Introduction

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Abstract

An introduction to the special issue on Russian foreign policy prepared by a team based at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. We begin with an overview of some of the contesting views about the dynamics and drivers of Russian foreign policy and some of the key theories. We then present the substantive arguments of the contributors, assessing how they fit into the overall pattern of understanding the key issues in Russian foreign policy and larger global concerns. The Introduction ends with some broader considerations, noting the tension between ‘declinist’ and ‘revivalist’ approaches to Russia today, and suggest that the contributions on the whole steer a cautious path between extreme representations of these two perspectives, while warning of the dangers of triumphalism. We argue that Russian and Russian-based views can make a specific and important contribution to larger debates about the dynamics of Russian foreign policy and Russia’s contribution to the resolution of some of the pressing issues facing humanity.

Keywords

great power – status – Cold War – declinism – revivalism – Europe – China

Western scholarship on Russian foreign policy has focused on explaining the motivations behind Russian foreign policy. These studies largely see Russia as a dissatisfied and unhappy power, haunted by the legacies of its totalitarian past saddled with a corrupt and ultimately ineffective authoritarian regime and struggling to adapt to the realities of the post-Cold War world and Russia's loss of power and status. These factors are used to explain what many Western observers see as Russia's "assertive" and "confrontational" approach to international politics. Many studies see Russia as reacting to the US and West's policies, which have taken advantage of Russia's temporary weakness after the post-Soviet collapse to expand its military and political influence at Russia's expense.¹ The West purportedly seeks to impose a radical vision of world order that looks to overturn many of the established rules of international society that Russia and other major non-Western states hold dear.² More critical scholarship traces Russian assertiveness to the workings of what is seen as its corrupt and illegitimate domestic political regime, whose leaders must stoke up regressive nationalism to divert attention from their domestic failings and whom have come to see Western style liberal democracy as a threat to its continued survival.³ Others see Russian foreign policy as a product of Russia's historical identity: the fact that it sees itself as a great and independent power⁴ and the importance that Russian elites and publics place in maintaining Russia's independence and great power status.⁵

- 1 John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault", *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 77–89; Elias Götz, "Neorealism and Russia's Ukraine policy, 1991–present." *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 301–323.
- 2 Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's last stand: the sources of Russia's Ukraine policy." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, no. 4 (2015): 279–303; Richard Sakwa, *Russia against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- 3 Michael McFaul, "Putin, Putinism, and the Domestic Determinants of Russian Foreign Policy." *International Security* 45, no. 2 (2020): 95–139.; Kathryn E. Stoner, *Russia Resurrected: Its Power and Purpose in a New Global Order* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2021); Kimberly Marten, "Informal Political Networks and Putin's Foreign Policy: The Examples of Iran and Syria." *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 2 (2015): 71–87.
- 4 Anne Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2009); Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin: Honor in international relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- 5 Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Russia says no: Power, status, and emotions in foreign policy." *Communist and post-communist studies* 47, nos. 3–4 (2014): 269–279, 63–95; Andrej Krickovic and Chang Zhang, "Fears of falling short versus anxieties of

While these studies have greatly contributed to our understanding of Russian foreign policy, in focusing on explanations and motivations, they have often given less attention to the way that Russian leaders, experts and scholars actually view international politics and Russia's place in the world. This often leads them to adopt a reductionist approach, where Russian world-views are deduced from the motivating factors used to explain Russian foreign policy behavior. Russian thinkers' predilection towards *realpolitik*, skepticism of liberal universal solutions, and tendency to see the world as increasingly unstable and chaotic are seen as being heavily influenced by Russia's post-Cold War experiences,⁶ the narrow self-interests of its regime and leadership,⁷ or by deep-seated historical identities,⁸ rather than reflecting sober, detached, and objective assessments on the part of Russian scholars, experts, and leaders. In doing so, much of the existing Western scholarship denies Russian thinkers agency in forming their own ideas about the way that the world works.⁹ This marginalizes their valuable insights, at a time, when the traditional IR paradigms (upon which most analysis of Russian foreign policy are based) are struggling to come to grips with the increased chaos, turbulence, and unpredictability of international politics, and when we should be open to new ideas and perspectives.

