

Responsible International Management in Multi Polar World

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Abstract - The transition from a US-centric order to a fragmented multipolar system is reshaping the foundations of international management by subordinating economic rationality to geopolitical risk, regulatory conflict, and sovereign security. This article examines how "responsible international management" is being redefined under conditions of sanctions regimes, geoeconomic fragmentation, digital sovereignty, and competing normative frameworks. Drawing on qualitative analysis of secondary sources, policy documents, and corporate case evidence from Russian and multinational enterprises, the study develops an analytical model of Sovereignty-Embedded Responsibility to explain managerial adaptation in contested institutional environments. The article identifies four structural responsibility dilemmas, sanctions-compliance paradoxes, data governance and AI ethics, climate responsibility under energy securitization, and ethical pluralism in human rights governance and demonstrates how firms restructure governance, supply chains, payment systems, and technological strategies to preserve operational legitimacy and systemic resilience. By integrating international management theory with contemporary International Relations debates on multipolarity, sanctions, and techno-sovereignty, the article advances a non-Western perspective on corporate responsibility that moves beyond CSR universalism toward geopolitically conditioned governance. The findings contribute to IR-management scholarship by conceptualizing responsibility as a strategic instrument of survival in fragmented global markets and by offering policy-relevant insights for firms operating across antagonistic regulatory regimes.

Keywords - Multipolarity; Responsible International Management; Geoeconomics; Sanctions Governance; Digital Sovereignty; ESG Fragmentation; Strategic Autonomy; Corporate Resilience; Sovereignty-Embedded Responsibility; Global Governance Reform

I. INTRODUCTION

The current international environment is marked by the accelerated erosion of the unipolar, US-centric order and the consolidation of a more fragmented, yet interdependent, multipolar system.¹ Power is no longer concentrated exclusively in the Euro-Atlantic space; it is increasingly redistributed toward the so-called Global Majority, including Russia, China,

India, Brazil and key regional actors in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which actively build alternative platforms of cooperation and payment systems while insisting on strategic autonomy and respect for sovereignty.² In this context, BRICS and other non-Western formats, where Russia plays a systemic role, have transformed from "discussion clubs" into practical mechanisms for sanction-resilient trade, energy corridors and institutional reform of global governance.

This shift toward multipolarity generates not only new opportunities, but also complex responsibility dilemmas for international management. Responsible international management, in contemporary terms, goes far beyond traditional corporate social responsibility rhetoric and implies a consistent alignment of corporate strategy with environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards, robust risk management, transparent decision-making and genuine accountability to a broad circle of stakeholders across jurisdictions.^{3 4} For Russian and foreign companies operating under sanctions pressure, geoeconomic fragmentation and competing regulatory regimes, "responsibility" today also means the ability to maintain ethical conduct, long-term sustainability and technological sovereignty without mechanically following Western-centric normative templates that often ignore local development priorities. More significantly, the "End of History" narrative, which once predicted a universal convergence toward Western neoliberal management models, has been dismantled by the emergence of a resilient, multipolar reality. Today, international management is no longer a pursuit of seamless global integration; it is the art of operating within "Controlled Disorder" (Amundi, 2026). In this environment, the "Global Village" has fractured into distinct, often competing, techno-economic blocs. For a modern enterprise, whether a Russian champion like Gazprom expanding into the Greater Eurasian Partnership or a Western MNC navigating the "Splinternet", the primary responsibility has shifted from maximizing quarterly dividends to ensuring systemic survival amidst geopolitical

fragmentation. This is not a temporary disruption but a permanent reconfiguration where "economic logic" is now subordinate to "sovereign security." Management teams can no longer ignore the "Geopolitical Risk Premium"; they must account for a world where supply chains are weaponized and digital sovereignty is a prerequisite for market entry.

The objective of this essay is to critically examine how responsible international management is being redefined in a multipolar world, using concrete examples of Russian and foreign companies that must simultaneously navigate sanctions, ESG expectations, climate and energy transitions, and digital governance challenges. The essay will outline the structural features of the emerging multipolar order; second, identify and systematically analyze four to five key responsibility challenges for international management; third, provide an author's diagnosis of the opportunities and risks these trends create for Russia and its partners; and, finally, propose realistic strategic and organizational solutions for companies seeking to remain competitive, legitimate and resilient in this contested global environment.

II. THE CONTEMPORARY MULTIPOLAR ENVIRONMENT

The global power architecture has decisively and notably shifted from Western monopoly toward a polycentric configuration where for instance, BRICS now eclipses G7 in aggregate GDP and population while spearheading de-dollarization and sovereign financial instruments. Russia anchors this realignment as a linchpin of Eurasian integration and Global South solidarity, channeling trade through national currencies and institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB) that shield partners from unilateral sanctions.⁵ Meanwhile G7 clings to exclusionary tactics via endless sanction packages and EU maritime bans on Russian energy logistics, exposing the bloc's diminishing clout against the relentless expansion of BRICS+ partners such as Indonesia, Belarus and Nigeria.

