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RUSSIA in a Polycentric World

Foreword by Yevgeny Primakov
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The monograph studies international political and economic aspects of the evolution and future developments of the polycentric world that began taking shape in the late 20th–early 21st century. An analysis of fundamental changes in the global economy, politics, and world order is presented. The basic trends and problems of a polycentric world are examined, as are global and other important regional centers of power, and international relations in the most problematic areas across Russia's borders. The main focus is on identifying the opportunities, challenges, and risks Russia faces in the polycentric world now taking shape.

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Foreword

Russia's place in today's world is determined primarily by two factors: domestic development (economic, social, political, and military) and the nature of the international environment of which the country is a member. The book you are holding was prepared by the Russian Academy of Sciences' newly created Department of Global Problems and International Relations. The book's main topic is the international conditions of the Russian state's continued existence and development.

The monograph's very name tells us that its authors consider today's world to be polycentric. It must be said that a great many political scientists did not come to this conclusion immediately after the collapse of the bipolar world order, foreordained by the end of the Cold War. Many people, both abroad and in Russia, thought then that a transition to a unipolar world was under way. In support of this thesis, they offered what seemed to be convincing arguments: the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Treaty, and COMECON had all ceased to exist, while the United States remained in the global arena as the strongest nation in the world, and the NATO bloc binding the United States and its allies retained and even strengthened its capabilities.

All of this was indeed true; however, new centers of world development emerged simultaneously and this objective process continued apace. In the period preceding the current economic crisis (i.e., up to 2008), China's share in world GDP growth was six times greater than that of the United States. The economies of India, Brazil, and Russia were growing faster than the US economy.

It must be stressed that the unevenness of development affected another important field, that of technological innovation. The United States continues to lead the world in this field, but China has begun to catch up with it. If we extrapolate current trends in world scientific and technological progress, the People's Republic of China has an excellent chance of drawing even with the United States as early as the mid-21st century, in the opinion of many experts.

The financial and economic crisis that unfolded in the first decade of the 21st century confirmed the hopelessness of the unipolar world order. This crisis, the consequences of which are far from being overcome, has demonstrated the unviability of a world financial system controlled from one center. The US dollar's dominant position in it is obvious. Under the conditions of the absence or relative weakness of other reserve currencies, however, the instability of such a system has been revealed. The future likely lies in the creation of regional financial centers. Everything points to both China and Russia following such a path. This in no way means that we should minimize the role of the US dollar, but we can foresee that the pegging of other nations' currencies to it will abate.

The reality of the transition to a polycentric world is also founded on comprehending that the formation of a new world order is, on the one hand, an objective process; on the other hand, it is or should be a result of the efforts of different nations, aimed at satisfying the world community's need for stability and security in the international arena. It is quite characteristic that among the arguments of those who initially favored a unipolar world order (and their numbers have now clearly dwindled) was the assertion (expressed, for example, by former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice) that a multipolar system was incompatible with the need to pool national efforts in the interests of stabilizing the world situation. I know of no politician or political scientist in academia who feels nostalgia for the multipolarity of the past, before the First or Second World War. But can we really ignore the indisputable fact that the present change in the structure of the world order, the transition to a multipolar world, is taking place under new conditions? At this new stage of globalization, a strong interdependence of different world centers is developing along with polycentrism. Business relations are becoming largely transnational in nature.

Globalization cannot lead to a *volte face* into the past. The multipolarity of the 21st century in and of itself is not pushing us toward confrontation between nations or to the creation of military alliances hostile to one another. Nations are being integrated into groupings, especially in the sphere of economics, and the number of political agreements aimed at stabilizing the situation in one region or another is growing.

So, whereas the history of the 20th century testifies to the inability of different nations to propagate their ideology on a worldwide scale, the 21st century demonstrates that a unipolar world order cannot be imposed even if one world power, stepping out of line becomes the strongest nation in the world.