The articles in this special issue look to address these shortcomings by giving a group of prominent Russian (and Russia-based) experts and scholars the opportunity to present their research, and, perhaps most significantly, their ideas and views about the evolving nature of world politics. Their analyses diverge significantly from established Western narratives on why Russia abandoned its initial pro-Western course in favor of a more independent "Great Power" foreign policy, and provide insights into more specific foreign policy issues, such as Russia's evolving relations with the US, EU, China and other great powers, its management of great power relations in post-Soviet Eurasia, and its efforts at "civilizational" geopolitics. These papers present original perspectives about the challenges confronting Russia in a complex and unpredictable international environment and how the world can begin to overcome the conflicts and contradictions it currently faces and move towards a new and more stable form of order.

decline: Explaining Russia and China's approach to status-seeking." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 13, no. 2 (2020): 219–251.

6 Mearsheimer (2014); Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia's foreign policy: change and continuity in national identity* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

7 McFaul (2020); Stoner (2021).

8 Clunan (2009).

9 For some exceptions that do give Russian actors agency see: Sakwa (2017); Tsygankov (2019).

Sergei Karaganov traces the evolution of post-Cold War Russian foreign policy through three phases, beginning with emulation of the West to a more inward-looking period of revival and on to the current period of the reassertion of great power status. Moscow perceives much of Western global foreign policy as not only ideological and short-sighted, but also increasingly ineffective in achieving its stated goals, and hence Russia must pursue its independent foreign policy. The process, however, is far from complete, and Karaganov indicates that a putative fourth phase is required in which Russia must develop its own coherent ideology that will advance domestic modernization while also outlining an approach that be attractive globally. On this basis the author outlines two scenarios for the future: an optimistic one whereby Russia develops such an ideology and becomes a co-equal with China; and a less optimistic one in which Russia fails to develop such a synthesis and as a result stagnates and becomes more of a junior partner, although even here it will take steps to hedge against China and maintain its independence.

Vladimir Lukin argues that the challenges of globalization demand that humanity develop a new legal, ethical and moral framework to address them, otherwise the consequences will be dire and may even lead to humanity's extinction. Thus far the attempt to formulate these kinds of rules, which reach back to Lenin and the Bolsheviks and most recently in American views of exceptionalism and liberal universalism, have been one sided and "flat." They have only provoked conflict and exacerbate the problem. What is required, in his view, is a pluralist and consensual approach that reflects the multifaceted and complex nature of the world, while also working towards some kind of humanist synthesis. The argument echoes some aspects of Mikhail Gorbachev's approach and the New Political Thinking (NPT) that inspired the Soviet foreign policy revolution during perestroika in the late 1980s, although Lukin makes no direct reference to NPT. An interesting feature of much policy-oriented Russian thinking today, although rarely acknowledged, is the way that elements of the late Soviet NPT recur in various formats, although the idea that Russia in any way pursues a neo-Gorbachevite foreign policy is anathema to most commentators, and for understandable reasons.¹⁰ Gorbachev is associated with capitulation to the West and the disintegration of a state that had taken centuries to construct, yet some of the dilemmas facing Soviet foreign policy in its later stages endure to this day. Although Russia is not at the center

10 For a recent study which argues that NPT continues to influence Russian foreign policy thinking, see: Andrej Krickovic, "Russia and Peaceful Change." In T.V. Paul, Deborah Larson and Harold A. Trinkunas, Anders Wivel, and Ralf Emmers eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

of Lukin's analysis, it is nevertheless presented as a kind of guarantor of freedom of action and pluralism against the West's (primarily the US) continued attempts at imposing its "flat" solutions on the rest of humanity. Thus, Lukin opposes one-dimensional ideological models and stresses pluralist solutions, including the commitment to international law and existing institutions, above all the UN system and the special role of Russia in that system. This starkly diverges from the standard Western view that Russia has no more than a cynical, superficial and self-interested instrumental commitment to the post-war international system and would ideally favor a return to some sort of nineteenth century concert of powers arrangement where Russia's privileges would be preserved.¹¹

Iain Ferguson and Sergei Akopov conduct a critical assessment of the increasingly popular view of Russia as a 'revisionist' power. They focus on what they consider the decisive period in the evolution of Russian foreign policy, the years between the Western intervention in Libya in 2011 and Russia's intervention in Ukraine in 2014. They frame their argument about "non-intervention" and "revisionism" in the context of the development of Russian ideas of itself as some sort of "state civilization", combining a return to traditionalism while advancing a non-Western and anti-liberal model of global politics. They contest this interpretation and suggest that the "state civilization" approach is based on advancing alternative policies grounded normatively in a type of international constitutionalism. Since around 2013 Putin has been advancing a distinctively Russian approach to the norms of non-intervention. This has generated a security culture that is both defensive and expansive and has been used to legitimate the incorporation of Crimea. However, this approach has not been recognized by the UN Security Council, leaving Russia once again in the role of an outsider to the system that it claims to defend.

