

Without doubt, Moscow is concerned about the anti-Russian, pro-Nato governments that have come to power in neighbouring Georgia and Ukraine, not least following Nato's recent declaration of support for these countries' future membership of the North Atlantic alliance. The advance of pro-western forces in Russia's "near abroad", the term used in Russia to refer to the 14 non-Russian Soviet successor states, is a major blow to Russian conceptions of security and national identity. However, judging by the discussions which took place at an international symposium held in Moscow on 19–20 June, the most negative scenario of a

resentful Russia determined to transform the international system in its own image is over-stated.

This paper builds on the discussions held at this Moscow symposium, the first of an international series of conferences entitled "Foresight—forging common futures in a multi-polar world". Organised by Policy Network, the international progressive thinktank based in London, in partnership with the Alfred Herrhausen Society, the international forum of Deutsche Bank, and the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, the two-day symposium brought together experts and policymakers from China, Europe, the US, India, Latin America, the Middle East and Russia to discuss the implications of the shift in the distribution of power away from the OECD to other regions of the world.

The symposium pursued two principal objectives. With the participation of high-level Russian policymakers, including foreign minister Sergei Lavrov, the symposium was first and foremost an occasion to learn about the visions and strategies of the new Russian presidency vis-à-vis the changing international order. Secondly, by inviting participants from the world's major powers to consider their views on three distinct international policy challenges—inter-ethnic conflict; energy security; and nuclear non-proliferation—the symposium shed light on the likely balance of cooperation and conflict in the efforts of Russia and other major powers to manage these challenges in an emerging multi-polar order. While highlighting disagreements in a number of areas, the symposium's discussions were on the whole reassuring: Russia's re-emergence on the international scene is not likely to usher in an era of conflict and instability; if handled correctly, it may even provide the foundations for building a fairer and thus more effective international order.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper, following the emphasis of the Moscow symposium, explores the consequences of Russia's re-emergence on the global stage. Subsequent symposia planned in Brazil, China and India will consider the same question from the point of view of other emerging powers.

## Russian visions of multi-polarity

Debates about multi-polarity are not new to Russia. In the second half of the 1990s, a group of thinkers and policymakers, led by foreign minister (and later prime minister) Evgeny Primakov, developed a new foreign policy paradigm based on the idea of Russia leading a “multipolar alliance” of like-minded powers to combat what was seen as the “unipolar” world being built by the United States. Today, with a number of major powers, including China, India, the EU, Brazil and

Russia, accounting for an increasing share of the world's GDP, Russians are quick to note that their earlier world vision has come to be. However, as the discussions at the Moscow symposium confirmed, the key driver of the current redistribution of power has been globalisation, and the tremendous economic growth which this has facilitated within emerging markets, especially in Asia—not, therefore, a “multi-polar alliance” à la Primakov. Indeed, while the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries are rapidly expanding their economic and political influence across the globe, there are no signs as yet of an anti-American alliance forming between them.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, as shall be explored further below, Russia's re-emergence on the global stage has coincided with a new emphasis on the part of the Kremlin to underline Russia's European credentials, and thus (in some ways) to be part of the “western club” of states, alongside a relative neglect of its relations with other regions of the world.

The Moscow symposium revealed interesting nuances in Russia's vision of the emerging multi-polar order that were absent in the debates of the 1990s. Russia's earlier multi-polar discourse was intimately associated with a group of thinkers who called themselves “Eurasianists”, following in the path of the Eurasian movement which developed in Russia during the early 20th century. The early Eurasianists aimed to transcend the centuries-long debate between Russian westernisers and Slavophiles by arguing that Russia revealed unique socio-cultural, economic and historical characteristics which were neither European nor Asian, but Eurasian. Primakov built on the idea of Russia as a distinctive Eurasian power to call for a “multi-directional” foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The possibility of such an alliance is examined by Mark R. Brawley in “Building blocks or a BRIC wall? Fitting US foreign policy to the shifting distribution of power”, *Asian Perspective*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2007, pp. 151-175.

