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Title	<i>Russia is Back: Jenifer Hart Memorial Lecture</i>
Description	Professor MacFarlane gives a talk about modern Russia; from the fall of the Berlin Wall to today; including the rise of Vladimir Putin, the conflict between Chechnya, alleged human rights violations and Russia's relationship with the rest of the world
Presenter(s)	Neil MacFarlane
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Prof. MacFarlane: It's a pleasure to be here, and an honour to have been asked to deliver this lecture. My topic is 'Russia is Back'.

As Tim noted, it's a good moment for a topic of this type. During the years after the Cold War we got used to discounting Russia as we focussed on the large issues of the post-Cold War era – globalisation, American unipolarity, European integration and enlargement, the Balkans conflicts, how to deal with failed states, and on and on and on.

In most of these Russia seemed marginal, if relevant at all. We grew accustomed to taking decisions without Russian participation and sometimes against Russia's express wishes. We could do that because Russia was weak, disorganised and seemingly dependent on us.

A quick look at issues on the table. . . Recently in contrast, not least in the United Nations General Assembly this week, suggests that Russia is very much back on the agenda. At the beginning of this year President Obama promised to reset America's relationship with Russia. The major US initiative at the moment is a renewal and strengthening of the strategic arms reduction treaty with the Russian Federation, as a basis for a larger initiative on nuclear non proliferation with Iran, not least in the back of our minds.

And this is joined by significant efforts to increase pressure on Iran. Russian support is essential in that task. And elsewhere the Secretary General of NATO a week and a half ago called for a reset of NATO's relations with Russia. Resetting is obviously in vogue.

Europe as a whole may be on the brink of embarking on a major consideration of the region's security architecture in order to attempt to address Russia's concerns over unequal treatment.

Clearly something has changed here. Russia is back, front and centre on the western policy agenda my question are how did we get here? What does it mean? What should we do about it?

I'd like to begin with a few remarks about why I think this is an important subject. I'll follow that with a number of historical observations and then briefly discuss Russia's changing position in the 1990s. I then want to look at the re-emergence of Russia as a major power, during this decade. And that involves comment not just on the physical recovery of Russian power, but also on the evolution Russia's understanding of international relations which differs from that of liberals like me considerably. And I'll conclude with an examination of the significance of Russia's role in European and global politics.

I hope you'll permit me before digging into this, a little bit of truth in advertising. I began my university studies as a student of Russian Language and Literature. I then moved on to PPE and then to International Relations. In that area my specialisation as Tim said was Soviet Foreign and Security Policy. The early stage of my career was the last stage of the Cold War. And the Soviet Union collapsed creating a real mid-career crisis. It's not fun for an academic to have his or her objective study simply evaporate. (Laughter).

And so I worked on the Caucasus for a while in central Asia. But I have never escaped a vague nostalgia for the good old days of my youth, great power competition, deterrence, intervention, the nuclear balance, ideological competition and missile defence. And now, perhaps here we go again. So it's back to the future.

Getting more serious, why should we care about Russia's re-emergence? This can I think be answered in at least two ways. One is with regard to Europe. Years ago I participated in a television panel, something I do infrequently I have to say, this panel included a very distinguished German journalist and specialist in Foreign Affairs and he argued that Europe's major security problem today is what it has been for the past 300 years. Russia is too big for Europe.

Now that's arguably a curious thing for a German to say. But there you are. What he was getting at was that Russia has raised significant issues for Europe ever since it emerged on to the scene in the 17th century. One issue here is simply geography. We are, I think reasonably convinced that everything west of Russia is in Europe. And we are also convinced that everything southeast of Europe, southeast of Russia, excuse me, is not in Europe. But, Russia is between or maybe it's both in this context. In other words Russia embodies Europe's boundary problem.

This is true also culturally. Russia did not share many of the formative experiences of modern Europe – the Renaissance, the Enlightenment. And many in Russia historically have found elements of that cultural heritage to be deeply threatening to cultural attributes that Russians, or at least many Russians value.

Russian intellectual history for the past couple of hundred years has been enlivened by debates about whether Russia should embrace the west and its values. Or whether it should follow its own course if necessary in opposition to the west, and I think that is true of Russian debates today and over the past ten years as well.

In addition to geographical and cultural ambiguities and boundary problems, there is the more concrete matter of European security. Russia has been a great powering the European system since the 1700s. Its history as a state has been punctuated by moments of near crisis, near collapse, followed by moments of reconsolidation and assertion.