This argument takes on particular force when considered in the context of the evolving global sanctions regime, as analyzed by Anastasia Likhacheva. She focuses on the interaction between three key processes. The first is the intensification and codification of sanctions by the Atlantic powers (with Western allies in Asia noticeably reticent in this system), with various cross-cutting dynamics and unclear connection between actions and their intended effects. The second process is the various counter sanctions and strategies adopted by Russia (and some other countries), including immediate defensive responses as well as longer-term modifications to developmental strategies. She notes

11 For a sophisticated version of this argument, see Andrej Krickovic, "Revisionism Revisited: Developing a Typology for Classifying Russia and Other Revisionist Powers", *International Politics*, published online 27 June 2021.

that some of these predate the most recent era of sanctions that began in 2014, suggesting a defensive developmentalism that is deeply ingrained in the Putinite model of governance and economic management. The third process is the combined effect of the previous two on global value chains and the model of globalization as it had developed since the end of the Cold War. Together, the three processes will shape international political economy for the foreseeable future. The failure to create an inclusive and equitable post-Cold War security and economic order at the end of the twentieth century will shape the better part of the twenty-first.

The article by Andrei Kazantsev, Sergei Lebedev and Svetlana Medvedeva examines the dynamics of Russian policy in post-Soviet Eurasia. They argue that policy is torn between two approaches. The first focuses on a pragmatic (realist) “business as usual approach” that tolerates the presence of external powers and seeks even to work with them, notably in the case of China in Central Asia and Turkey in the Caucasus. The second approach is more “securitized” and confrontational, which views these external powers as a threat and seeks to resist their presence, notably in the cases of the US and EU in Ukraine and Georgia. These contrasting responses are interpreted as a reflection of the recognized tension in Russian foreign policy-making between, on the one hand, the focus on regime security, whereby Western expansion and democratization are perceived as threats to Russia’s authoritarian regime, and on the other hand, “identity based” explanations in which Western expansion is securitized because it is more of a threat to Russia’s identity as a regional hegemon and its status as a great power. In both cases China and Turkey do not threaten the security of Russia’s domestic political regime nor its “ontological security”,¹² whereas the inroads by the Western powers are perceived as direct challenges to both. The practical implications of these contrasting approaches are then examined. This means that some kind of *modus vivendi* has been established with the non-threatening powers, however contingent and fragile (particularly in the case of Turkey’s activism in the South Caucasus); whereas with the Western outsider powers, a *modus vivendi* can only be achieved on the basis of limited engagement on practical matters and cannot be enduring as long as they are perceived as threats to core elements of Russian security and identity.

Igor Denisov and Alexander Lukin examine whether Russia will continue to align with China as the asymmetry in their power capacities continues to grow.

12 “Ontological security” refers to actors’ (including states) need to maintain stable social identities and a coherent “sense of selfhood.” See: Brent Steel, *Ontological Security in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2008).

One possible consequence is that Russia will be forced to “bandwagon”, which will fundamentally change the character of their relationship, with Russia more overtly recognized as the weaker partner. The article provides some striking examples of growing Russian concerns about Chinese power as well as some examples of overbearing Chinese behavior that have affected Russia. Although Russia in the near-term will continue to view the West as the greatest immediate threat and thus is prepared to run the medium-term risks of the close alignment with China, there are indications Russia will turn towards hedging in the long term. This reflects the concern voiced by some of the authors in this collection about Russia’s long-term foreign policy options. There is clearly growing concern in Russian foreign policy circles about the imbalances in the relationship, and these are beginning to be voiced more openly.

