

Russia

Irvin Studin
Editor

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For Allochka
Аллочке

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Russia is the world's most complex country. Its fate, as it returns to the centre of international affairs and struggles with a vexing multiplicity of domestic challenges, will, in many ways, be that of the entire world in the 21st century. With the largest territory of any country, 14 different land borders and several more maritime borders, 85 regions and huge ethnic mixity, it must be said that the only appropriate posture to be assumed in studying, analysing, or making determinations about Russia – past, present and future – is one of deep humility.

Humility, therefore, is the posture I assumed in preparing this book, which I hope will be unique and important in its time. The book is the first, to my knowledge, this century, in English or Russian or any other language, to assemble the leading specialists of Russia (and Russia only) in virtually *all* the public policy fields of the country, from foreign policy to education, health care, agriculture and, among multiple other areas, macro- and microeconomic policy, sport, culture and criminal justice. The book has three key premises:

1. A country as big and complicated as Russia must be understood across its system of strategy, policy and administration, from the *inside out* (from the bowels outward, as it were), rather than through a select, partial or episodic audit of a small sample of its political or social life.
2. Language and mentality matter enormously – perhaps even exceptionally – to understanding Russia's realities and prospects. Without these, one cannot penetrate beyond a surface-level apprehension of

the country. There is, in other words, no credible “outsider’s view”. As such, all the specialists in the book were, without exception, asked to write the first draft of their chapters in Russian (in all cases, their preference) – and in the local mentality, as it were – so as to maximise facility of expression and directness of message. I did all the translations subsequently (in all cases, highly stylised translations), with considerable editing and iterating with each writer throughout and afterward, in English and Russian.

3. The correct approach to seriously analysing both countries and international issues is not to impress those who know less, but rather to move those who know most. As such, all the chapters across the three parts of the book are pitched at a standard appropriate to present and future Russian policy leaders. And, paradoxically, all the practical policy recommendations in the book, while read in English around the world (my sincere goal), aim to have direct impact on real Russian policy-making over the next decade or two. This was my objective in pushing the writers to expand their thinking and imagination beyond the past and present, and to project into Russian (and global) futures, according to their various areas of expertise. God knows that Russia will be looking long and hard at such policy recommendations in the coming years, as there is much work to be done in that country.

I should stress that, in my view, the thinkers and experts gathered in the book are not only leaders in their fields in Russia, but excel many of their opposite numbers in other countries in their creativity, curiosity, porousness, depth of knowledge and breadth of intellectual culture. The only intricacy is that the majority of them, Russian language (and mentality) oblige, and perhaps post-Soviet cultural and institutional inertia also, are not well known outside of Russia and some of the former Soviet space. We try to overcome this major problem by providing a platform, through this book, to some of the world’s most interesting thinkers to tell us about the past, present and future of various parts of this mammoth country called Russia.

I came to my professorship in Moscow fairly serendipitously, but discovered among colleagues in the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration some of the most eclectic and energetic people with whom I have worked in any academic, research or policy institution in my years of working around the world. For my

warm reception and for countless wonderful intellectual exchanges, I am particularly indebted to Vladimir Mau and Sergey Zuev, but also wish to mention Irina Ronzhina, Alexey Verbetsky, Robin Lewis, Evgeny Mironov, Alexander Abashkin, Eugenia Groushko, Natalia Abramova, Tatyana Batueva, Vasily Zharkov, Sergey Bepalov, Viatcheslav Maratcha, Timur Atnashev, Alexander Balobanov, Nikolai Grintser, Andrei Kolesnikov, Dmitry Uzlaner and Mikhail Dmitriev.

This book is curated under the venerable aegis of Palgrave Macmillan and, insofar as possible, in the style of *Global Brief* magazine, which I have headed for nearly a decade. It is non-dogmatic, deeply analytical, ambitious in the scale of its coverage, and very practical and forward-looking in its aim – to explain Russia, and to make real strategic, policy and administrative prescriptions for its future. I met with all the writers in this book in person more than once, breaking bread in Moscow (where doubtless some 90 per cent of Russia’s top specialists, in any field, reside), St. Petersburg and also Nizhny Novgorod, with countless phone, Skype and email conversations besides. The exchanges were always colourful.

