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The book's authors, including leading Carnegie Moscow Center experts, pose the question: what was the reason behind Russia's stalled reforms? They argue that a policy that leads to the dismantling of civil liberties in the country and uses strong-arm tactics externally is a dead-end. While the demolition of the Berlin Wall is no guarantee of success, democratic transformations are a necessary precondition for the country's modernization and strong, modern international profile, as well as for citizens' welfare.
20 Years Without the Berlin Wall: A Breakthrough to Freedom

Edited by Natalia Bubnova

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The present collection was prepared as part of the celebration of the Carnegie Moscow Center’s fifteenth anniversary. Its authors are the Center’s experts.

When the Berlin Wall was erected in the early 1960s, few could have imagined that its destruction would become the 20th century’s foremost symbol of the democratic process; however, today, it is especially difficult to imagine a better emblem of the struggle for freedom, justice, and human rights. Twenty years ago, “velvet” democratic revolutions erupted in Eastern and Central European countries, and the associated anniversaries continue: the 20th anniversary of the six-party treaty on the unification of East and West Germany is being marked in 2011, and various countries are commemorating the establishment of new political parties, media outlets, and research centers created two decades ago to engage subjects that once had been considered taboo. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Russia was also intricately involved in a process of revolutionary reinvention. In August 1991, Russia’s own internal Berlin Wall was torn asunder via popular resistance to the State Emergency Committee’s attempt to restore the authoritarian regime.

This unique process of democratic transformation, represented ostensibly by the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, affected the entire world – marking the conclusion of the Cold War and the global confrontation between two competing ideologies, a significant proliferation of democracy, a sharp decrease in the number of military dictatorships, and an expansion of the reach of personal freedom. To that end, the volume’s authors

Foreword

Natalia Bubnova
view in global context the tremendous political and social changes that occurred in the former communist countries. Furthermore, inasmuch as the Soviet Union was at the center of a world that faded into the past at a time and in a fashion similar to the Berlin Wall, it is natural that many of the authors’ questions directly address Russia’s experience.

The hope shared by many in the early 1990s that both the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet republics – having accomplished seminal breakthroughs to freedom – would build new societies based on the values of democracy and free enterprise, turned out to be more optimistic than what really happened. The authors of the collection point to the fact that the countries of Eastern and Central Europe were more successful in establishing democratic structures, since they were distinctly aware that their goal was to return to Europe and they were supported by the European Union. Most of them had previous experience with democratic development; they viewed the communist regime as something imposed on them from the outside and built their national identity in opposition to it. Lilia Shevtsova also writes that “paradoxically, the nationalism of the ‘new Europeans’ made it possible for them to limit their own sovereignty in favor of supranational European organizations.”

Meanwhile, Sam Greene believes that in spite of a stronger institutional foundation in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe due largely to their membership in the European Union, their societies have not yet fully demonstrated the ability to effectively use these tools of democracy. Over the past two decades, these countries “had functioning democratic institutions, held elections, changed parties and governments, developed an independent media and built a market economy. But there was no public politics as such... They failed to develop party organizations able to bring together and mobilize diverse public interests.” Hence the popular discontent and considerable emigration from the region. As does the previous author, Andrei Ryabov notes that “in Central and Eastern Europe, post-communist symptoms are kept hidden behind the European facades of new institutions” and become active when the new system, as
happened during the financial crisis, enters a period of instability. There are no politicians willing to propose a constructive program of action, and as in the 1990s, the most active are what seemed to be the already forgotten political players: the nationalists, the anti-Europeans, and the radicals. Both authors agree, however, that the farther west one looks, the greater the extent to which the post-communist countries have progressed along the path of democracy, whereas one observes the opposite process in most post-Soviet countries.

Alexei Arbatov considers the Soviet Union’s collapse alongside the fall of other great empires of the 19th-20th centuries: Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium and Germany. He proceeds from the assumption that its end was not a historical accident, but rather was due to an objective and logical course of events. However, unlike most other empires, Arbatov emphasizes, the Soviet Union did not suffer a military defeat, and, contrary to wide-spread opinion, was not defeated in the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet empire was preceded and determined by the fall of the Soviet economic and political system, which was eaten away to the core by internal erosion, the discrepancy between the official ideological dogma and real life, the loss of faith in the regime among the overwhelming majority of the population, and the spirit of cynicism, careerism, and greed among the ruling class of the nomenclatura.

At the foundation of the collapsed structure were authoritarian traditions, militarism, the centralized command economy, messianic ideology, expansionism, and the constant confrontation with the West. “This is why,” the author explains, “Russian communists’ calls to restore the Soviet Union and all types of nationalist yearnings for a return to the tsarist empire inevitably involve a return to an authoritarian or totalitarian regime and are incompatible with democracy and the market economy.” Alexei Arbatov believes that there are no factors that support the restoration of the empire on the basis of modern Russia. “The military-imperial road is a dead-end option that would only lead to yet another disastrous collapse of the Russian state.” Authoritarianism, militarism, and expansionism are
not integral components of the Russian mentality and national character. “The country needs to carry out vast and complex social and political modernization tasks, make the transition to an innovative economic model, and spread European-style living standards beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg to the country’s regions.”