<sup>3</sup> “Eurasianism”—a term used in many Russian official documents during the 1990s—soon became a catch-phrase used by populist politicians regardless of their actual ideological proclivities, and was thus abandoned. Today, it is rarely heard in Russian political debates (and indeed, was not mentioned at all at the symposium).

At the symposium, it was clear that Russia's earlier association of multi-polarity with a Eurasian identity had been dropped in favour of a European one. Former Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed in this direction in the early years of his presidency when he noted that Russia's identity was not in contradiction to Europe.<sup>4</sup> At the symposium, foreign minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated the same message, stating that "Russia conceives itself as being part of a European civilisation having common Christian roots." Indeed, the metaphor of a "bridge" between Europe and Asia that was actively encouraged by the early Eurasianist movement was openly rejected by the symposium's Russian participants as suggestive of a country that not only lacks its own distinctive identity but is also on the periphery of other (European and Asian) centres of power.

Russia may be a European state, but it is "European with a difference" and it therefore does not follow that the EU has a right to tell Russia how to manage its own affairs

In his keynote address, Igor Yurgens, chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Development,<sup>5</sup> spoke of Russia's modernisation objective—to transform Russia into an "innovation society"—in terms that would have been familiar to any European policymaker. Notwithstanding the country's separate political development during the Soviet period, many of the key challenges facing Russia are shared by its European neighbours: ageing populations, struggling manufacturing industries, under-investment in R&D, and the need to integrate new technology into business practices in order to remain competitive in the global economy. Indeed, in contrast to the widespread perception in the west of Russia's future as a "rentier" state, built on the profits obtained from exporting its rich natural resources, the Russian government has embarked on a modernisation programme which has a lot in common with the EU's Lisbon strategy, especially its emphasis on creating a more business-friendly investment climate while providing social protection for individuals and families not capable of supporting themselves.

At the same time, there is a constant thread running through Russian political discourse, including the Russian interventions at the Moscow symposium, aimed at clarifying that Europe as a geographical and cultural term is much more than the European Union. In other words, Russia may be a European state, but it is "European with a difference" and it therefore does not follow that the EU has a right to tell Russia how to manage its own affairs. The point was brought home by Yurgens in his reply to a question on whether Russia would need international partners to achieve its modernisation objectives: "Perhaps. But if we do, the US would be best placed to provide this partnership since it is less intrusive in our domestic affairs." The economic crisis of the 1990s, and the widely-held belief that this was provoked and aggravated by the "medicine" delivered by the west, has created a culture of sometimes fierce nationalism in Russia. While this may not sit well with the broader demands of globalisation, especially when it is manifested in protectionist policies (more on this below), it is a political reality that the European Commission and Russia's other international partners must come to terms with in their dealings with the Kremlin.

4 MacFarlane, N. 2006, "The 'R' in BRICs: is Russia an emerging power?", *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, p. 53.

5 Established in Moscow in 2007 as a liberal thinktank, the Institute for Contemporary Development's board of trustees is headed by President Dmitry Medvedev.

Russia's love-hate relationship with Europe might go some way towards explaining a second development in Russia's vision of multi-polarity: a relatively benign view of America. Russian policymakers are today at pains not to exclude the US from the emerging "multi-polar club". Lavrov highlighted this point in his keynote address at the Moscow symposium, noting that "the new stage is occasionally defined as 'post-American'. But of course, this is not a 'world after the US' and even less a world without the US. It is [simply] a world where, as a result of the rise of other global centres of power, the relative significance of America dwindles." He went on to clarify that, in future, America's power and ability to lead should remain a cornerstone of the international system. This leadership, however, should be practiced collectively, in a concert-like system, where each great power has equal status. Russia's shift towards a more moderate discourse on multi-polarity reflects a new self-confidence that can only be understood in the context of its gradual, if still incomplete, acceptance as a global player by other major powers.