In 1812 for example, Napoleon occupied Moscow's. Three years later the French, Parisian French acquired the word 'bistro' which was the galafication or galasisation I guess of the Russian word 'bistro' meaning quickly, which was what Cossack officers used to shout at French garcon in the cafes of Paris.

[[Ere 0:07:21]] to move fast forward a little bit. In January 1943 German troops had taken Belarus and Ukraine. They were besieging Leningrad and they were sitting in most of Stalingrad. They destroyed over a third of the USSR's capacity, killed a substantial proportion of the Soviet population and basically destroyed most of the cities in the western part of the Soviet Union.

Two years later Soviet troops took Berlin. Within five years the USSR had constructed a military and political cordon sanitaire from Poland on the Baltic to Bulgaria on the Black Sea.

So Russia has courted disaster many times, often as a result of its quarrels with other European powers. But it seems always to bounce back. Given its size and its distinctiveness and the fact that it does bounce back, the problem of how to integrate Russia into the European security system has been a constant of recent European history. Is Russia a state to be balanced against? Is it a state of which others can cooperate?

The nature of European security as a whole has strongly depended on the ways in which and the extent to which Russia is engaged. In the current period it is hard to see how one could have a stable regional security structure if Russia were left out contesting the settlement, as it is doing now.

Turning to the larger canvass of international relations, and continuing the theme of why the subject might be important, many see the re-emergence of Russia in the past ten years as part of a wider shift in the global distribution of power; a shift away from Europe and North America. In this respect Russia tends to be linked together with other rising states, Brazil, India, China in a grouping that has come to be known courtesy of Saloman Brothers as 'The Bricks' – Brazil, Russia, India, China.

As a group these states share to varying degrees an historical resentment over the global dominance by the Euro-Atlantic region. And they have real doubts about many of the liberal values promoted by western democracies in the international system as a whole.

As power shifts away from the Euro-Atlantic core, we may risk returning to a world of multi polar competition. At the very least, this shift raises important questions about how we adjust the institutional architecture of international relations, to take account of the new reality of power. I noticed that two days ago the G7 disappeared all of a sudden to be replaced finally, by the G20. That's an example.

In general I think it makes sense to try to keep these new powers inside cooperative arrangements. But, the question for us is what concessions do we make in order to do so?

Finally, and most obviously the Russian Federation possesses the largest number of nuclear explosive charges and strategic launching systems of any country in the world. Unless we wish to return to a world of deterrence through mutual assured destruction, that wonderful M.A.D., it makes sense to build and sustain constructive and respectful relations with Russia.

On the meat of the topic – I don't want to go in to detail on Russia's 1990s decline. A few illustrations suffice. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia's economy collapsed with it. The data of course are a bit fluffy from the 1990s but there was a drop in official GDP of around 50% in Russia. I think we are dropping by about 4% as a result of the recessions. It gives you a sense of dimension and the difference.

Unemployment grew massively; inflation was substantial. The value of the currency largely evaporated taking with it the accumulated savings of a large portion of the population. In 1989 the Russian economy was three times the size of that of China. By the end of the 1990s Russia's official economy was roughly the size of Denmark's.

On the political side the central state lost control of its country. The executive and the legislature locked themselves into a death struggle. And that culminated in 1993 with the Russian army shelling Russia's own parliament in Moscow.

The regions by and large left to their own devices, generated their own rules and laws. They restrained into regional trade inside the Federation in order to be able to provide for their own populations. In other words the national economy was busting up into little bits.

Regional leaders bought security from local military commanders since these commanders were not getting support for their units from the central budget.

Law enforcement basically harvested money from the population because the state was unwilling, well unable I should say to pay a living wage to police and the judiciary.

In the meantime a botched privatisation at the beginning of the 1990s opened the way to the accumulation of huge wealth by entrepreneurs who understood the opportunists and who were willing to do what was necessary to take the jewels of the former Soviet economy. Their rapidly accumulating fortunes allowed them to exercise a disproportionate influence on the political process, typified by their buying of Boris Yeltsin's re-election in 1996.

There were predictable social consequences from this catastrophe. Demographic decline had begun in the late Soviet era. It accelerated during this chaotic transition as women, wisely, were reluctant to bring children into such a world, and as men unhappily drank themselves into a substantial reduction in average male life expectancy. Russia's population in 1989 or 1990 was 147 million people. It is now courting 140 million and shrinking between 600 and 8,000 people a year. So you have a real demographic crisis on the scene.