The authors of the collection all share the conviction that for Russia and other post-Soviet countries, the movement backwards was not inevitable; they believe that it was possible to “straighten the path to freedom.” Lilia Shevtsova examines in detail the objective and subjective factors that prevented the country from following a steady path of reform. She believes that in the fall of 1991 after the defeat of the State Emergency Committee that staged a coup to overtake the control of the state from Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin missed a real chance to make necessary changes. “Yeltsin had won a huge amount of public confidence: around 70 percent of Russians were ready to support the country’s movement towards liberal democracy.” During the first autumn of his presidency, Yeltsin ventured into economic reform, yet hesitated to adopt a new constitution that would have introduced the principle of checks and balances, and to hold presidential and parliamentary elections on its basis. Further, without the construction of new independent institutions, economic reform inevitably provided the old-new ruling class with an opportunity to privatize property in their own interests. Yeltsin took the path of consolidating his own power, having maintained elements of the Soviet state in the form of parliament, which under the old constitution was the main center of power. This set the stage for the inevitable confrontation between the legislative and executive branches of government, which ended with the assault on the parliament in October 1993. The bloodshed that took place “ended the hopes for a national consensus and signaled a return to force as the means of conflict resolution.” The new constitution of 1993, adopted after the end of the standoff between the executive branch and the legislature, declared the sovereignty and freedom of the people but in practice “consolidated a super-presidential regime that undermined these very principles.”
The hegemony of the central government alongside the weakness or absence of institutions is one of the main factors hindering progress in Russia. Andrei Ryabov analyzes the lack of effective institutions in Russia, noting that institutions have played a decisive role in the post-communist transformation not only of the Eastern European countries, but also of the Far East (in China and Vietnam) – in the latter case “not in affirming freedom, but in successfully developing the market.” He points out that “little study has been made of why, twenty years later, the Russian political scene remains just as bereft of institutions.” However, such a state of affairs quite suits the country’s leadership, because it allows them to combine the functions of government with the distribution of property. Ryabov also suggests that for corporations, which had undergone a conversion into multiple independent actors with their own resource bases, in the absence of an institutional means by which to negotiate their interests, it became more advantageous to negotiate on the level of the national leadership. This, in his opinion, was the factor that determined the persistence of the personalistic political regime in modern Russia. “Institutionalizing the political system requires strong public demand for the consolidation of institutions – above all an effective national parliament – to represent interests,” writes Ryabov. He is convinced that escaping the current situation is possible only through close cooperation with the Western world and by using its political, economic, and cultural experience. “The pressure of globalization will lead to the emergence of a responsible elite and to a mass demand for strong institutions, above all representative ones.”

Maria Lipman also writes that if the government does have a certain unwritten pact, then “it is not with the masses but with the elite, who have indeed deliberately chosen to give up political representation and influence in exchange for privileges and opportunities for enrichment.” Lipman underscores the negative role of the passivity of Russian citizens, when “it is impossible to say what is the cause and what is the consequence: is there no public politics because society does not stand up for its political rights? Or does society see no meaning to these rights because there is no political
process in which to take part?” Lipman wonders whether the emergence of a civic feeling from the newfound personal freedom, which compared to Soviet times “has become practically unlimited,” is possible. Would this help shape a national consensus?

Nikolay Petrov, drawing on extensive factual data, shows how the power “vertical” was built in the regions, and how the lines of communication between the center and the regions were strengthened, while those between the government and the population in the regions, as well as among regions, were weakened. After gubernatorial elections were abandoned, local candidates for governor were passed over in favor of federal appointees, who are more bureaucrats than politicians. Russia has essentially turned into a unitary, centralized state. “The shortest path between two neighboring regions frequently passes through the Center; contacts are often intermediated by the Center, not only between neighboring regions but also between different federal agencies within a single region.” Municipal reform has led to a situation where “the state power vertical has penetrated the municipal level as well, turning local self-rule essentially into ‘local state rule.’” Petrov examines in detail the pros and cons of such a state of affairs and reaches the conclusion that such a design enables the authorities to more efficiently give instructions from the center, but does not ensure their execution locally and does not allow them to quickly resolve regional problems, which has had especially negative consequences during the financial crisis. “The negative aspects also include the threat of weakened ties between the citizens and the ‘top’ and the perception of the latter by the local inhabitants as an ‘occupying’ power imposed upon them from above – with the potential loss of control over the main corps of their regional elites and over the situation in the regions.”

Natalia Bubnova examines the state of Russia’s major institutions in comparison with prevailing public sentiment, trying to determine whether the conditions are present for overcoming stagnation and on what grounds future democracy-building could rely. The authors of the collection do not provide unequivocal prescriptions, but they all agree that in today’s world
it is impossible to move forward on the basis of authoritarianism; it under-
utilizes the power of the whole of society and precludes the discussion and
development of optimal solutions on the basis of expert evaluations and
broad public debate.

Alexey Malashenko and Peter Topychkanov view the demolition of
the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the tectonic changes affecting the entire
world at the beginning of the new millennium. Malashenko writes about
the increasing political role of religion, when “not only Islam, but also
Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism have become a legitimate factor in
political activity.” However, if “Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism all
have their own mechanisms for joining and cautiously mingling with the
globalization current,” then Russian Orthodoxy and Islam have a decis-
edly negative attitude toward globalization. Political Islam, notes Malash-
enko, is almost always radical, offering its own alternative to the structure
of society and the state and drawing millions of Muslims into its struggle.
Its followers are ready to engage in conflict with the current authorities,
who, in their opinion, have betrayed the precepts of Islam. Malashenko
points out the existence of world-wide interconnected conflicts, which he
likens to a system of communicating vessels. Understanding Islamic rad-
icalism, from his point of view, is the key to understanding the problem
of terrorism, which is an “asymmetrical response” to the defeat of Mus-
lims in the economic and political competition with their neighbors: with
America, with Europe, and to some extent with Russia.

Peter Topychkanov analyzes the achievements and problems of de-
mocracy based on the example of India. Convinced of the need to attain
real equality of opportunity and protection of the rights of all people, the
author nevertheless builds a system of evidence supporting a thesis about
the ambiguity of the compensatory allocation of quotas for elections and
appointments to positions in government agencies for any specific popu-
lation groups, be they castes or religious or ethnic minorities. He believes
that such affirmative action, together with a certain leveling of the playing
field, isolates and demotivates those groups whose position it is supposed
to improve. As a specialist on India’s history and politics, Peter Topych-
kanov bases his point of view on many examples from the country’s practi-
cal experience.

Dmitri Trenin’s chapter is devoted to the role and influence of the
West on events in Russia, and to the foreign policy factor in the Russian
transformation. Having renounced a dominating position in Eastern Eu-
rope and finished with the Cold War, at first Mikhail Gorbachev, and then
the leaders of the new Russia, hoped that the country would succeed in at-
taining a position in the world comparable to that of the United States, not
in confrontation, but in collaboration with the United States. Yet Europe
was becoming a common home and NATO expansion was taking place –
all without Russia. Trenin points out that Vladimir Putin was prepared to
accept the leading role of the United States in the world and viewed Russia
in the context of the “European choice,” but on the condition that anti-Rus-
sian forces would not be encouraged in the countries of the former Soviet
Union, that foreign troops would not be stationed in those countries, and
that the countries neighboring Russia would not be accepted into military
alliances. After the events of September 11, 2001, Putin was the first among
world politicians to reach out to the U.S., seeking to capitalize on the situ-
atation in order to form a “special relationship” with the world’s leading
power, and looking to obtain in return what other U.S. allies earned in
their time – the recognition and consideration of their countries’ national
interests. However, Russia’s claims were not heard, and the steps taken to
meet the West halfway were considered as not requiring compensation.
And then the Khodorkovsky case, the murder of liberal journalist Anna
Politkovskaya, and the growing Kremlin control of the media, as well as
the intensified anti-Western rhetoric in response to the “color revolutions,”
caused Russia to be increasingly viewed as an unfriendly country where
authoritarian despotism was the rule of the day. However, there were no
objective reasons for a new Cold War, which many seemed to believe was
inevitable during the Georgian crisis: the ideological antagonism between
the two countries is lacking; there are no fundamental contradictions be-
between the national interests of Russia and America; the U.S. does not view Russia as an enemy; and Russian leaders are not interested in a military confrontation with the West.