Russia continues to be one of the chief defenders of the European minority rights regime not least because of the assistance it has given to Russian minorities living in non-Russian former Soviet republics

In the remainder of the paper, Russian visions of the emerging international order are traced in each of the policy areas explored at the Moscow symposium. As we shall see, there is no demand on Russia's part for the wholesale replacement of existing international norms, but rather an insistence that Russian needs and interests be taken more fully into account in the application of these norms. It is only in relation to what Russian policymakers call the international "economic-financial order", including energy-trading norms, where more adaptations are called for.

### 1. Inter-ethnic conflict

It was only in the 1990s, when the fall of communist governments in central and eastern Europe exposed societies deeply divided along ethnic lines, that efforts began to regulate the rights of minority ethnic groups at the international level. However, the norms developed in this area by the United Nations, and in greater detail by the European institutions, are on the whole what lawyers refer to as "soft law", providing states with guiding principles rather than binding, directly enforceable regulations. Moreover, the norms are restricted to calling on European states to foster cultural pluralism and establish power-sharing arrangements within their borders. On the critical question of how states should deal with irredentist claims—where minority ethnic groups seek independence or incorporation in another state—international law is clear: the demands of minority ethnic groups must be met without prejudice to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of states.

It is therefore not surprising that, in the first session of the Moscow symposium, dedicated to managing ethnic diversity, few participants took issue with the existing international minority rights regime. The discussions dwelled on the need to ensure that respect for cultural diversity does not come at the expense of national cohesion, and on the need to complement strategies for managing diversity with measures aimed at ensuring economic redistribution. These two challenges have particular relevance to Russia, a country that

is home to more than 170 ethnic groups, and where regional economic differences are significant. Russia's system of asymmetric federalism, whereby some territorial units (including those where ethnic Russians are in a minority) have more autonomy than others, is one "power-sharing" arrangement that Russia has developed to manage its complex ethnic mosaic. However, in some regions, these mechanisms appear to be insufficient, most notably within the north Caucasus, where a long-running war with Chechen separatists has spilled over to neighbouring territories.

Between a third and a half of Russia's GDP growth is said to depend on natural resources

Led by Vyacheslav Nikonov, executive director of the Russkiy Mir Foundation, a series of Russian interventions made it clear that Russia is not opposed to the development of universal norms in this area, as long as these are defined flexibly so that they can meet the needs and circumstances of different states. Indeed, Russia continues to be one of the chief defenders of the European minority rights regime not least because of the assistance it has given to Russian minorities living in non-Russian former Soviet republics. What concerns Russia is the inconsistent application of these norms—particularly the rule concerning the inviolability of state borders—which Russia claims is observed or overlooked by western powers for divergent and self-serving reasons. Indeed, the emerging doctrine of a "responsibility to protect"—the idea that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens, but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the international community—endorsed by all world leaders including Russia at the UN World Summit in 2005, has become a major stumbling block in relations between the major powers for precisely this reason.

The boundaries of the doctrine of "responsibility to protect" have been tested in both Kosovo and, more recently, South Ossetia, where minority populations have sought independence for their territories on grounds of "ethnic cleansing". Rejected by Russia, Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 was regarded by many in the west as a test-case of the doctrine. In a vain effort to stop the formal recognition of Kosovo's independence by the west, Russian diplomats warned of the dangerous precedent Kosovo would set for inter-ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world. Paradoxically, as Russia pursues its attack on Georgia, it has used the language of the "responsibility to protect" to turn those warnings into bombs. Vladimir Putin could not have been clearer when he declared that Georgia had "lost the right to rule" South Ossetia on account of the "humanitarian catastrophe" that had taken place. By using the language of the "responsibility to protect", Russian policymakers have effectively endorsed this emerging international norm even if its precise ambit remains contested.