Polycentrism of the world order will not, however, lead to an international situation free of conflict. The transition to a multipolar system is not a one-time event; the continuous development of the system and the changing of its form is an ongoing process during which various conflicts can emerge and be exacerbated. These are due mainly to the unevenness of development among nations and the success or failure of integration groupings. The instable relationship between, let us say, a policy of “rebooting” relations and the inertial lines of national behavior that took root in the time of open confrontation during the Cold War also affects the course of political, military, and economic affairs. Neither is the desire to establish palatable regimes in the Asian and African countries, by force or otherwise, receding into the past.

Under such conditions, control over the international agenda is vital. One of the main mechanisms of such control ought to be the United Nations, the role of which is undoubtedly growing. Events sometimes push the United Nations to adopt resolutions on exerting full pressure on countries whose leaders take large-scale armed actions against their own people. But when such forceful methods go beyond the UN mandate, as happened in Libya, the situation becomes fraught with legalizing NATO interference in a civil war on the side of anti-government forces. This cannot and should not become the international standard in a polycentric world.

Russia is of course one pole of a multipolar world. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia remains the largest country on Earth in terms of territory, straddling two continents—Europe and Asia. More than one-third of the world’s natural mineral resources lies under the soil of Russia. In addition, Russia inherited all of the Soviet Union’s nuclear missile capability and remains the only nation in the world comparable to the United States in the field of nuclear missile weapons.

Russia’s place in today’s world is also defined by our nation’s sincere desire to play a leading role in key affairs while maintaining stability and security in the world arena, and to continue integrating itself into the world economic system more effectively. Without Russia, it would be difficult (even impossible) to confront the challenges and threats facing humanity in the 21st century. The country’s active participation in international affairs will undoubtedly make it easier to deal with its domestic problems as well.

Russia in a Polycentric World examines the current economic and political issues of creating a multipolar world order, along with details of Russia’s relations with the main centers of power and its international partners in the near and far abroad. I am certain that the results from our large team’s research will prove useful to Russian and foreign scholars, politicians, experts, and a wide circle of other readers.

**Yevgeny Primakov,
Academician**

Introduction

In the last 20 years, changes of historic scale have taken place both in Russia and in the world at large. The era of bipolar opposition and ideological confrontation is now a thing of the past. A new world order is taking shape, in which large developing countries and nonstate actors have begun to take increasingly important places alongside the developed nations – the “golden billion.” Radical shifts in the global economy and the system of international relations are having a growing effect on the development of today’s world cultures and civilizations.

These fundamental changes demand research based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines methods of economic analysis, sociology and political science, economic history and geography, and international comparative and country studies. Only this kind of approach allows us to analyze the present state of and outlook for the development of the polycentric world whose formation began at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, and of the opportunities, challenges, and risks Russia may encounter (and which it has to some extent already encountered). The task of implementing such an approach was set in the RFH project “Russia in a Polycentric World,” the main results from which are presented in this publication.

A great many specific scientific, theoretical, and methodological problems were solved in the course of our work. Among these were formulating ideas and concepts that allowed us

- to explain the present dynamic of global development and the patterns of changes in national capabilities within this dynamic;
- to demonstrate the difficulties in creating mechanisms of global governance on the whole and in different spheres, from finance and ecology to nuclear security and combating transnational threats;
- to determine the main characteristics of and prospects for the further development of new and traditional leaders of globalization;
- to investigate the present state of, prospects for, and risks and possibilities of developing relations between the Russian Federation and the main centers, regions, and nations of the world.

In accordance with these general and specific tasks, this work is structured into three logically interrelated parts:

1. The global trends that make up the economic and political foundations for the modern world’s polycentric development.
2. The leading countries at the forefront of globalization and Russia’s relations with them in the world economy and politics.
3. Russia’s main interests in relations with the countries and regions along the perimeter of its borders.

In the *first part*, we systematically examine the trends toward polycentrism in the world economy, the military sphere, and international relations. We describe the characteristics of polycentrism as a phenomenon, as a particular stage, and as the state of the innovation and financial spheres, the security system, and international relations. We study the most important processes and phenomena that acquire special importance under the conditions of globalization and polycentrism, determine nontraditional forms of relations between nations and other actors, and could in the long run affect the very character of the system of international relations, give it a different quality, and alter its meaningful content.