In recent years the United States and Russia, as part of resetting their relationship, have been able to cooperate to solve major problems on the basis of existing political realities and with consideration for the interests of both parties. Trenin is convinced that by the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the conditions are ripe to move further on. On the agenda is the issue of forming a Euro-Atlantic security space and, simultaneously, a pan-European space. This dual project would, along with the countries of the European Union, the U.S., and Russia, also include Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and other neighboring states. A common security space and cooperation should be built in the context of overcoming military and political confrontation and guaranteeing interaction between the major centers of the modern world.

In an era of both global challenges and global opportunities, the fall of the Berlin Wall helps us to put events in perspective. It provides not only a historical watershed, but a lens that allows us to investigate the problems of today, to ask the right questions, and to seek solutions that cross geographical boundaries and span more than the twenty years that have passed since the world changed in 1989.
Freedom

Sam Greene

The fall of the Berlin Wall is usually considered to be the starting point for the “liberation” of first Central and Eastern Europe and then the former Soviet republics. Removal of the physical (and also the political and psychological) barriers between East and West Berlin did indeed play a huge part and in many respects made the “liberation” process irreversible. However, the process itself began not in Berlin and not with the wall’s fall.

A more accurate date from which to start the countdown to the socialist bloc’s “liberation” would be not November 9, 1989, but August 19, 1989, when what was dubbed the “European picnic” took place. A large number of East Germans, anxious to make their way at any cost to West Germany, where they were promised citizenship and a new life, found themselves at that moment in socialist but relatively liberal Hungary, from where they could hope to cross into Austria and onwards into West Germany. The Hungarian government came to their aid, opening the border with Austria first for one day, and then, on September 11 that same year (alas, history has since defiled this date!), for good. No sooner was the decision made than East Germans began streaming into Hungary and Czechoslovakia and from there to West Germany. The East Germans’ desire to seek a new life elsewhere and the Hungarian and Czechoslovak authorities’ refusal to support the East German government and send the would-be émigrés home by force made the wall dividing Berlin an absurdity, and this is what brought the wall down.

I recall these precursory events not out of a pedantic nature, but because if we want to understand subsequent events we first have to trace
them back to their real causes. The Berlin Wall came down not because Berlin and Bonn (and thus Moscow and Washington) agreed to let it fall, but because it had been quite simply bypassed and deprived of its sense, thus turning it into nothing but meaningless bricks and barbed wire. But most important of all is why it was bypassed: East Germans wanted to live on the other side. This contradicts another of the explanations of what brought the wall down, namely the idea that it fell because East Germans wanted change in their own country.

When describing the behavior of consumers dissatisfied with this or that product, economists use a model giving consumers two options – “exit” or “voice.” The second option is simpler and requires less cost and effort, but it makes sense only when people think there is a likelihood that their voice will be heard and taken into consideration (and not only by the powers that be). If people see no chance of this, they choose the first, more radical option. Political economist Alfred Hirschman applied this model to the situation in East Germany. I will not go into all the reasons why East Germans chose the “exit” rather than the “voice” option, but will only note that this choice was quite clear and unambiguous.

East Germany was not the only country that saw many of its citizens leave during the totalitarian regime’s rule and after its collapse. Even today, people are still emigrating from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Most of them head for the West in pursuit of money, education, safety, and new opportunities. Of course, people also emigrate from third world countries and from one developed country to another, either more developed or simply offering something different. I say this just to note that there is no reason to reproach East Germans for what was an understandable choice and standard sort of response on their part.

However, at the same time, their choice is noteworthy in that it reflects the essence of the post-communist period, and not just in Germany (less so in Germany, in fact, since East Germany had an advantage that none of the other countries had – it was subsequently absorbed by the Federal Republic of Germany). Flight from one country to another was and still is in many
cases not so much about the search for freedom as the search for a better life. If East Germans sought freedom, it was freedom “from” (oppression, poverty, a drab existence, lack of hope), which is certainly all very important, but it is a very different thing from freedom “to” (express one’s views, exercise political and civil self-government, and help set one’s own country’s policies). Liberal theorists assert that this is all one and the same thing, but the experience of the last twenty years suggests otherwise.

Two decades after the Berlin Wall fell, many speak of a new wall dividing Europe. This new wall is a lot farther east than the old Iron Curtain. It is far easier to penetrate, but causes much harm even so. It divides the countries that have joined the European Union from those that can hope to join only many years down the line, if at all. Analysts note that only the former socialist bloc countries to the west of this new wall have made a successful transition to democracy and a market economy. Some see historical and cultural differences as the explanation, suggesting that some countries are capable of making this transition, while others are not. But experience shows that a different link between cause and effect is in play, and that the European Union was the deciding factor in those countries that made successful transitions.

Whatever the causes and effects involved, the new curtain dividing Europe is largely illusory. It is only as real as people’s (and politicians’) imaginations render it. It does, however, make it hard to see the real similarities between the countries and societies on either side, and for all their seeming differences, these countries do share indisputable similarities.

There is no doubt that the new EU members have a more solid institutional foundation than their eastern neighbors. This is thanks to the EU itself and its acquis communautaire, which the Central and Eastern European governments have brought into force over the last almost twenty years. This has created what transition specialists Juan Lintz and Alfred Stepan call the “usable state.” The commitment of these countries’ elites to democratic values and procedures is largely a product of their need to prove themselves part of the European family of peoples and countries.
In the years before their countries gained EU membership, almost all of the region’s politicians tried to win over voters during election campaigns by asserting that only they, and not their opponents, would take the country faster into the EU.