Turning to the foreign dimensions of the collapse, Russia first lost its eastern European allies, then it lost the other republics of the USSR. It attempted to resist NATO expansion to no avail in the mid 1990s, and again in the first half of this decade. The second wave of NATO's expansion brought NATO on to Russia's borders in central Europe.

When Russia opposed NATO's actions in Bosnia in 1995 it was essentially ignored when NATO invaded, or sorry, attacked Serbia in 1999 as part of the Kosovo affair, Russia again objected to no avail. By the mid 1990s western states had moved to robust support of the sovereignty of the non Russian former Soviet Republics. Again, ignoring Russian preferences, Russia wanted to maintain a sphere of privileged interest in the region.

Well, enough said. Their mess left many people in my business wondering by the mid 1990s whether the collapse of the USSR would be followed by the disappearance of Russia itself.

Recovery began with the arrival of Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister in 1999 and as President in 2000. He set out quite deliberately to rebuild the Russian state and to restore it to a position of power in international relations. His project had three elements: economic revival; political consolidation; and the restoration of Russia's national pride.

The economy picked up reasonably quickly, fuelled, no pun intended, by a rapid rise in the price of oil and gas. Increasing foreign exchange revenues allowed Russia to stabilise its currency and to pay off its external debt. By now, they have accumulated the fourth largest foreign exchange reserves in the world. Growth during this decade has averaged 7 to 10% annually.

And turning to politics, benefitting from close relations with the security services, he learned, Putin learned his German while working for the KGB in the former German Democratic Republic. He fairly quickly re-imposed central control over Russia's regions and tamed the Russian parliament. He also asserted the state's authority over the country's financial oligarchs. The deal for them was pretty simple. They supported him or they got hurt. Among those who got hurt, the lucky ones left the country and they're now mostly living in Chelsea.

And the less lucky ended up in jail. He is also effectively silenced opposition parties and more or less the media, the free media anyway. The official media are hardly silent in Putin's [[?? 0:17:23]] Russia.

Finally he has reinvested in the country's military. And the effects are evident in Russia's successful second war in Chechnya which is now effectively over. And also in Russia's attack on Georgia in August of 2008.

And turning to the third element of Putin's rebuilding project, national identity, he has restored considerably Russia's sense of national pride and self respect. There's nothing like bashing the Georgians to make people in Moscow feel good I guess.

So, in short the good news is that the Russian state has been largely restored. The bad news is it's not the one we wanted. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR and communism along with it, we thought we were entering a period of peaceful and cooperative relations among liberal democratic or democratising European states.

The political reform of the Russian Federation is hardly democratic and more likely semi-authoritarian. Power is concentrated in the executive, or more strongly in the hands of a small group of people around Mr. Putin. Organised opposition in Russia is next to impossible. The media, as I mentioned have been substantially restricted. Its practitioners intimidated by the

frequent unexplained murders of prominent liberal journalists, [Poucher, De'couarget 0:19:03] I guess.

The human rights of the population are frequently violated. Organisations promoting them are harassed: I noticed that the President of the Chechen Republic within the Russian Federation said yesterday that "Russia's principle remaining human rights organisation was an instrument of the west devoted to the destruction of Russia." It gives you a flavour for the conversation.

The role of law is notional. And the commanding heights of the economy as we used to call them have fallen increasingly under state control, either through parastatal corporations or through the dependence of entrepreneurs on the good will of the political leadership. You do it our way or you take the highway.

The national identity that has re-emerged in Russia is nationalist, chauvinistic and competitive. This leads me to a few comments on current Russian perspectives on international relations in Europe and in general.

First, it is evident that the Russian elite was not amused by its treatment during the 1990s and in the early years of this decade. In their view the west had taken advantage of Russia's post-Cold War weakness to make unilateral gains at Russia's expense, in central Europe, in the Baltics and in the Balkans. One commonly sighted grievance is NATO enlargement, including into the territory of the former Soviet Union, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

We might see NATO as a cooperative mechanism for enhancing security in the European region and beyond, as in Afghanistan. Russians in contrast tend to see it as a Cold War artefact that should have been dismantled with the end of the Cold War. But which was retained as a means of making further gains at Russia's expense.