Vladimir Ryzhkov traces the evolution of relations with Europe, from aspirations of a “Greater Europe” to open confrontation fought on the terrain of both geopolitics as well as values. Both sides bear responsibility for this outcome. Europe was seized by elements of triumphalism and focused on its projects for internal integration and external enlargement and thereby failed to address Russia’s specific concern. This meant that in practical terms not much aid was forthcoming, and integration was offered in the form of take-it-or-leave-it one-sided diplomacy, problems that were exacerbated by NATO enlargement. Faced with the difficulties of transition from totalitarianism, Russia lapsed into authoritarianism and anti-Westernism, with roots in the former Soviet system of power. However, despite these problems the idea of Greater Europe is not entirely dead, and there are grounds to believe that the project of pan-European unification may one day come back on the agenda. If the EU can solve its domestic problems continental integration may get back on track. The EU could once again become an attractive model for Russia as it struggles with stagnation and adaptation to pressing new global challenges. There are a number of prerequisites for this to become a reality, above all the development of a pan-European security architecture that can finally address Russian security concerns. This would allow a move away from geopolitical competition in post-Soviet Eurasia towards a more cooperative model.

Even this small collection indicates that there is considerable diversity in Russian views, although there are several unifying themes. The various authors demonstrate that thinking about Russia is far from parochial, notably about how to maintain Russia’s power and status, but are also not afraid to tackle big issues, including problems of world order and the larger fate of humanity. These ideas are far from uncontested, but we believe that it is important to listen to them to understand the dynamics of Russian foreign policy behavior. For Western policymakers, this will not only help design more effective strategies

but also help resolve some of the most intractable issues in international politics. The diversity of views can open up new perspectives on the most challenging problems facing the world today.

A number of underlying and recurring themes emerge. The first is the one that Ryzhkov sets as the stipulation for a return to the Greater European agenda, namely the resolution of the European security dilemma. As William Hill so eloquently and convincingly argued, this has been the number one issue in Russia's relations with the West since the fall of communism, and not only is it no nearer to being resolved now than it was three decades ago, it has in fact become far more intractable and deep-rooted.¹³ Although the EU has now formally adopted the idea of "strategic autonomy", it remains firmly part of the postwar Atlantic power system, and despite the wobble in the Trump years, both Washington and Brussels eagerly re-embraced a more traditionally-minded US president in the guise of Joseph Biden entered the White House. There are good reasons for this, and although the EU is devising its own path in relations with both Beijing and Moscow and a number of other policy issues (above all on responses to climate change and the Iran nuclear deal), Ryzhkov's anticipation that the pieces of European security arrangements may once again be set in motion are likely to be disappointed.

However, a second element is also coming into play that may in the long-term force a reappraisal of the whole European security situation, accompanied by a broader re-evaluation of the relationship between Russia and the West. Several of the articles in the collection hint at unease in Russian policy circles about the changing character of the relationship with China. This certainly does not mean that the alignment between Russia and China will change any time soon. In fact, in the short-term it will deepen as the military, energy, food and technology links intensify, accompanied by a quasi-alliance relationship in diplomatic and security matters. The links have long ago moved from the convenient to the necessary. This trend will continue, especially if the Atlantic powers continue to overplay their hand and thereby drive the two countries together. The Biden administration showed some awareness of this, and the Geneva summit between Biden and Putin in June 2021 clearly signaled Washington's desire to stabilize relations with Moscow so that it could focus on competition with Beijing. While crude "wedge" tactics will certainly not work, Moscow (just like Brussels) is keen to retain and develop its "strategic autonomy", and thus also has an interest in restraining Beijing's more ambitious and assertive impulses.

13 William H. Hill, *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

This brings us to a third feature revealed in these essays, namely Russian elite views of the current state of international politics. Vladimir Lukin contrasts the development of what Amitav Acharya calls a “multiplex world” (although Lukin does not use the term) and the one-dimensional perspectives so often advanced in Western and Russian policy-making circles.¹⁴ In this context, Lukin sees an opportunity for Russia to develop a more progressive agenda rooted in a realist appreciation of challenges and opportunities. This is a theme taken up by Karaganov when he examines the successive stages of Russian foreign policy and ends with a call for a more future-oriented agenda. Lukin’s focus is on Russia, but the appeal has broader resonance. This means not simply reiterating the appeal to “multipolarity” but requires filling such a model with positive content. It certainly means that Russia must be taken seriously as a great power; but it also means that if Russia really wants to be a worthy and responsible great power, it must shoulder its portion of responsibility for the cooperative collective management of global affairs. Likhacheva also alludes to a fundamental change in the post-Cold War model of international political economy, with a return to more insular policies as global supply chains are shortened and bulwarks thrown up against sanctions.