However, it is one thing to create a usable state and another to establish just to what extent society is ready to “use” it. This concerns not only society in general, but politicians, political parties, the media, civil society, and all other “non-structural” elements making up the democratic system. A state, after all, is not some formal set of constitutionally enshrined institutions, but a system of relations between society and what we call the authorities, as well as relations within society itself. Determining the changes that have taken place since 1989 requires us to look at what has happened to this system of relations between society and the state.

One very important change has taken place: the state is no longer the decisive factor in people’s success and prospects. This change has taken place in all of the former socialist bloc countries (with perhaps the partial exception of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). These two countries aside, totalitarianism is dead throughout the region, meaning that ideology plays almost no part today overall. These two changes combined have resulted in fundamental shifts in the relations between society and the state, although not always in favor of freedom, as we will see a little later.

The state no longer tells its citizens where to live, work, study, and rest, what to read, what to wear, and how to interpret the events taking place around them. Even in countries where democracy is weak or altogether absent, basic human rights are observed, and the main difference today in private life for people in the former Soviet Union and in Western Europe is the level of prosperity they enjoy. There are more noticeable differences when it comes to civil and political freedoms. Only in the new EU member countries do people have rights (electoral rights, the freedom to demonstrate, freedom of the media, etc.) comparable to those of people in the “old” Europe.

What does this difference in civil and political freedoms mean? According to surveys conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction
and Development (EBRD), around 4 percent of people in Central and Eastern Europe think that the economic situation in their countries is better now than in 1989. This response was given by the same number of people in the CIS countries, despite these countries’ obvious economic backwardness. The political picture is even more paradoxical: around 45 percent of people in the CIS said that the political situation in their country has improved since 1989, while this view was shared by slightly more than 30 percent in Central and Eastern Europe.

Of course, public opinion surveys have to be taken with a grain of salt. Any attempt today to assess the state of affairs twenty years ago will inevitably be subjective. In addition, the degree of political and economic collapse in the Central European countries differed (mostly for the better) from that in the Soviet Union. This dubious “sociology” could be dismissed altogether were it not for other statistical evidence to back it up. According to data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of people leaving the former socialist countries has been growing steadily over the last ten years. From 1998 through 2007, the number of people who left Hungary for the OECD countries (wealthy, mostly Western countries) rose by 92 percent and came to 34,900 people in 2007. The figure rose by 137 percent in Poland over the same period (reaching 221,900 people a year). A total of 115,400 people left Ukraine in 2007 – an increase of 238 percent compared to 1998. The only country that stands out is Russia, with 70,300 departures in 2007 – just 4 percent more than in 1998.

Democracy is not the Berlin Wall. It has no barbed wire and no armed guards doing their rounds. It does not hold anyone back. But if you bypass it and run from it in search of a better life, it becomes just as absurd as the Berlin Wall did twenty years ago, and just like the Berlin Wall, it will also fall if it loses its meaning.

You could object, of course, saying that people are running not from democracy, but from one democratic country to another. You could ask where democracy fits into all this anyway, when what we were talking about was freedom. Besides, what kind of freedom is this, if it doesn’t include the pos-
sibility of leaving? This is certainly the case, but it does not change the essence of the matter. As before, people are still primarily concerned with their personal well-being (in all its forms, not just the material aspect) and their children’s future. Politics is a means for achieving these goals. People saw the Berlin Wall as an obstacle mainly for these reasons, rather than for political ones. The new “democracy” is not an obstacle in people’s way, perhaps, but it evidently fails to help them achieve their objectives to the extent they would like, and thus, like the wall, it too can vanish.

It is worth taking a look back at what happened after the wall came down. Gorbachev sent the signal that the Soviet Union would not protect the socialist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe from their own people, who did not want to live under socialism. In this situation, the “voice” option suddenly became a real possibility, and people swiftly showed the communist leaders to the “exit.” Some of these leaders stepped aside voluntarily, some not so willingly, and some did not leave at all, but there remain no more communist countries in the region. The new leaders (some of whom were simply the old ones in new guise) learned to play by new rules. There were two rules. First, leaders were chosen by the people in free elections, if only because this system guaranteed that the losers could stay in the game and not end up in prison. Second, the aspiration to join the European Union became the sole basis for legitimacy.

The Central and Eastern European countries wandered the desert for fourteen years until some of them were finally allowed to join the EU. Over these years they had functioning democratic institutions, held elections, changed parties and governments, developed an independent media, and built a market economy. But there was no public politics as such. Former communists (now social democrats) competed against former anti-communists (now center-right) in proving who was more of a technocrat and less of a demagogue. However, they failed to develop party organizations able to bring together and mobilize diverse public interests. If asked where their country’s future lay, right and left both chorused “in Europe.” All fine and good, but this is not enough. There is no democracy without differences.
Differences in opinion existed, of course, but they were not discussed in the political arena. The politicians and the public probably share the blame for this situation, afraid, no doubt, that if they aired their dirty laundry in public it would lessen their chances of EU membership. Meanwhile, widespread reform began in the education, health and housing sectors, the social and economic stratification of society became more pronounced, and the number of homeless and unemployed grew. Furthermore, some countries simply ceased to exist and new countries emerged in their place. This was a huge test for society in general, as well as for every individual. The EU countries also underwent this whole process recently or before, and to a certain extent are still dealing with the consequences today. Different societies chose different solutions, and so the German state differs greatly from, say, Britain or Italy.

Now that they have become “European,” the people of Central and Eastern Europe have to decide just what kind of Europeans they want to be and what kind of state to build. The seemingly democratic institutions that served them well enough along the path toward EU membership have turned out to be not so well suited for further maneuvers. There are no politicians willing to incorporate into a constructive program the widespread discontent revealed by the EBRD surveys and emigration statistics. Instead, the disenfranchised and confused population is caught up in the embrace of radicals and nationalists with their simple answers. Filled with a sense of having been unjustly cheated, the public follows the aggressive slogans and turns its anger against “outsiders.” Gypsies have been frequent targets of this frustration, and here and there across the “new” Europe synagogues have been set ablaze. People in these countries are trying to speak up, but in the corridors of power it seems that no one is listening, and the threat of a mass movement towards the “exit” is growing anew.

