

# Letter From the Editors: Oct. 24-30, 2016

## Is the End of the Globalization Era in Sight?

The past two weeks have been marked by a series of meetings about practical policy matters and their broader philosophical implications. On Friday, the [foreign ministers of Russia, Iran and Syria met in Moscow](#) to discuss the ongoing conflict in Syria. The ministers reiterated the need for a political solution to the conflict and emphasized that the US and its coalition allies must convince the moderate opposition to dissociate itself from terrorists like Jabhat al-Nusra. They also gave the US heat for preventing further intra-Syrian peace talks in Geneva.

It is Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko who has been catching heat at home since [last week's meeting of the "Normandy Four"](#) leaders in Berlin. Patience is wearing thin over the Minsk agreements, which a growing number of critics in Ukraine are saying should be abandoned. Poroshenko pushed back, asserting that the agreements are the only path to peace, but he also rejected the notion of giving up the separatist regions in eastern Ukraine. The next chapter in the Ukraine saga will be a road map for the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements that the "Normandy Four" foreign ministers are to have ready by the end of November.

Leading policy experts from around the world met in Sochi this week for the 13th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. This year's topic was about shaping the world's future. Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks at the meeting were both defensive and cautiously optimistic. He issued his usual criticisms of the West for blaming Russia for all that is wrong in the world and using double standards. Commentator [Andrei Akulov](#) offers a laundry list of the accumulated grievances in Russian-US relations, which Putin hopes will improve under a new US president. Putin adopted a particularly strident tone as he rejected the "imaginary, mythical threats" about the Russian "barbarians": "Russia has no intention to attack anyone. That is ridiculous. It is simply preposterous, foolish and unrealistic." Putin repeated what has been his main foreign policy dogma throughout his leadership tenure: Russia wants to see a multipolar world where every country is equally respected and no country can "reshape the world order to suit its own interests," which he intimated the US has been doing ever since the end of the cold war.

[Fyodor Lukyanov](#) writes that the world is growing disillusioned with the universalistic message of globalization. Its promised benefits are failing to materialize, or are doing so in ways that many did not predict, leading to imbalances in the world political system and public sentiment. Lukyanov says that dissatisfaction with the economic and political status quo has turned into "global disorder": the fragmentation of interests and objectives instead of their universalization.

In addition to Ukraine and Syria, another symptom of that "global disorder" is the current US presidential campaign, where outspoken Republican candidate Donald Trump is breaking nearly every political convention, seemingly without losing any political capital. His populist message of drastic, reactionary approaches to hot-button issues like terrorism and immigration appeals to base fears about those issues and taps into the growing strain of disillusionment with globalization's gospel of universalism. Lukyanov suggests that modern institutions founded on ideas of global governance built on consensus have failed to adequately address such fears – at least in the minds of many citizens. And so the task of existing global institutions, Lukyanov argues, is to prevent centrifugal and polarizing forces from creating more division and conflict on national and international levels. But he is not optimistic: "The scale of problems facing the world offers no hope that solutions will be found in the foreseeable future."

Matthew Larson,  
Translator/Copy Editor

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