

Conclusion

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In the end, these chapters on Russia's potential futures have illuminated a range of possible paths for the country's future evolution and its relationship with the West and the rest of the world. Some authors, such as Serfaty, Lindley-French, Lough, and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, have stressed the significance of Russia's interaction with other major powers, others, such as Terry, de Wijk, Moorhouse, von Eggert, Gvineria, Kutelia, and Šliwa, have underscored the diverging paths of the Russian idea, while others still, including Krutikhin, Veebel, Ploom, Šrāders, Allik, and Harding, have commented on Russia's extent weaknesses. It is our hope that the discussions and debates in this volume will aid and steer academic and policy-making discussions on Russia in the years ahead.

In each of these prognoses, it is clear that Russia will continue to be a source of insecurity for its neighbours. This is a result of Russia's ongoing aggression and interventionist foreign policy, as well as the isolation it has imposed on itself through its decision to invade peaceful neighbours. The tensions between Russia and these countries are unlikely to dissipate in the near future, even after the war concludes, and there is no returning to the peace and stability of before the war, as the wounds it has inflicted will take generations to heal before the memories of the Second World War and the sequel Cold War had faded into oblivion. It is our hope that the discussions and debates in this volume will aid and steer academic and policy-making discussions on Russia in the years ahead.

As Russia continues to wither and becomes ever more isolated from the global community, the country becomes even more unpredictable than it has been in the past. This is because a declining Russia is likely to be more tumultuous and less able to control internal actors with their own agendas separate from that of the Kremlin. In addition, a declining Russia may become more aggressive and assertive in its foreign policy than under Putin as it descends down the path of imperial decline. This makes it even more challenging for other nations to foresee Russia's actions and respond accordingly, adding to the overall uncertainty and unpredictability of the situation. In this tumultuous and uncertain time, Russia is a force that is increasingly difficult to predict and understand. It is like a rabid bear, now unleashed and raging, its actions unpredictable and dangerous.

Even as Russia confronts a host of self-imposed challenges and obstacles, it would be unwise to underestimate the country's resilience, even in an authoritarian context. Russia has demonstrated again and again that it is capable of bouncing back from even the most chaotic situations. For example, the country managed to recover from the upheaval of a devastating civil war and the massive destruction of World War II, each time resulting in authoritarian and bureaucratic centralisation. In the 1990s, Russia was confronted with the collapse of its economy and political system, but it was able to overcome these challenges and emerge as a major global power, following many of the same authoritarian patterns of the past. This history of resilience suggests that Russia may be able to rebound from its current issues and continue to play a significant and disruptive role on the world stage. The challenge for the West especially is to predict and cope with the refined Russia that indulges into its past, pivots away from Europe, the West and over peaceful co-habitation with the others Kremlin chooses the rule where the strong eats the weak.

Despite the uncertainty and haziness of potential futures, transatlantic unity remains the only variable that Western policy makers can influence in regards to Russian actions. As such, it is our only credible deterrent against further aggression. When the United States and Europe speak as one and present a united front, Russia is less likely to engage in belligerent actions that would be detrimental to our shared interests. This is because Russia is more likely to be deterred by a strong, cohesive, and clear response than by individual, fragmented, and sometimes appeasing actions.

Furthermore, transatlantic unity sends a powerful signal to Russia that its actions will not be tolerated and that there will be consequences for any aggression. This message serves to protect and defend against Russian aggression. In contrast, a lack of unity and consensus among the Western nations only serves to embolden Russia and encourage it to pursue its own interests without regard for the interests of others, the bloody results of which have been seen in the cities and villages of Ukraine.

And to that point, no matter the situation, this transatlantic future should be shared with Ukraine as well. In the post-war paradigm, the United States, Europe, and Ukraine must stand together as a bulwark, each contributing their unique strengths and capabilities to present a united front against any future Russian aggression. Only by standing together can we hope to deter further belligerence and ensure the security and stability of the region. Like a feral and panicking animal at the times of the utmost weakness, Russia might opt for a lookout for another prey to compensate for its domestic fears.