With the exception of the three Baltic countries, people in the former Soviet Union have not become citizens of the united Europe and will not do so in the foreseeable future. Thus, Russian and Ukrainian politicians, ignoring the call of public politics, cannot, like their counterparts in
Central and Eastern Europe, justify themselves by saying that by engaging into politics they can postpone accession to the European Union. By and large no such call has come anyway. The Central European countries wandered for fourteen years through the desert of formal democracy, but at least they picked up some useful habits over this time. The leaders of their neighbors to the east, however, have led their people into somewhat different deserts, where they picked up somewhat different habits, or rather their habits remained pretty much the same as before the eviction from the Soviet “paradise.” The rules that the Central and Eastern European leaders played by do not apply here. There are no rules here at all.

It is noteworthy that the problems on either side of the new curtain are nevertheless almost the same. For all their formal success, the Central and Eastern European countries have not yet sufficiently developed the substance of relations between the state and society, including parliaments, parties, and the press. This means that government is still not accountable to the public, and this is what causes people to head for the “exit,” some emigrating, others moving to the outskirts of the political arena, and still others withdrawing into themselves (with or without the help of alcohol and drugs).

During the Soviet period people also chose the “exit” option. Emigration was difficult, but possible for some groups. Others, who could not emigrate but did not want to live within the limits set by the state, chose what outwardly resembled the “voice” option but in reality differed little from the “exit.” The dissident movement harbored no illusions about the possibility of changing the political regime. Those who did not want to resign themselves to the system, but could not live beyond its physical borders, could at least live beyond its moral borders. This was what they meant by “living a life without lies.” Toward this goal, they would get together and speak the truth, write the truth in their samizdat publications, share the truth with Western journalists, and for a brief moment in Red Square even shout the truth to the stones, fir trees and dead leaders, and to the waiting KGB officers.
Times have changed now. Information travels freely from computer to mobile phone and on around the entire globe. It can easily bypass any wall and penetrate any curtain. The few regimes that keep their people in fear and darkness are doomed. Sooner or later the absurdity of this closed-off life will become too obvious and the walls will tumble down. The peoples of North Korea, Burma and the other handful of totalitarian states will sooner or later gain their freedom, but it will be freedom “from” rather than freedom “to.”

When Hirschman wrote about the political choice between “voice” and “exit,” he assumed that in a free environment, with all other things being equal, people would choose “voice” rather than “exit.” This is because “exit” involves greater costs; after all, the person doing the exiting leaves behind all that is close and familiar and has to adapt to a new way of life. What happens, however, if the “exit” turns out to be closer? What happens if all one has to do to “exit” is to buy a package tour, open the right book or turn on a computer? The result is probably what we see now. “Exit” has become a cheaper and simpler option than “voice.” A dreary and difficult existence becomes more bearable. In theory, people reject the “voice” option only if it is senseless or dangerous. But in the new paradigm, when it is enough to press a button to “exit,” the theory no longer works. In the modern world people renounce the “voice” option just because they are too lazy to become actively involved.

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, with rare and sad exceptions, have obtained freedom “from.” They are now full-fledged citizens of a new globalized world, from which they obtain many benefits. But they are not full-fledged citizens of their own countries and they receive only negligible benefits from being citizens of their countries. Obtaining freedom “to” and public sovereignty over their own country, rather than personal sovereignty beyond its physical or moral borders, is a worthy objective for the next twenty years.
Russia’s Own Imperial Road *

Alexei Arbatov

Each great empire has its own unique and inimitable emergence, zenith, decline, and collapse, but they all have one thing in common. Back in the 5th-6th century, Roman historian and philosopher Anicius Boethius noted that all those who witnessed an empire’s fall considered it a natural development, but always made an exception for their own country. As they saw it, their own country’s collapse, unlike that of all others, was not simply history taking its logical course, but arose because of particular combinations of circumstances, incompetent rulers, or malicious intent fermented at home and/or abroad. The collapse of one’s own empire was always seen as an unprecedented disaster, while the end of any other empire was simply one link in a long chain of similar, explainable, and logical historic events.

These same views prevail in today’s Russia. Speaking several years ago, former President Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century, and most of the public and the political elite backed him up on this opinion. But paradoxical though it may seem, this attitude is yet further proof that for all its specific features, the Soviet empire found itself subject to the same universal laws of socio-economic, military-political, and moral-psychological cycles that took the Soviet empire, like all of its numerous predecessors, through the stages of rise, zenith, decline, and collapse.

* This chapter is based on updated text from the book by Alexei Arbatov, The Equation of Security (Moscow: Russian United Democratic Party Yabloko, 2010).
The Soviet Empire: Similarities to and Differences from Other Empires

It seems unquestionable that in several important respects tsarist Russia and its successor, the Soviet Union, stood out among the great empires of the 19th and 20th centuries. Britain and France, Spain and Portugal, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Germany all built their prosperity on colonial exploitation and drew a strict dividing line between Europeans and indigenous peoples. Russia, however, had always been an empire not in the economic sense, but in the political and military sense, acquiring colonies in order to expand its security perimeter and multiply its might, prestige, and role in the surrounding world.

The Russian (Soviet) ruling elite was open to nobles from the colonial provinces, thus giving rise to a genuinely multiethnic nomenklatura, working together to exploit and oppress all of their subjects and use them as cheap labor (albeit with a low level of productivity) and cannon fodder with the goal of maintaining their own power, wealth, and grandeur. The empire’s core people – the ethnic Russians – were not infrequently given even harsher treatment than the other peoples. However, Russia and later the Soviet Union were nonetheless empires in the full sense of the term. They had much in common with continental military and political empires of the past – the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and especially the Byzantine empire, from which Moscow borrowed, most of all in terms of imperial ideology (Moscow as the “third Rome”), state-building, rules and traditions governing relations within the hierarchy and the political process in general.

Soviet-style communist ideology was built not so much on Marxism-Leninism as such, as on a super-statist, anti-democratic (totalitarian) and messianic vision of state and public organization. Russian autocracy, before the Revolution of 1917, had possessed a similar ideological base, though in a milder version. This was the only kind of ideology able to cement into a unified monolith a whole host of peoples scattered across a vast territory and living at different stages of social development – from
an industrial economy to nomadic cattle herding. This was yet another difference between Russia and the main European empires, where (except in authoritarian Portugal) varying levels of democracy in the mother country existed in parallel to authoritarian colonial oppression in the dependent territories. For this reason these empires’ political regimes survived the loss of their colonies.

The Russian Empire, and even more so the Soviet empire, was built on four pillars holding up the system.

The first was an iron-disciplined authoritarian or totalitarian corporate political regime based on all-pervasive political surveillance and suppression of dissident thinking.