We might see our actions in the Balkans in the 1990s as an effort to protect civilians in the face of massive, often ethnically motivated violations of their rights. Russians in contrast see our efforts as part of a effectively, a conspiracy to exclude Russia from a significant role in a sub region, south Eastern Europe where Russia has strong interests of its own and a long tradition of engagement. As my good friend Dmitri Trenin, hardly a hardliner, put it "By 1999 when NATO wrestled Kosovo from the hands of Belgrade, NATO had already enlarged traditions with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland."

Russia, for the first time in 250 years had ceased to be a power in Europe. Whatever the west's intentions were, the sequence was perceived in Moscow as a deliberate effort to reduce Russia's power and influence in the European system.

Turning to NATO enlargement, we might see NATO's consideration of extending membership further into the former Soviet's space as a means of fostering security and democracy in that region. Russia sees it as a direct threat placing the world's most powerful military coalition next to Russia's points of greatest strategic vulnerability, in other words as a hostile act.

Underlying the specific concerns is a more general Russian perspective on international politics that differs profoundly from conventional views in Western Europe. We tend to; well we like to think anyway in the west that the region has evolved beyond its Westphalian phase of great power competition towards a security community. In which power is no longer measured in terms of military capacity; the use of force is obsolete and relations among states are handled cooperatively, for mutual gain.

For Russians, relations among states in a pluralistic international system remain competitive. Security is achieved unilaterally. Military power matters. The Control of territory matters. Force in pursuit of state interest remains an option of policy.

These perspectives are amply evident in the Russian understanding of their surrounding region, the former Soviet Union. Since 1991, i.e. since the beginnings of the Russian Federation as an independent state after the Soviet collapse, Russia has claimed special rights and responsibilities

in the rest of the Soviet, former Soviet Union. Essentially they have claimed a more or less exclusive sphere of influence there.

Now, in the 1990s Russia lacked the capacity to act effectively on that aspiration. Now, Russia does have substantial capacity to structure its immediate surroundings. After NATO's last draw into enlargement the focus moved more clearly on NATO's part to the remaining non Russian post-Soviet states. In 2007 the United States, or more appropriately President Bush proposed that Georgia and Ukraine be put on the path to NATO membership.

Russia responded immediately and unequivocally stating that the entry of those two countries, Georgia and Ukraine into the alliance was unacceptable as it would pose a security threat to the Russian Federation.

In April 2008, nonetheless NATO declared its intention that at a future date the two states would join the alliance. In August of the same year, Russia provoked a war with Georgia and then invaded, and substantially dismembered my second favourite country, causing the worst crisis in Russia's relations with western states since the end of the Cold War.

In short, they drew a line in the sand; they figured we were crossing that line and so they acted to enforce the line. This is hardly sort of post-modern, post-military, post-competitive Europe.

It's worth noting by the way that this was the first interstate war in Europe since world war two. And arguably a clear violation of evolving international norms prohibiting aggression - see the United Nations Charter among other documents.

It was followed by Russian recognition of those parts of Georgia that it occupied, as independent states. And that was a clear violation of norms and law concerning territorial integrity.

In the wider international arena, Russia became a significant stumbling block on a number of key policy concerns of western states. Not least Iran, but also such areas as the possibility of effective multilateral action to address challenges such as those in Darfur, in Sudan.

In response to the now cancelled American project to install ballistic missile defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, Russia threatened to install short-range missile systems in Kaliningrad, and exclave of the Russian Federation surrounded by EU states.

Russia has manipulated energy exports for political effect in Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic republics with significant downstream effects for the European Union itself, since we're at the end of the pipe. And so when the oil stops flowing it stops flowing here as well as in, well not here but in central Europe as well as in Ukraine.

Russia has effectively challenged the legitimacy of the existing European security architecture and is pressing for fundamental reform. The reform that they appear to prefer is towards a system in which it has the authority essentially to manage its part of Europe as it sees fit.

The Russian government has actively sought to deepen cooperation with, more broadly with emerging powers as a counterbalance to the west. And, the Russian Federation has consistently stated its preference for a return to a world of balancing between multiple centres of power.

In short, and moving to a conclusion slowly, after a 15 year hiatus we are once again faced with that perennial question. How to engage Russia effectively in European and international affairs?

Now you might say that this is all a little bit exaggerated. Vice President Biden said a couple of months ago in respect of Russia and Russia's re-emergence, "They have a shrinking population base; they have a withering economy; they have a banking sector and structure that is not likely to be able to withstand the next 15 years. They're in a situation where the world is changing before them and they're clinging on to something in the past that is not sustainable." So, apparently for Mr. Biden we shouldn't worry too much.