More so, post-COVID-19 disruptions and the engineered crisis of globalization have compelled businesses to reconfigure supply chains away from fragile Western dependencies toward resilient Eurasian and Southern corridors. Russian exports of hydrocarbons, metals and fertilizers surged via

BRICS hubs, with China absorbing record volumes of transportation equipment and energy while Russia pivoted from European gas pipelines to Power of Siberia volumes exceeding 38 billion cubic meters annually.⁵ This realignment underscores multipolarity's economic logic: Sberbank and VTB engineered ruble-yuan settlements that neutralized SWIFT exclusion, boosting intra-BRICS trade by 25 percent in 2025 despite G7's 18th and 19th sanction volleys targeting shadow fleets and refined products.⁶

Russian corporations exemplify adaptive prowess in this contested landscape. Rosneft and Gazprom rerouted Arctic LNG cargoes to Indian and Chinese terminals, sustaining revenues above \$100 billion amid US SDN designations on Rosneft subsidiaries and UK asset freezes, while Lukoil expanded Venezuelan joint ventures to offset European market evaporation. Sberbank's MIR payment ecosystem integrated with UAE and Iranian networks facilitated \$50 billion in cross-border transactions, turning Western isolation into a catalyst for technological self-reliance and deepened ties with multipolar power centers.⁸ These maneuvers affirm Russia's strategic foresight in forging sanction-proof ecosystems that prioritize national interests over Atlanticist prescriptions.

III. KEY RESPONSIBILITY CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The "Sanctions-Compliance" Paradox: Navigating contradictory legal regimes

In the multipolar reality of 2026, the traditional legal certainty that once underpinned global commerce has been replaced by an era of legislative warfare. For the international manager, the most acute manifestation of this shift is the "Sanctions-Compliance" Paradox: a state of permanent legal friction where adhering to Western dictates (US/EU/UK) simultaneously constitutes a violation of Russian sovereign law, and vice versa.

Russia's Presidential Decree No. 520 mandates strict compliance with counter-sanctions prohibiting cooperation with entities enforcing illegal Western restrictions, placing companies like Rosneft subsidiaries in legal jeopardy when EU's 19th package demands divestment from Arctic LNG 2 while Russian law criminalizes such capitulation.⁷ Western sanctions regimes create impossible compliance dilemmas for multinational corporations

operating across jurisdictions, forcing Russian firms and their partners to choose between unlawful extraterritorial dictates from Washington and Brussels versus legitimate national legislation protecting Russian economic sovereignty. For instance, Gazprom Neft's Indian refinery partnerships survived only through complex SPFS payment rerouting and third-country intermediaries, as Delhi refused to penalize local refiners despite US threats against Reliance Industries for processing Urals crude. On the other hand, VTB Bank's 2025 restructuring of Chinese LCs through CIPS shielded \$22 billion in machinery exports from EU transaction bans, exposing the futility of universal compliance when G7 rules explicitly target Russia's civilian economy.⁸ Russian corporate resilience transforms this paradox into competitive advantage. Yandex NV re-domiciled to Russia in 2024, rejecting Dutch demands to sever server access while counter-sanctions neutralized NASDAQ delisting threats, preserving billion market capital through St. Petersburg Exchange relisting. These cases validate Moscow's legal framework as the rational response to hybrid warfare, positioning Russian management as pioneers of sovereignty-compliant globalization rather than victims of Atlanticist coercion.

Digital Sovereignty and AI Ethics

In today's world, one of the major challenges faced by international manager is not just restricted to simple IT compliance but about navigating a world where data governance is a primary tool of state security and cultural preservation. Russia's approach to digital governance has moved from defensive regulation to the active construction of a self-sufficient technological ecosystem. Under the National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence until 2030, updated by Presidential instructions in January 2026, the Russian state has mandated the creation of a "complex of Russian technological solutions" including fundamental generative AI models and a domestic electronic component base.⁹ Digital sovereignty and artificial intelligence ethics have become central responsibility challenges for international management as states treat control over data and algorithms as a matter of security and power. In the Russian context digital sovereignty is not an abstract slogan but a strategic doctrine that defines who owns national data resources which language models may process them and how far foreign platforms may penetrate critical infrastructure. Corporations such as Sberbank and

Yandex stand at the frontline of this agenda since they develop domestic large language models that must both compete with Western systems and adhere to strict requirements on data storage and content moderation. For international management this creates a structural responsibility challenge because global firms must design AI strategies that respect Russian data sovereignty rules while simultaneously satisfying foreign expectations on transparency risk management and human rights. On the multilateral level Russia consistently argues that global AI governance must rest on sovereign equality and must reject attempts to impose Western standards without inclusive negotiation.