This part of the monograph deals with theoretical aspects of the conceptual and methodological problems associated with establishing the global world order as a whole and its polycentric version: the correlation and mutual influence of national and supranational trends, the role played by the institution of the state, the dynamic and forms of global governance, and international integration and regionalization under the conditions of polycentrism. An analysis is given of comparatively new and little studied (in both international political discourse and international political practice) problems of migration, ecology, climate change, terrorism, transnational crime, and piracy.

The *second part* of this work is devoted to studying the main actors of a polycentric world: the United States, China, the European Union, and the new emerging nations of the world economy and politics. Focus is on assessing the state and prospects of Russia's relations with them. We examine the place and role of each of the "old" and emerging global centers of power; foreign policy strategies and the development of their relations with other world leaders; the strengthening/weakening of their economic and political positions under the conditions of the 2008–2009 world financial crisis; and their relations with Russia and the prospects for bilateral cooperation in the political and economic spheres.

We focus on the issues of guaranteeing security, arms control (including the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the United States and Russia) and the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, relations in the field of antimissile defense, and further development of Russia's relations with the main centers of power in the areas of defense and security.

We reveal the reasons for the objective decline of US influence against the backdrop of China's outrunning rates of development and those of other major regional powers that could potentially grow into global centers of power in the future: India, Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey. We analyze the prerequisites for and main factors of their becoming new centers of power; their potential for rising in the world arena and the likelihood of this happening; their position in the world economy; and the prospects for their participation in a system of global governance, plus their cooperation with Russia on bilateral and multilateral bases. Let us note an important methodological feature of our research on new global centers of power: coordinating our analysis of each country's problems and prospects with the characteristics of the growing multilateral interaction within the group of new leaders, and with the assessment of the potential for their influence on the outside world.

The *third part* of this work presents our analysis of Russia's geostrategic interests and relations with the nations and regions along the perimeter of its western, northern, southern, and eastern borders: "New Eastern Europe," the Arctic, and the countries stretching from the Black Sea to Central Asia, respectively.

The objective need for studying the spatial factor is dictated by the need for the new subregions along Russia's borders to be drawn more closely into the orbit of the nation's policy, so that Russia can become a center of power and a policy of strengthening ties with bordering nations and world centers of power can be developed on "common neighborhood" principles.

Russia's strategic interests in the "New Eastern Europe" zone are examined in the context of ensuring international political and economic stability at all levels of this emerging region. A minimum sufficient condition for such stability is a vision common to all nations of the region of its strategic profile and lines of evolution.

Our devoting a separate section to the Arctic was dictated by its resource potential, the expansion of scientific research and economic activity, and the growing disputes over its status (division vs. internationalization). The expansion of international activity in the Arctic will inevitably lead to more general questions of drawing up charters and treaties, and of creating institutions and mechanisms for cooperation between regional and nonregional nations over its territory.

For the South, we analyze the real and probable threats, challenges, and risks emerging there for Russia. A set of measures for neutralizing them and conducting a more effective foreign policy

is proposed. Our study of the Central Asia zone is conducted along three lines: from the standpoint of the evolution of individual nations' foreign policy; with regard to Russia's relations with them (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan); and in the context of multilateral diplomacy (with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, EurAsEC, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, etc.) while maintaining Russia's leading role in the region. Emphasis is placed on regional security and concrete proposals for lowering the level of threats and challenges.

A special place in our study of the emerging polycentric world order is given to Africa, now one of the world community's most problem-ridden regions. On the one hand, it is a continent with a population of one billion, a considerable share of the planet's mineral and energy resources, and (relative to the world averages) high rates of population growth and labor resource migration. On the other hand, the most dramatic contradictions associated with backwardness, poverty, and low levels of socioeconomic system development and socium organization as a whole are concentrated there.

The breadth of the problems' scope and the interdisciplinary nature of our research demanded that a large number and wide variety of experts be involved in composing this work. Scholars from the Russian Academy of Sciences' Branch of Global Problems and International Relations (the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies, the Institute of Europe, the Institute for Latin American Studies, and the Institute for African Studies) were the main contributors. Social scientists from a number of other Academy branches (e.g., the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of Economics), and from the RF Foreign Ministry's Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), also took part in our research.

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