The second was colossal military power far in excess of the country’s economic resources, built up at the expense of the state’s other functions and the people’s prosperity.

The third was a centralized economy under state control (directly in the Soviet Union and indirectly in tsarist Russia), designed above all to consolidate the bureaucratic establishment’s power and build up military might.

The fourth was a messianic ideology that served to legitimize the three pillars of imperial power mentioned above, use grand ideas to justify the subjects’ poverty and lack of rights, and provide the grounds for constant outward expansion.

The obsession with security, secrecy, and the never-ending fight against plots and threats from both within and without was an integral part of this ideology. It was partly rooted in the harsh lessons of history, but over time became a self-perpetuating condition of the regime’s existence. The need to maintain and legitimize the status quo, coupled with the messianic vision, required the constant expansion of the borders. This exhausted economic and human resources, sparked discontent at home, and aroused neighboring peoples’ fear and hostility.

The result was that the obsession with external and internal threats turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The vision of potential enemy plots
at home and abroad produced a saber-rattling foreign and domestic policy that did indeed create resistance inside the empire and confrontation beyond its borders.

Soviet foreign policy had its own particular approach to the rule of law and the need to observe moral norms of some sort or other on the international stage. The Soviet Union made a show of observing these rules only insofar as they corresponded to its geopolitical, military or ideological aims or could be used to justify its actions. The disregard for the law and reliance on force that it practiced at home defined its behavior in the world at large, too.

Of course, Western leaders were far from being the angels that many ideologues abroad tend to sing the praises of now. Mass use of military force, secret sabotage operations, and violations of international laws and moral standards were frequent in Western politics during the Cold War. But for the West, this was the cost of global rivalry rather than a natural extrapolation of its domestic situation to events abroad.

The Western democracies, therefore, had a relatively painless time digesting the end of global confrontation. However, these changes on the international stage represented a glaring contradiction challenging the Soviet empire’s existence. This is the main reason why the West’s economic and political systems and military and political alliances were able to survive the end of this confrontation, while the Soviet Union’s system, empire and ideology could not. This interdependence between the regime’s nature at home and its projection abroad explains why those trying now to rehabilitate Stalinism and appeal for a return to this or that form of authoritarian regime always link it to a revival of some form of the Russian (or Soviet) empire and permanent confrontation with the West.

The irony is that once it lost such a strong and cunning adversary, the United States made a bid for the status of sole superpower and leader of a single polar world. Acting in this spirit, in its foreign policy Washington started making increasing use of the worst Cold War-era practices and borrowed many of the Soviet Union’s shameful principles and methods, such
as exporting its political and ideological system by force, changing inconvenient regimes, using force arbitrarily abroad, committing mass human rights violations, conducting disinformation campaigns, and so on. This eventually led the U.S. into the biggest domestic and foreign policy crisis in its recent history. “History teaches us nothing but only punishes us for not learning our lessons,” Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky wrote.

Under the Banner of a Grand Mission

Messianic vision is an important element of all empires. The British, French, and other empires all suffered from megalomania and used the idea of a civilizing mission to justify their expansionist ventures. Hitler’s Germany proclaimed the “thousand-year Reich” of the superior Nordic race. Under Benito Mussolini, Italy set out to restore the great Roman empire, and under the emperor, Japan used its military might to spread its beneficial rule and create “the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” The Soviet Union supported the “triumphant march” of socialism and national liberation movements around the world.

The idea of a special “Russian mission” has long been an inherent part of the Russian imperial design. Some of its features are more or less typical of any colonial ideology, especially the conviction that the center spreads its civilization to peoples at a lower stage of socio-economic and technological development. But the Russian idea/mission has its historical roots in internal Russian issues: it was in many respects necessary as a psychological defense and support for the nation over centuries of bitter struggle for survival.

This ideology served as a source of comfort and a sort of compensation for the relatively low living standards and absence of many of the basic practical conveniences available to people in the West. It was essential to provide a psychological justification for the difficulties created by a centralized and militarized economy and an ineffective bureaucracy.
Above all, an inspiring idea was needed to reconcile in Russians’ minds the contradiction between their lives filled with hardship and humiliation and their country’s vast territory, its boundless natural resources and the talents of its great people. Finally, spiritual quests and metaphysical values provided an outlet for the nation’s intellectual potential in an environment where a reactionary ruling regime strictly limited freedom to engage in political or economic activity.

Be that as it may, authoritarian traditions, militarism, a centralized command economy, messianic ideology, expansionism, and constant confrontation with the West are not an inherent part of the Russian mentality or national character. These are all the results of particular circumstances of historical development and, therefore, can and should change as Russia’s domestic situation and external environment change.

At the same time, these traditions could gain new life and receive public support in response to failed transformation policies, lost opportunities to make progress along the mainstream road of European civilization, and an increasingly painful process of adapting Russia’s everyday life to the changes taking place. These moods could flare up in reaction to unfair and disrespectful treatment of Russia by other countries and attempts to exploit its weakness and force it to accept a dependent and humiliated position. Such moods are explainable and understandable, but they should not be allowed to become a self-perpetuating force that defines policy and would lead the country once more along the long dead-end road of self-isolation, messianic ideology, militarized authoritarianism, internal stagnation, and external hostility.

**Who Defeated the USSR?**

Like all other empires, the Soviet Union had its advantages and its moments of glory. Aside from the grim years of Stalin’s secret police terror and mass repressions, the Soviet state, like other empires at their high
points, guaranteed its subjects a high degree of stability, security, and predictability within the strict rules established by the government. Along with colossal military and industrial might, it also developed a modest but universal level of healthcare, education, social protection, and housing that its many different peoples all benefited from on an equal basis (along with a system of strictly regulated privileges for the bosses). Moreover, no one can deny the Soviet Union’s truly world-class cultural, scientific, and technological achievements.

Unlike most other empires, including tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union was not defeated or fatally wounded in a major war and did not disintegrate as a result of exhausting small colonial conflicts, despite the quagmire of the war in Afghanistan (1979-1989) and the troubles in the USSR’s constituent republics (1989-1991). It is particularly significant that despite the common view, the Soviet Union was not defeated in the Cold War. Many people share this misconception because the Soviet collapse coincided in time with the end of global military and ideological confrontation, but in history “happened after” is not always the same thing as “happened as a result of.”