A fourth theme across the collection is the dynamic of relations within post-Soviet Eurasia. Kazantsev, Lebedev and Medvedeva highlight some of the dilemmas, but the problems they address have fundamental resonance not only in the post-Soviet space itself but also in the broader region (including the Near East and the security and political challenges provoked by the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of Taliban rule), and globally. Just as the problem of post-Cold War European security has not been resolved, neither have the dynamics of relations in post-Soviet Eurasia. In fact, the two dilemmas feed on each other, and the one will not be resolved in isolation from the other. This is most pressingly the case with Ukraine, in which alternative models of state development and international integration spilled over into conflict and full-scale internationalization of the crisis. None of the authors suggest that the questions can be resolved in the near-term by any sort of “grand bargain” between the great powers, but neither do they suggest an alternative path out of the impasse. Not only is the question of the legitimate scope for Western engagement with the countries of the region not resolved, but above all the legitimate scope for any putative Russia hegemonic project is not clear. Russia has advanced its own model of integration through the Eurasian

14 Amitav Acharya, “After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order”, *Ethics & International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (2017): 271–85.

Economic Union, but there are some legitimate questions about the degree to which it can emulate the achievements of West European integration.

A fifth and final theme is the one raised by Ferguson and Akopov, but which resonates across the other papers: namely the degree to which Russia's assertion as a great power is underpinned culturally and by reserves of power. This intersects with the enduring debate over whether Russia today is a rising or declining power. Russia rebuilt its economy and its military and has returned as a significant actor on the world stage, but is it more a regional than a global power? Even the small selection of authors in this collection demonstrates that Russian thinkers are not afraid to think big and to advance their ideas on the major questions of the day. But is all this the delusion of a fading elite stuck in a world dazzled by the grandeur of the past, but failing to come to terms with the country's reduced role? Karaganov is aware of the dangers of overstretch and hence urges the need to hold on to recent gains in the face of rapidly changing international environment, accompanied by the generation of a new more domestically-focused ideological and developmental model for Russia that can serve an alternative to both the West and China. Ferguson and Akopov provide a sophisticated theoretical treatment of the enduring problem of universality and specificity.

The debate is conducted against the background of starkly contrasting perspectives on Russia. The 'declinist' view suggests that Russia is a marginal and waning power, with its economy stagnating, its population falling, its institutions dysfunctional and the legitimacy of the regime eroding. In the 1990s the decrease in national power was taken to be permanent, and hence there was no pressing need to worry about Moscow's concerns. Russia's assertive foreign policy, moreover, was discounted as little more than the impotent thrashing of a regional state and a desperate regime with its back to the wall. In 2014, Obama dismissed Russia as 'a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors, not out of strength but out of weakness'.¹⁵ Serious politics would be conducted with Beijing, while Moscow was not much more than a distraction and 'spoiler'. Alternative perspectives and policies, in Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere were thereby categorized as little more than the deluded ambitions of a failing power. The main driver of Russia's foreign policy was viewed as a 'patronal autocracy', in which the national interest was subordinated to the domestic political needs of a corrupt authoritarian government devoted to

15 'Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands', The Hague, 25 March 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/25/press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-rutte-netherlands>.

personal enrichment.¹⁶ From this perspective, 'power projection abroad ... has become necessary to maintain regime support at home'.¹⁷ Any 'off-ramps' out of confrontation would provide the regime with an unwarranted breathing space and amount to little more than appeasement. Pressure has to be maintained and regularly escalated (through sanctions, military deployments, intelligence leaks, arms to Ukraine, propaganda campaigns and much else out of the Cold War playbook), until the whole rotten edifice collapses.¹⁸ 'Wedges' needed to be driven between Russia and China and the alignment destroyed.¹⁹ Much of this was drawn from the experience of the conflict with the Soviet Union (with hints of the even longer tradition of hostility to Tsarist autocracy), on the assumption that there could be no serious prospects for normalization as long as the old regime remained in place. This reductionist account has little room for the complexities of Russian statecraft or for nuanced diplomatic engagement.

