

IGOR YURGENS

Chairman of the Management Board of the Institute of Contemporary Development,
Moscow

I will be bringing three things back from this conference. Firstly, it is exceptionally important for us in Europe and probably in the world to have a French-speaking forum. We are of course speaking English from the rostrum at the moment, but the way that Thierry de Montbrial has conceptualised the forum is very much a French thing. French civilisation and the French language first and foremost manage to conceptualise things that are not as well conceptualised in other languages. One of the punch lines in the first day of the conference was that the French would sometimes say 'Yes. It works in practice, but would it work in theory?' The forums that I have attended in different parts of the world and that have been predominantly English-speaking forums lack something in terms of this conceptualisation and, as a mathematical economist Thierry de Montbrial is very good at formulating ideas that should probably be taken from one forum to another. It is good for *francophonie*, which makes our world more diverse and it is very good for us in Europe to think in this manner.

That takes me to the second issue. Both Thierry and another outstanding world-renowned French thinker and doer, Pascal Lamy, said something very important on the second issue that I will bring back in terms of global governance. In a nutshell, they said that while democracy would probably bring short-termists in governments to an abyss, because they push you to populist democratic solutions, there will be no long-term solution to the problems that we are facing in this world of scarce resources. You therefore have to think further. On the other hand, you cannot rely on autocracy because autocracy has the subjective mistakes of a leader who is getting older and makes mistakes or you have a group of leaders who run the country or region in their own self-interest. Therefore, between these two dimensions of short-termist and long-termist we have to find a solution. Pascal Lamy put it very bluntly when he said that unless a big bang happens, such as a big war or a major disaster or a cyber-attack, we will not start to think in the real long term, resisting populism and the pressure of the electorate.

We therefore need to find a solution for the long-term governance of the world from three things, as I see it. Firstly, we definitely have to rely on democracy and public opinion. This is short term. It is the way that the people will always say how they want those that are governing them to run them. Secondly, there is the knowledge of people who understand the geopolitics and history of where they come from. This is academia and those politicians who are outside the electoral cycle. Thirdly, there are people with the highest intelligence quotient (IQ) who think long term and understand the cosmos and space and where the place of this universe is in a grander environment. Therefore three chambers of our world parliament are absolutely essential and would be a challenge for many years to come.

The third thing that I will bring back home with me is a major preoccupation on what the role of Russia is and where its place is at the moment. We are definitely falling a little – intellectually, politically and militarily. We have 1,000 warheads and are negotiating with the US about whether we should cut this down or retain it. This is our instrument for positioning Russia in the world arena. At the moment this discussion inside Russia, with Russia itself and out to Asia, Europe and Eurasia, is a major thing and is more acute in my lifetime than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union or even earlier.

For 300 years, ever since Peter the Great brought us to Europe, there has been a real fight between Slavophiles and Westerners inside Russia, which has been intellectual, although it has also sometimes been political and even military. At the moment, we have reached the stage where we cannot agree in Russia on whether we have a common denominator in this fight. The elites are split, and there is a serious school of thought amongst Russians that says 'To hell with Europe. It is going down and has gotten weak. We have nothing to gain there and everything to gain in Asia.' I am against this for a simple reason. If you carried out an opinion poll in Russia, 80% of people would say that they are Europeans. That is the first thing. Secondly, we are of European and Judo-Christian origin. Thirdly, if we negotiate with Asia from the position of a limbo between Europe and Asia, we will lose to our greatest neighbour, China, who would consider us as a weakling, and then to greater Asia, which is China plus.



I would therefore argue that Russia is at the crossroads. It is thinking very hard about where it should go and is still hesitant. Russia's policy is personified in the personality of its president, Mr Putin. Putin is disenchanted with the West for a number of reasons that I do not have time to discuss, but he is still a pragmatic man and I think that he will figure out that to simply rush towards Asia and say that Europe is secondary would be a bad decision.

However, here comes the United States. At the moment, we have a feeling that Obama's administration would probably use the dual-containment theory to contain both China and Russia in their autocratic foreign policy endeavours and in that case we will be pushed into an embrace with each other. Normally, China and Russia are not strategic allies for a number of reasons, including geography. However, we could be pushed into an embrace by US policies if the United States decides that with the background of the Syrian crisis and other things dual containment should be the theory and practice of the foreign policy of the United States for years to come. Then those Russians who are tired of being taught about democracy and human rights will feel that they have less to lose in the strategic cooperation with the Chinese and more to gain in their own position. I think that that would be short sighted and myopic and a big mistake in the long term. However, it might happen.

I will end there and once again say thank you to Thierry de Montbrial personally and the IFRI as an institution. Long live *francophonie* and let us carry on.