The Soviet empire was created and built for the arms race, confrontation, and, if necessary, waging war against external enemies. The arms race was not in itself a factor that undermined the economy or caused the empire’s collapse. It was the engine driving the entire planned economy and the nucleus of the overall economic and technological system. However, as a result of its own internal dynamic, this system completely lost its effectiveness and attractiveness for the mass consumer by the end of the 1980s, as did the whole edifice of political and ideological dogmas, myths, and claims on which the state regime and the nomenklatura’s monopoly on power were built.

Subsequent experience showed that a tenfold decrease in defense spending in the 1990s did not lead to economic growth but only made matters worse, sending all of the economic sectors directly connected to the defense industry into collapse. The militarized Soviet economy’s systemic
nature prevented any real free movement of capital, labor, and goods into civilian sectors. The system started to fall apart but was not subjected to any deep-reaching reform after 1992.

The Reagan-era acceleration of the arms race, including the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) program, did not deal the final blow to the Soviet economy. Taking into account the time needed to go through all of the usual cycles involved in big military programs – research, development, production, and deployment – the Soviet “appropriate and asymmetrical response” to Reagan’s military and technological challenge at the start of the 1980s would have gotten into high gear (and demanded greatest funding) only by the late 1990s at the earliest. Gorbachev’s détente began fifteen years earlier, and the defense programs underway during the Soviet Union’s final years were based on decisions made back in the 1970s or early 1980s.

Technologically and economically speaking, the Soviet Union could have continued under the growing burden of its military expenses, but the state had been weakened to its very core by internal corrosion. The gap between real life and all of the official ideological dogmas, without exception, had become too glaring. Most of the population fell into apathy and lost all faith in the regime, thus depriving it of social backing and support. As for the ruling nomenklatura, with few exceptions, the system of “natural” selection that had taken shape had filled its ranks with careerist, money-grubbing cynics.

The defeat was hastened by the scientific, technological, and information revolution that brought about unprecedented expansion in the Soviet Union’s contacts with the outside world in the 1980s. By the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union had more than 30,000 nuclear warheads, 5,000 ballistic missiles, 60,000 tanks, and 300 submarines, but as Grigory Yavlinsky noted, it could not produce a single laptop computer. Speaking figuratively, the new era of the universal computerization of human existence determined the outcome of the historical struggle between “real socialism” and capitalism. The Soviet empire was designed as a monolithic
bastion built to withstand constant siege, but it had no immunity against broad-ranging contact with the outside environment and thus collapsed as soon as the siege (or perceived siege) was lifted.

It was not the United States, NATO, or Reagan that brought down the Soviet Union as a political regime and an empire. The Soviet Union did not collapse under pressure from outside, but was toppled by a relaxation of internal tension and inconsistent attempts at internal reform. Mikhail Gorbachev freed Eastern Europe in order to maintain political cooperation with the West, and Boris Yeltsin and the Russian democrats freed the other Soviet republics in order to end the rule of Gorbachev and the Soviet Communist Party. Democratic Russia was the main victor in the Cold War – not the U.S. and its allies, which provided only episodic and half-hearted moral support in achieving this victory.

The collapse of the Soviet economic and political system and its associated ideology preceded the empire’s downfall rather than the other way around. This makes the Soviet case different from that of the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Portuguese empires or the Kaiser’s Germany. The Soviet case also differs from the disintegration of the British, French, Dutch, and Belgian empires, in which collapse of the empire did not lead to serious change in the mother country’s economic and political system.

The communist system in its economic, political, and ideological dimensions was the cement holding the empire together. This is why Russian communists’ calls to restore the Soviet Union and all types of nationalist yearnings for a return to the tsarist empire inevitably involve a return to an authoritarian or totalitarian regime and are incompatible with democracy and the market economy.

The Price of Collapse

Russians have yet to fully wake up to the fact that they live in a country radically different from the Soviet Union, owing its existence not to
historical coincidence, domestic or foreign plots, or miscalculations by its rulers, but to the objective course of events. Gorbachev’s ascent to power, Yeltsin’s emergence on center stage, and the failed coup of August 1991 were just subjective catalysts for deep-seated changes long since waiting to happen. They shaped the form but not the substance of events.

No matter how inevitable it was, the Soviet Union’s fall was a disaster for millions of people, for whom it meant the collapse of the state, the loss of national identity, and separation from friends and family in neighboring countries. In some of the former Soviet republics millions of people suddenly became second-class residents with no rights or protection. The militant, and at times unashamed, nationalism that replaced the internationalist ideology, which, as a rule, had been the natural foundation for everyday relations between the ordinary people of the USSR’s many ethnic groups, came as a shock.

This was all aggravated by the fact that during the Soviet period many of the borders between the different republics had been drawn and redrawn in an absolutely arbitrary fashion, ignoring historic events and ethnic or economic ties. Stalin often deliberately redrew borders in such a way as to sow the seeds of interethnic conflict in order to “divide and conquer.” These lines suddenly became state borders and turned into the focus for tension, territorial claims, nationalist speculation, and trans-border crime.

Negative attitudes towards this turn of events were heightened by the fact that many people had no clear understanding of what had caused the Soviet Union’s demise, as it was a different case from that of past empires. Furthermore, the various Soviet republics differed too in their views of the USSR’s collapse.

The events that followed: economic decline (in Russia above all as a result of failed economic reforms), social contradictions, the breakdown of traditional ties and communication, instability and bloody conflicts in the former Soviet republics and in Russia itself, all added to people’s disappointment and confusion. Added to this were the loss of modest but re-
liable benefits, the rather unworthy behavior of leaders suddenly catapulted into power, the sense of national humiliation due to loss of influence in the world, and a whole chain of foreign policy retreats and defeats.

This created fertile soil for restoring Russian nationalism, artificially constructing national identities or unifying ideas, and attempting to revive traditional and archaic concepts and values in new conditions. Alongside everything else, the recent retreat that has occurred in Russia from many democratic norms and institutions is entirely in line with the emergence of a monolithic state with a development model based on the export of raw materials. In keeping with the historical tradition that dominates the political elite’s mood today, neo-imperial motives are sounding ever clearer.