## 2. Energy security

The strategic importance for Russia of its large natural oil and gas reservoirs cannot be overestimated—energy exports were the basis for Russia's economic recovery and crucially important for the re-establishment of Russia as a global player. Part of the discussions in the second session of the Moscow symposium focused

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6 A new organisation which aims to promote knowledge of the Russian language and culture outside Russia.

on the economic risks for Russia of its unbalanced economic development, where between a third and a half of Russia's GDP growth is said to depend on natural resources. Andrei Klepach, Russian deputy minister of economic development and trade, gave a comprehensive account of the Russian government's awareness of the pitfalls involved, and of steps that it is already taking to diversify the economy. According to government statistics, the contribution of the oil and gas sector to Russia's GDP growth is already in decline, at 20.3% of GDP in 2005 and 18.7% in 2007. The government's proclaimed aim is to continue diversifying Russia's economy in the future, especially by investing in Russia's service sector, a critical condition for broadening Russia's fledgling middle class.

Trade in energy cannot be treated as any other commodity, subject to free-market norms

The bulk of the discussions at the symposium centred on concerns about security of demand and supply among energy producers and consumers. In relation to this question, the discussions focused less on the implications of Russia's rise for existing international norms, since the energy sector has always been notoriously difficult to regulate, even during the so-called "unipolar" moment of the 1990s. Instead, the focus was on the viability of developing international trading norms in the future. Opinion remains divided. On the one hand, given the strategic importance for Russia of securing guarantees of energy demand, Russia's rise may be expected to accelerate the development of such a regime, which, if constructed wisely, could provide Russia with important dividends. On the other hand, the energy policies pursued by the Putin administration—including the re-nationalisation of Russia's energy reserves, the creation of state monopolies over the use of Russian pipelines, and the limitations placed on foreign ownership of Russian energy assets—are widely interpreted, especially by western governments and oil and gas companies, as posing obstacles to international cooperation in this area.

The timing of the symposium, held exactly one week prior to the EU-Russia summit in the oil-rich city of Khanty-Mansiisk, which launched the negotiations for a new EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement, made these discussions particularly opportune. The European Union has been pushing Russia for many years now to ratify an Energy Charter Treaty aimed at establishing multilateral rules for international cooperation on energy matters. Signed by Russia in 1994 (in the midst of its economic crisis) but never ratified, the prospects of Russia ever accepting the treaty's provisions appear slim. A key sticking point is the charter's requirement that state parties give foreign companies access to their oil and gas pipelines.<sup>7</sup> Russia considers this treaty illegitimate, established by western powers to suit their own interests. President Medvedev made this clear in the recent G8 summit, where he announced that the energy charter did not work for Russia and needed to be replaced by new international accords that are able to balance the interests of energy producers, energy consumers and transit countries.

7 "The Russian dimension and Europe's external energy policy", unpublished paper by Dieter Helm, professor of energy policy at the University of Oxford, 3 September 2007.

The symposium delivered a helpful warning about the need for Russian and EU policymakers to stop thinking in zero-sum terms, what Peter Mandelson referred to as “an inclination to see much of the relationship between western Europe and Russia as power manoeuvring based on mutually exclusive interests”. The presentation delivered by Coby van der Linde, director of the Clingendael International

Having inherited the mantle of the Soviet Union, Russia has no intention of losing its pre-eminent nuclear position

Energy Programme, provided a helpful corrective in this respect. Noting that Russian efforts to retain control over the production and distribution of oil and gas are in no way unique, with EU member states and the US pursuing geopolitical interests as well, she called on governments in energy-consuming countries to be more understanding towards Russia's position. But assuming these governments were willing to do so, where would this leave the task of establishing international energy-trading norms? In view of the geopolitical implications of oil and gas for Russia, one thing is certain: trade in energy cannot be treated as any other commodity, subject to free-market norms. While some market liberalisation would be beneficial, a degree of intervention at various governance levels will continue. The relative decline in economic power of the US and other OECD countries means they must come to terms with this reality and engage in open discussions with Russia and other energy exporters about the type and extent of interventions needed.