This is why the 'revivalist' approach, adopted in many of the articles in this volume is so important as a corrective not only to unduly negative assessments of Russia's power and status, but also to achieve more realistic and effective policy-making. According to IMF data, in 2019 Russia's nominal GDP was just \$1.5 trillion, eleventh in the world and accounting for just 1.8 per cent of global GDP, with per capita income of \$11,600. However, in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms GDP is over \$4 trillion, accounting for 3.5 per cent of global GDP, making Russia the sixth largest economy in the world with per capita income at just over \$28,000. Russia remains a full-service economy, with an advanced IT sector, developed aircraft and ship building industries, factories producing 10 per cent of the world's power turbines, a nuclear industry building 40 per cent of the world's commercial power stations, the world's only nuclear-powered ice breakers, along with advanced urban infrastructure and a well-educated population. It has a number of e-commerce giants and the world's largest digital bank (TCS Group, better known as Tinkoff). Yandex parallels the work of Google, with cloud services, AI and self-driving cars, along with a host of service facilities (taxis, search engines, mapping and much more). Russia

16 Stoner, (2021): 246–56.

17 Ibid. 237.

18 The Atlantic Council is the most resolute exponent of this view. For example, Daniel Fried and Adrian Karatnycky, 'A New Sanctions Strategy to Contain Putin's Russia', *Foreign Policy*, 4 May 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/04/sanctions-contain-russia-putin-west-us-eu-uk-europe-weaken-economy/>.

19 Andrea-Kendall-Taylor and David Shullman, 'China and Russia's Dangerous Convergence', *Foreign Affairs*, 3 May 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-05-03/china-and-russias-dangerous-convergence>.

produced the world's first anti-Covid-19 vaccine (Sputnik v) by August 2020, which was then delivered to much of the non-Western world as well as some European countries (Serbia, Hungary and Slovakia). Russia has reinforced its status as a leader in the development of hi-tech weaponry, including hypersonic missile technologies, and its anti-missile systems (the latest being the S-500) are recognized the world over as second to none. By 2011 the GLONASS geospatial positioning system had restored its full complement of 24 orbiting satellites with a network of ground receiving stations outside Russia, allowing global coverage to rival America's GPS (although later development was hampered by the embargo on the export of Western dual-use technology). The list could be indefinitely extended, but the point is clear.²⁰

These "revivalist" perspectives should not be confused with "triumphalism." Even the most optimistic authors in this volume acknowledge the profound challenges Russia faces. The economy continues to be heavily dependent on the export of energy and natural resources (though this dependence has lessened in recent years as other sectors of the economy develop). There are serious problems with corruption and governance, accentuated by uncertainty over the future as "the weak strongman" Putin era inevitably draws to a close.²¹ Russia's share of global GDP has been in steady decline, though it is not alone – between 2014 and 2019 the US share fell from 16.6 to 15.3 per cent, while India's rose from 5.9 to 7.0 per cent and China's from 14.9 to 17.3 per cent.²² Russian leaders and scholars are well aware of their country's shortcomings and the potential pitfalls of stagnation if the country is unable to adjust to the rapidly changing international environment. However, its recent accomplishments and the resilience the country has shown in raising itself from the brink of complete social collapse in the 1990s make them hopeful that Russia will adapt and continue to play its traditional role as one of the great powers in the international system.

Even under current, less than ideal, conditions Russia has adroitly managed power asymmetries to return to the ranks of the great powers. It became a power broker in the Middle and Near East and to a degree in Africa. Russia effectively mobilized its diplomatic, military, energy and economic resources, and it has reasserted itself as an important player in the Eastern Mediterranean

20 The argument is made by Richard Sakwa, *The Lost Peace: How We Failed to Prevent a Second Cold War* (Yale University Press, forthcoming), from which some of the material here is drawn.

21 Timothy Frye, *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

22 Jozef Hrabina, 'The Year of Crises: How 2022 Will Reshape the Structure of International Relations', *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 1, January/March 2021, 185.

and across the world. Policy has been remarkably consistent, reflecting elite consensus over the underlying grand strategy of restoring Russia as a great power. This is more than improvisation but the mobilization of the various tools of statecraft to achieve specific and clearly defined goals. While (sooner or later) the leader will change, this collection suggests that that the grand strategy through which Russian foreign policy is conducted will in all likelihood remain. This means that Russia represents far more than a short-term challenge to the West. Russia will be a perennial player in international affairs whose action will be informed by its unique ideas and world views. These ideas and views, as expressed by Russia's leaders and scholars, should not be taken for granted and merit serious consideration by scholars of Russia as well as practitioners of world politics.