Putin is back as president of Russia, but is it the same Putin? Is it the same country? The world at large has also changed. This lecture will examine all three elements. As part of the presidential campaign in 2012, Putin issued a number of important documents, which together begin to outline a more coherent ideology of 'Putinism'. Even if he wished, Putin cannot rule as he did in his first two terms between 2000 and 2012. The widespread popular mobilisation in protest against the flawed parliamentary and presidential elections signals that society has matured, and is no longer willing to accept a subordinate place in the system. Dmitry Medvedev as prime minister keeps alive the hopes of the reformers. Putin does have a reactionary agenda, but this is combined with an attempt to devise a new pattern of modernisation for the country. At the same time, the external challenges have become more focused: the rise of China on Russia's borders, new plans for regional integration in post-Soviet Eurasia, disarray in the European Union, the need for a more coherent response to crises such as that in Syria, and the constant geopolitical struggle with the United States. Putin is back, but the country and the world have moved on. Can Putin keep up?

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