### 3. Nuclear nonproliferation

Established during the cold war, when the arms race was at the top of the political agenda of the two super-powers, the current nuclear disarmament system remains embedded in anachronistic bi-lateral structures. The prospects for reforming the existing arms control framework was the subject of the symposium's third session on the changing security context and the future of nonproliferation. The crux of the problem is the unequal treatment received by nuclear and non-nuclear states in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), established in 1968 when the United States and Soviet Union, having raced far ahead in the nuclear arms race, decided to invite other states to ratify a treaty which banned the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. Extended indefinitely in 1994, the NPT is considered illegitimate by non-nuclear states but also by India and other middle-ranking nuclear powers, who resent the two-tier security system which it has created.

The inequity at the heart of the nonproliferation regime may have been tolerated when the conflict between the Soviet Union and United States dominated all other issues, but under conditions of multi-polarity it has become unsustainable. This was the clear message delivered at the symposium by Arundhati Ghose, former representative of India to the UN, who blamed the inequalities and flaws of the nonproliferation system for the steps taken by Iran, North Korea and Libya to develop nuclear weapons of their own. Ghose's words were echoed by Nabil Fahmy, ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the US, who explained that, until the nuclear states take concerted steps to disarm their own nuclear arsenals, the non-nuclear states will remain “non-believers” and any efforts to reform the nonproliferation regime will fail.

On the issue of nuclear nonproliferation, the Russian government representatives at the symposium distinguished themselves from the participants of other emerging powers by actively calling for the preservation of the existing system. Nikolai Spasskiy, deputy director general of Russia's State Corporation for Atomic

Energy (“Rosatom”) made it clear that, having inherited the mantle of the Soviet Union, Russia has no intention of losing its pre-eminent nuclear position: “It is not about being just, it is about being practical”. The proposals to eliminate all nuclear weapons recently advanced by the so-called Gang of Four, including former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, were rubbished by the Russians as completely impractical.

Indeed, Russia’s support for the existing nuclear nonproliferation system even appears to exceed that of the United States which, jolted by the cataclysmic events of 9/11, has abandoned key elements of the system, withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile system, abandoning START and developing nuclear defence shields in central and eastern Europe. America’s selective application of the nonproliferation regime—the US continues to lead international criticism of Iran’s development of uranium-enrichment facilities—threatens to further delegitimise the system and provoke a new arms race.

In this field, the (in some ways) atypical nature of Russia as an emerging power becomes evident. For although the relative increase in Russian power since the crisis of the 1990s has been dramatic and, according to some observers, greater than the increase experienced by any other emerging power, the fact remains that Russia (in the form of the Soviet Union) had enjoyed great power status for many years in the period after 1945. This has given Russia a greater stake in some of the existing international norms and institutions (including in the area of nonproliferation), than, for example, India or Brazil. In light of this, the consequences of Russia’s current resurgence for the prospects of reforming the nonproliferation system are ambiguous. On the one hand, Russia’s insistence on retaining the nuclear deterrent puts a hole in the most ambitious reform projects which call for total disarmament. On the other hand, Russia’s criticism of the selective application of the regime by the US, what Strobe Talbot, former US deputy secretary of state, has called “US multilateralism à la carte”, combined with the protests of India and China, holds the promise of a fairer regime emerging in the future.

## Conclusion

Products of a different era, when the United States leadership was uncontested, existing international norms and institutions are (on the whole) viewed with scepticism by emerging powers. The extent to which the latter agree to play by internationally agreed rules of the game will depend in large part on the ability and willingness of the United States and other OECD states to integrate the new powers into a shared international order. However, the prospects for a smooth transition will also depend on the aims and preferences of the emerging powers themselves.