Now, the perspective I just presented of Mr. Biden may be a bit of an overstatement. But, in his defence it bears remembering that Russia, despite all of its economic growth currently makes up

about 2.5% of global gross domestic product. Its economy is massively unbalanced in its reliance on natural resource production and export. Efforts at economic diversification to create a balanced multifaceted economy have not had as much effect as they might have liked.

The Russian under-investment in energy production raises questions about its capacity to maintain current levels of exports in the long-term. And, on demography it stands to lose another 10 to 15 million people in the next 20 to 30 years, unless it finds a way to reverse its demographic decline. Finally it remains vastly inferior to the United States or to the EU in most attributes of state power.

Nonetheless I think it would be unwise to dismiss the significance of Russia's qualified re-emergence. First of all, the re-emergence isn't over yet. Given projections of energy prices in global and regional markets, Russia will continue to grow fairly quickly for some time to come.

As demonstrated in Georgia, it is already capable of real damage in its neighbourhood. Its growing assertiveness is placing strain on European institutions - the EU and NATO, as members differ widely on the nature and extent of the problem that Russia poses.

And at the global level Russian cooperation continues to be necessary across a wide array of challenges. These range from the very specific - non-proliferations, strategic arms control, Iran, Afghanistan for that matter, to the very general - climate change, energy, security or the reform of international financial architecture.

So, what to do? This is always the hard part for me. I often say that it is the role of academics to study problems not to give answers. But I think that's probably an easy way out so I'll take the tougher road.

Now as my colleagues in the department know I am no diplomat, so you should take anything I have to say about diplomacy with reservations. But it strikes me that several directions in our approach to Russia are desirable.

First is restraint. If part of the problem is the Russians sense that we have for the last 20 years taken advantage of their weakness, then we should stop doing things that strengthen that impression. In this context by the way, I think that further NATO enlargement should come off the table for the foreseeable future. I think it would be a gross error to attempt to include either Georgia or Ukraine in particular in NATO.

A related point is that we may need to revise our expectations, which are essentially derived from liberal ideology. Russia is recreating a state that differs in many ways from what we might like to see. But, there's little we can do about that, at least in the short and medium term.

Democratisation and economic liberalisation are also off the table in Russia for the time being. And we should not hold our relationship with Russia hostage to Russian departures from our values.

A second point is improvement in consultation. If part of the problem we've encountered is a sense, a Russian sense of grievance at having been ignored on major European and international issues. In other words if part of the problem is about a recognition of status, then we should do as the Americans are in fact doing, which is to seek to treat Russia as a major player who deserves to be consulted, as an equal on major issues affecting the international system.

In this context, I'm going back to this chestnut about redesigning European security architecture that the Russians seem captivated with. I would favour a multilateral conversation about that. And about the place of NATO, the EU and the OSCE, and for that matter Russia's own sub regional multilateral structures - the CIS, the place of all of those acronyms in a renewed architecture.

I have thought a lot about that proto negotiation and I have to say there are many, many hills to climb along the way to agreement. But I think we need to recognise that a security system from which a major player feels excluded, or which it deems illegitimate is a problem.

A third and related point is the need to try to deepen cooperation with the Russian Federation. Not easy. However, although there are many conflicts of perspective and interest between Russia and the west, there are many areas of shared interest as well.

Russia fears a Taliban victory in Afghanistan possibly even more than we do. Russia has little interest in an Iran armed with nuclear weapons. Russia, like us will be a victim of climate change. Russia's economy, like ours was deeply damaged by a financial crisis that arose, not least from the weakness of international regulatory structures.

Our interest in energy, stability of energy's supply is matched by their interest in stability of demand for energy, since that is their major export. And so on and so forth.

In short we should actively and inclusively explore areas where cooperation is possible. But we also have to accept that there will be areas of difference. But the fact that areas of difference exist in relations between states is no excuse for not exploring areas of cooperation.

To conclude it seems to me that the past 20 years illustrate the perils of kicking people when they're down, or as to quote Vice President Biden again, "It's never smart to embarrass an individual or a country when they're dealing with a significant loss of face."

Russia is back; it is deeply unhappy with the status quo. It's not going away and it can't be ignored. The risk of failing to address the challenge, I'm sorry to say is an eventual return to a bifurcated and competitive European system. Having grown up in that system and despite my occasional nostalgia, I don't think it's a place we should wittingly or unwittingly return to.

Thank you very much.

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