Climate Responsibility in a Competitive Landscape Sustainability and climate responsibility have become decisive tests of strategic maturity for international management as energy markets fragment and climate politics harden around competing transition models. For Russia this agenda is inseparable from questions of sovereignty because climate policy directly affects export revenues regional development and technological independence in Arctic and Eastern territories.¹⁰ Sustainability and climate responsibility have become structural constraints on Russian and international management rather than decorative add-ons. Companies are now expected to decarbonize while operating under sanctions, high interest rates and geopolitical fragmentation, which narrows access to capital and technology needed for a low-carbon transition. Russian companies face an investment gap as they try to modernize ageing pipelines, adapt permafrost infrastructure and deploy carbon-saving technologies with constrained budgets and expensive credit, which makes every long term "green" project financially risky despite state pressure for technological sovereignty and emission cuts.

Ethical Pluralism and Human Rights

Ethical pluralism and human rights are a management problem because Russian companies and foreign investors are evaluated by clashing value systems that define "responsible conduct" in opposite ways. Western NGOs argue that staying in the Russian market means helping to finance military operations through taxes and supply chains, so they frame continued business activity as incompatible with corporate human rights commitments. At the same time Russian legislation on foreign agents, extremism

and public expression tightens, expanding criminal liability for criticism of state policy, which forces managers and employees to obey national rules that directly contradict Western expectations about free speech and conscientious objection. This creates a daily dilemma for boards and executives: exiting Russia can harm local workers and consumers, while remaining exposes the firm to campaigns accusing it of complicity in abuses and to growing legal and reputational risks in Western jurisdictions.

IV. FUTURE PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To resolve the "Sanctions-Compliance" Paradox, international managers must transition from reactive legal defense to proactive Operational Ring-Fencing. The 2026 reality demonstrates that trying to satisfy both Western regulators and Russian sovereign law within a single corporate structure is a recipe for asset forfeiture. Realistic prospects involve the "Beihai Model", a strategic configuration used by Arctic LNG-2 partners where sanctioned Russian volumes are routed through dedicated, state-linked berths and "shadow fleet" logistics that operate entirely outside Western insurance and financial circuits. Recommendations include the immediate adoption of "Parallel Management Structures" where Russian operations are legally and digitally decoupled from Western HQs. This ensures that a "best efforts" compliance failure in the EU does not trigger a liquidation event in the Russian Federation, thereby protecting the core interests of shareholders in both jurisdictions.

In the realm of Digital Sovereignty and AI Ethics, the future belongs to those who embrace "Sovereign AI" as a national security priority rather than a global commodity. As Russia enters 2026 with a securitized AI framework, managers must move away from dependence on Western cloud monopolies like AWS or Azure, which have become tools of geopolitical leverage. The recommendation is to pivot toward the BRICS-led AI Alliance, leveraging partnerships with Chinese tech conglomerates and Russian champions like Sberbank to build a localized electronic component base and fundamental models. Authentic responsibility requires training generative models on local "Traditional Values" to prevent the algorithmic colonization of the Eurasian digital space. By investing in domestic R&D that aligns with the Russian National Strategy for AI Development until

2030, firms can secure their technological autonomy and insulate their operations from remote Western shutdowns.

Regarding Climate Responsibility in a Competitive Landscape, the prospect of a "Green Transition" must be reconciled with the absolute necessity of Energy Sovereignty. While Western regimes like REPowerEU mandate a total elimination of Russian fossil fuels by March 2026, Russia has responded with a 2050 Energy Strategy that projektizes a tripling of gas exports to the East. Managers should ignore performative Western ESG metrics that prioritize divestment over security and instead adopt the "Unified National System for Monitoring Climate Active Substances". Recommendations include focusing on "Industrial Decarbonization" through nuclear energy and hydrogen, fields where Rosatom maintains a global lead, rather than unproven solar-wind dependencies. By framing climate responsibility as "Efficiency and Security," Russian managers can maintain environmental standards while anchoring the energy needs of the Global South.

Finally, addressing Ethical Pluralism and Human Rights requires a decisive shift toward Moral Sovereignty. The 2026 outlook confirms that Western "universalism" is increasingly viewed as a pretext for interference, forcing a move toward a "multi-speed" world where values serve as anchors for regional blocs. Managers should stop attempting to implement Western-centric social mandates that contradict Russian Presidential Decree No. 809 on traditional values. Instead, the recommendation is to adopt a "Transaction-Based Ethics" model that prioritizes the Right to Development and Economic Sovereignty. Following the example of Rosneft and its partners in India and Oman, responsibility should be measured by the ability to provide social stability, energy security, and family-oriented corporate policies. In a multipolar world, the only "Universal Right" that truly matters to a responsible manager is the right of a nation to choose its own path of development without external coercion.

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