The reform agenda presented by Russia at the Moscow symposium does not threaten the foundations of the international system as we know it

The Foresight symposium held in Moscow on 19–20 June was therefore a unique opportunity to find out more about the visions and strategies of Russia in the 21st century, and to assess the extent to which these diverge from the preferences of other major powers. While highlighting differences on a number of important questions, the symposium's discussions suggest that the most negative scenarios predicted by some, of increasing competition and disagreement between "emerging" and "status quo" powers, may be over-stated—at least in relation to Russia's role in the emerging multi-polar order. For the reasons mentioned above, namely, Russia's status as (in some ways) an untypical emerging power, it is likely that this conclusion will change when Foresight moves on to analyse the views and preferences of emerging powers which played no part in building the post-1945 international order, including Brazil, India and (perhaps to a lesser extent) China.

The reform agenda presented by Russia at the Moscow symposium does not threaten the foundations of the international system as we know it. For the current Russian leadership, a reform of global institutions is necessary to reflect the new configuration of power, but this process should not lead to the wholesale replacement of western norms. Instead, Russia's vision of the future is one where a greater number of voices can be heard, western and non-western, northern and southern, particularly when it comes to establishing the parameters for each state's economic and social development.

For Russia, this does not mean that there should be no common rules of the game. However, the common rules should be limited to questions which affect inter-state relations, including the claims of irredentist groups and nonproliferation. Indeed, when it comes to the international political architecture, Russia ardently defends the system put in place by the United Nations, which it believes can begin to work effectively only now, as the world moves in a multi-polar direction. As foreign minister Lavrov explained at the Foresight

symposium, the UN was established in 1945 with a multi-polar system in mind; hence the five permanent seats established in the Security Council. It was the cold war, with its bi-polar configuration of power, and later the uni-polar system centred on the US, which prevented it from operating as the UN's founding fathers had foreseen.

Rather than lecture to Russia on the development of its economic and social system, the EU should accept that Russia will follow its own development model

This is not to say that there are no UN developments that are of concern to Russia. However, as we have seen with the "responsibility to protect" doctrine, which Russia has evoked in the case of South Ossetia, Russia does not object to the existing principles sustaining the UN system, but rather to inconsistencies in their application. Russian Security Council vetoes over Darfur and, most recently, Zimbabwe, do not strike at the heart of the principle of conditional sovereignty (whereby sovereignty entails responsibilities and not only rights). Russian objections to the imposition of sanctions on Sudanese and Zimbabwean leaders are cast in terms of the need for greater scrutiny in the application of the doctrine. There is insufficient evidence, according to Russian diplomats, that either crisis constitutes a threat to international peace and security. If the doctrine of the "responsibility to protect" is to facilitate, rather than disrupt, international cooperation in the resolution of ethnic conflicts, it will be essential for the major global players to negotiate a common understanding of its content.

From Russia's point of view, it is only the norms and institutions which make up the current "economic-financial order" which require more fundamental changes, including existing efforts to establish free trade rules in the energy trading sector. Pressure to reform the international financial institutions, including the IMF and World Bank, is in any case increasing as a result of their inability to prevent the global credit crunch and related financial and economic instability. What these reforms will look like, however, remains unclear. The point was poignantly made by Strobe Talbot at the Foresight symposium that Russia has so far tended to be better at identifying problems with the existing system than at offering solutions. Be this as it may, the relative increase in the power of Russia and other emerging markets, which have not shied away from efforts to protect their nascent industries, may force world leaders to re-think some of the liberal economic principles that have so far structured the international political economy.

The symposium highlighted a number of changes the western powers could make to facilitate the transition to a multi-polar world where Russia can play a constructive role. First and foremost, Russia should be treated as an equal by other European states. Rather than lecture Russia on the development of its economic and social system, the EU should accept that Russia will follow its own development model, which should be seen as enriching what is already a diverse patch-work of European social and economic systems. The same conclusion applies to the broader international scene. Accepting Russia as an equal in international negotiations is a prerequisite for solving global challenges. Injecting greater pluralism into the system, which is what Russian ambitions come down to, should not dissuade western diplomats from engaging with Russia. Far from disrupting international cooperation, it will serve to ensure that Russians see the value of multilateralism and therefore become more cooperative international players.