



Vladimir Putin

*The World
Order: New
Rules or a Game
without Rules*

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Putin talks to Valdai Club in Sochi



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goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066422929

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Putin talks to Valdai Club in Sochi on the theme: "The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules"¹

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PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA VLADIMIR PUTIN:

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, friends, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the XI meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club.

It was mentioned already that the club has new co-organisers this year. They include Russian non-governmental organisations, expert groups and leading universities. The idea was also raised of broadening the discussions to include not just issues related to Russia itself but also global politics and the economy.

I hope that these changes in organisation and content will bolster the club's influence as a leading discussion and expert forum. At the same time, I hope the 'Valdai spirit' will remain - this free and open atmosphere and chance to express all manner of very different and frank opinions.

Let me say in this respect that I will also not let you down and will speak directly and frankly. Some of what I say might seem a bit too harsh, but if we do not speak directly and honestly about what we really think, then there is little point in even meeting in this way. It would be better in that case just to keep to diplomatic get-togethers, where no one says anything of real sense and, recalling the words of one famous diplomat, you realise that diplomats have tongues so as not to speak the truth.

We get together for other reasons. We get together so as to talk frankly with each other. We need to be direct and blunt today not so as to trade barbs, but so as to attempt to get to the bottom of what is actually happening in the world, try to understand why the world is becoming less safe and more unpredictable, and why the risks are increasing everywhere around us.

Today's discussion took place under the theme: New Rules or a Game without Rules. I think that this formula accurately describes the historic turning point we have reached today and the choice we all face. There is nothing new of course in the idea that the world is changing very fast. I know this is something you have spoken about at the discussions today. It is certainly hard not to notice the dramatic transformations in global politics and the economy, public life, and in industry, information and social technologies.

Let me ask you right now to forgive me if I end up repeating what some of the discussion's participants have already said. It's practically impossible to avoid. You have already held detailed discussions, but I will set out my point of view. It will coincide with other participants' views on some points and differ on others.

As we analyse today's situation, let us not forget history's lessons. First of all, changes in the world order - and what we are seeing today are events on this scale - have usually been accompanied by if not global war and conflict, then by chains of intensive local-level conflicts. Second, global politics is above all about economic

leadership, issues of war and peace, and the humanitarian dimension, including human rights.

The world is full of contradictions today. We need to be frank in asking each other if we have a reliable safety net in place. Sadly, there is no guarantee and no certainty that the current system of global and regional security is able to protect us from upheavals. This system has become seriously weakened, fragmented and deformed. The international and regional political, economic, and cultural cooperation organisations are also going through difficult times.

Yes, many of the mechanisms we have for ensuring the world order were created quite a long time ago now, including and above all in the period immediately following World War II. Let me stress that the solidity of the system created back then rested not only on the balance of power and the rights of the victor countries, but on the fact that this system's 'founding fathers' had respect for each other, did not try to put the squeeze on others, but attempted to reach agreements.

The main thing is that this system needs to develop, and despite its various shortcomings, needs to at least be capable of keeping the world's current problems within certain limits and regulating the intensity of the natural competition between countries.

It is my conviction that we could not take this mechanism of checks and balances that we built over the last decades, sometimes with such effort and difficulty, and simply tear it apart without building anything in its place. Otherwise we would be left with no instruments other than brute force.

What we needed to do was to carry out a rational reconstruction and adapt it to the new realities in the system of international relations.

But the United States, having declared itself the winner of the Cold War, saw no need for this. Instead of establishing a new balance of power, essential for maintaining order and stability, they took steps that threw the system into sharp and deep imbalance.

The Cold War ended, but it did not end with the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the impression that the so-called 'victors' in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests. If the existing system of international relations, international law and the checks and balances in place got in the way of these aims, this system was declared worthless, outdated and in need of immediate demolition.

Pardon the analogy, but this is the way nouveaux riches behave when they suddenly end up with a great fortune, in this case, in the shape of world leadership and domination. Instead of managing their wealth wisely, for their own benefit too of course, I think they have committed many follies.

We have entered a period of differing interpretations and deliberate silences in world politics. International law has been forced to retreat over and over by the onslaught of legal nihilism. Objectivity and justice have been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Arbitrary interpretations and biased assessments have replaced legal norms. At the