The book is divided into three sections – strategy, policy and administration – corresponding to the subtitle of the book. I recommend to readers a serial reading of the sections and their constituent chapters, but am fully aware that different people will sooner gravitate to some of the more specialised topical chapters than others. Part I on strategy provides a macropicture of the goals, ideology (or philosophy), formal and implicit structures, and broad operational orbit of the Russian state as it looks ahead in this new century. Part II does a sweep of nearly all the spheres of Russian public policy, from the foreign to the economic, social, environmental and other. Part III treats Russian public administration and institutional structures, including the public service, the courts, regional administration, and even state corporations and companies. I myself have penned the introductory chapter, entitled “Ten Theses on Russia in the 21st Century”. Of course, since the Russians are far from bereft of humour, they may well retort: “Only ten? Why such limits?”

Even if I fancy that this book is nearly total in its comprehensiveness, I grant that, in a different world and perhaps in different times, more could have been said about three areas of Russia policy and administrative life in particular – first, Russia’s intelligence structures and policies (partly captured in the chapters on foreign policy, national security and also criminal justice); second, Russian water policy (only partly captured in the chapter on environmental policy); and third, to be sure, the organ-

isation and functioning of the Presidential Administration (the president's ministry or, in Western parlance, cabinet office or *Kanzleramt*) proper. A chapter on pension policy was excised for reasons of economy. Perhaps I can treat all these important areas in a future edition of this book. More direct commentary on the sui generis theme of the "Russian mentality" would also have been ideal (even if it is partly captured in the chapter on Russian political ideology), as this mentality is poorly appreciated outside of the former Soviet space, and yet is, as mentioned, exceedingly influential in shaping Russian institutions and decision-making. Having said this, as some of my colleagues argued, the Russian mentality would have commanded not a chapter, but indeed an entire second book.

Let me express my especial gratitude to my lead research assistant on this book, Svetlana Inkina, whose professionalism and energy were critical to the completion of the first third of the manuscript. Sincere editorial thanks also go to Jaelyn Volkhammer and Zach Paikin, respectively Senior and Juniors Editors of *Global Brief* magazine, as well as to Uran Bolush and Ivan Katsevman (the latter for fact-checking). Fred Lazar, Daniel Friedrich, Leonid Kosals and Seva Gunitsky were extremely generous in offering additional sets of eyes to a few of the more technical chapters. Jemima Warren and Beth Farrow, editors at Palgrave-Macmillan in London, were a delight to work with from day one.

This book is dedicated to my wife, life partner and love, Alla (Allochka), who never ceased to hold the fort, with characteristic charisma and good humour, even when our beautiful gremlins Noah, Gabriella and Isaiah were wondering why Papa was spending so many hours labouring over a book that interested them not at all.

Still, I tell my children as I do my students, friends and colleagues the world over: as goes Russia, so goes the fate of the international order, and indeed that of humanity more generally. The world has barely recovered from the October Revolution of a century ago, and some Russian analysts, like Fyodor Lukyanov in this very book, argue that the present Ukrainian crisis betrays the final death pang – delayed by some two and a half decades – of the Soviet Union. And yet, since the fall of the Soviet Union, there has been a steep secular decline in the number of Russia experts around the world, and perhaps especially in the English-speaking world. Unfortunately (if not distressingly), this decline in expertise outside Russia has not been compensated by increased penetration by policy experts within Russia into discourses about Russia outside the borders of the former Soviet space. Indeed, in my work in Russia and across the

former Soviet space – from Ukraine to Azerbaijan, from Moldova to Kyrgyzstan, and from Latvia to Armenia – over the last five years, and in lecturing on Russia and the unique post-Soviet theatre around the world – from Mexico to India – I have found the degree of general intellectual and policy fascination with Russia to be directly proportional to a general naïveté on the topic. This naïveté would be a curious thing were it not so consequential for the management of international politics in our time – a fact that has given me considerable pause as I and colleagues have, through the Institute for 21st Century Questions (21CQ), travelled the capitals of the world, in a Track 1.5 capacity, to try to translate post-Soviet realities into terms that might be comprehensible to decision-makers who have but fleeting or highly impressionistic exposure to Russia, its composition, and its particular pressures and imperatives.

This book, then, is inspired by my determination that the knowledge gap in respect of Russia – outside of Russia, above all, but even among Russians, cultured and less cultured alike – is unacceptably conspicuous. I hope the book plays some small part in filling this gap for readers the world over.

Irvin Studin
Moscow, Toronto, Montreal, Whitehorse and Buenos Aires

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