

## Discussion on 'Russia in the 21st Century: Where From, Where To'

September, 2016

### Welcome

I'd like to personally welcome each of you in this Discussion. It's an exciting time for all of us as we continue to grow and adapt, remaining always adaptable, motivated and responsive to new ideas. We're meeting during a time of large nation-wide and global change. The field of law, policy and strategy research is an exciting area in which we work. We will continue to meet and bring intellectual people to come together in forums like this, to ensure IIFH remains at the top to strengthen the humanity.

The Internal discussion on topic 'Russia in the 21st Century: where from, where to'. The discussion was chaired by Amb PS Raghavan and moderated by Amb PP Shukla, both India's former Ambassadors to Russia. While the focus was Russia's foreign policy strategy under President Putin, especially its relations with major world powers including Europe, America and China, among others, the interaction also substantially delved into the perceived drift taking place in Russia-India relations over the last few years.

In his opening remarks, General NC Viji, while underscoring Russia as a key strategic partner of India, underlined that the country will remain the mainstay of India's military power for a foreseeable future, as over sixty percent of the Indian military equipments are of the Russian origin. He further stated that even with a weakened economy, Russia continues to be a formidable global military power.

Amb PS Raghavan, whose last diplomatic assignment was India's Ambassador to Russia till his retirement this year, presented a most comprehensive and insightful analysis of how President Putin's muscular approach has been pushing the boundaries of Russia's foreign policy in recent years. He analysed the current drivers of Russia's security and foreign policy strategy, a strategy which has worked well both internally and externally so far. Russia, however, the Ambassador said, has been a



victim of western propaganda and misinformation to increasingly question Moscow's relevance to the world's affairs. While crediting President Putin for successfully pulling Russia out of economic quicksand and placing it firmly on the world stage, the Ambassador asserted that contrary to what his western detractors would concede, President Putin has proved Russia's relevance to the global affairs, buttressing his argument with Moscow's key role in fructifying Iran's nuclear deal, its relentless fight against the Daesh in the Middle East and its tough stance against the NATO in Ukraine, among others. Besides dwelling on Russia's frayed relations with the west, the Ambassador also touched on Russia's economic recovery and the internal political dynamics in Russia, both contributing substantially to Moscow's current approach towards the west.



Insofar as the interactive session is concerned, it dwelt more on the present state of Russia-India relations, with analysts seized of the present drift which has set in. There was broader consensus among the experts that the drift has resulted largely from the Russian perception of India-US relations. Experts also agreed that India needs to have a calibrated policy approach towards both the United States and Russia while keeping her strategic autonomy intact.

With General Vij moderating the session, Mr. Vijai Kapoor, Amb TCA Rangachari, Amb Bhaswati Mukherjee, Ms. Nirmala Joshi, among others, participated in the discussions.