Meanwhile, the country needs to carry out vast and complex social and political modernization tasks, make the transition to an innovative economic model, and spread European-style living standards beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg to the country’s regions. By some socio-economic and scientific-technical criteria Russia is an advanced country, while by other elementary criteria, even aside from per capita GDP, average wages, pensions, and the subsistence minimum, it is still incredibly backward. The housing situation is still a serious problem (and is still, as Mikhail Bulgakov said, “ruining people”). The country has the world’s biggest gas reserves, but more than half of its territory is still not connected to centralized gas supply networks. Russia has the world’s largest fresh water reserves, but many of its small towns, not to mention villages, do not have modern sewage systems. Russia has always been proud of its huge territory (a seventh of the world’s land surface), but its network of quality roads is shorter than that of tiny Belgium or Switzerland. In terms of life expectancy, child mortality, and level of corruption, Russia ranks among the developing countries and even then is a long way from the top of the list.

Those in Russia sounding the call for a new imperial campaign (including many former liberals – Russia’s neocons),¹ as a rule already have gas, sewage systems, country houses, flashy foreign cars for trips to their dachas along excellent highways, and also property and big bank accounts
abroad. It seems this has all become too mundane and boring for them, and so they want something more thrilling: the restoration of an empire, a big geopolitical game on the international stage, building anti-Western coalitions spanning continents and oceans, and a return to global superpower status...

Sewage systems, gas and decent roads for ordinary people are too mundane, troublesome and time-consuming. They seem to realize subconsciously that they would not succeed in delivering these things anyway, at least not as long as they work within the framework of the current political and economic system that gives them their prosperity and share of power. There is more appeal in rousing the people to new feats for the sake of Russia’s “greatness,” all the more so because this would distract people for a long time to come from questioning the inconveniences and difficulties of life in this same Russia. Why waste time and energy on cancer treatment centers for children? Give us aircraft carriers and military bases abroad!

The real matter of historical and modern political importance is whether a militaristic authoritarian empire is Russia’s natural and only possible form of existence, as many supporters of conservative and nationalist views assert today, or whether this model has outlived itself and should be replaced by a new paradigm.

It seems that one of the “enigmatic Russian soul’s” biggest secrets is the tendency to step on the same rake over and over, never learning from its own mistakes, and thinking up various metaphysical notions to explain this going round in circles. Unable to offer the conditions for sustained growth of national prosperity (and fearing for their privileges and power), the ruling elite mobilized the people for geopolitical expansion and drew them into exhausting military campaigns that sapped the country’s resources and finally toppled the political regime and the state itself. In Europe (and probably in the entire world) you would be hard pressed to find another country that three times repeated the same cycle again and again. Unable to provide a decent life for its own people, it turned to the
search for unifying national ideas and grand imperial projects, unwilling
to understand the mechanisms of past disasters and heaping the blame
for them on individual “villains” (whether Boris Godunov and Shuisky,
Rasputin, Lenin and Trotsky, or Gorbachev with Alexander Yakovlev and
Eduard Shevardnadze).

The state collapse and the Time of Troubles in the late 16th and early
17th centuries were not only or even particularly due to the end of the
Rurik dynasty following Ivan the Terrible’s murder of his son and the mys-
terious death of Prince Dmitry. A century of imperial expansion followed
Russia’s liberation from the Golden Horde yoke and the passing of the
Orthodox baton from Byzantium to Russia in the 15th century. The mili-
tary campaigns against Kazan and Astrakhan and the endless Livonian
War bled the country dry. The flourishing centers of Novgorod and Pskov
(we would call them “economic growth zones” today), which had avoided
destruction by the Mongols, were destroyed in the interests of mobiliza-
tion and consolidation. The boyars – the nobles who formed the political
elite – and their economic base were destroyed by the oprichniki – Ivan
the Terrible’s personal henchmen – whom the tsar then exterminated, too,
leaving nothing in their place. The result, as could be expected, was that
the nation, economy, and state simply fell apart. The disputes between
surviving princes and squabbles over the throne, the peasant uprisings,
the emergence of several false Dmitrys, and the Poles establishing them-
selves in the Kremlin were not the causes of the Time of Troubles but were
the consequences of the unjustified imperial ambitions and senseless in-
ternal massacres unleashed during the reign of Ivan IV (who, incidentally,
during his lifetime was nicknamed the “Torturer”).

With various alterations and adjustments as the times changed, this
cycle repeated itself and again led to the empire’s downfall in 1917, and
then a third time in 1991.

The author has no doubt that the military-imperial road is a dead-
end option that would only lead to yet another disastrous collapse of the
Russian state.
Historical experience shows that all empires are built (or rebuilt) on the basis of the center's decisive military supremacy, its attractiveness as a more advanced economic and socio-political development model, ideological appeal, or a combination of these three factors. All of them played some part in “gathering” the Russian lands and backward frontier regions following the troubles of the early 17th century, and in establishing the USSR after the tsarist empire’s collapse in 1917.

However, none of these factors would be of use in rebuilding an empire based on today’s Russia. Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova depend on Russian oil and gas and supply Russia with cheap labor, but they do not see Russia as an attractive political and economic model. The irredentist mood is strong only in Crimea in Ukraine and in Moldova’s Transnistria region, above all as a result of short-sighted policies of cultural and political oppression on the part of Kiev under President Yushenko, and on the part of Chisinau in the 1990s. Most Ukrainians seek close relations with Russia and do not want to join NATO, but at the same time they do not want to return to the Kremlin’s embrace. Alexander Lukashenko’s current personal power regime in Belarus rejects the idea of reunification with Russia as a “poor relative,” but great power Moscow rejects the idea of an equal union. In the future, a more democratic leadership in Belarus would probably set its course on rapprochement with the European Union, like Ukraine and Moldova, which see in the EU, rather than in Russia, a social and economic model to follow.

Not one of the three South Caucasus countries sees Russia’s ideology and social and political system as more progressive and an attractive model to follow. Georgia is hostile toward Russia following the 2008 conflict and is openly and unanimously trying to throw itself into NATO’s embrace. Armenia is quietly moving in the same direction, and Azerbaijan is busy reproducing the authoritarian oil-state model of the Middle Eastern countries (including hereditary supreme power for life).

To various degrees the authoritarian or dictatorial regimes of Central Asia are not looking northwards for models to follow, but to the south and
east. Any attempt to export the current Russian ideology and political system to these countries using force would provoke an explosion of Islamic radicalism and bitter resistance (as in Iraq and Afghanistan).

From a purely military point of view Russia could hypothetically restore its control over Belarus, Crimea, and Ukraine’s eastern regions, absorb Abkhazia and South Ossetia, annex northwestern Kazakhstan, and, under certain conditions, seize Transnistria and northern Azerbaijan (populated by Lezgins).

However, without an economic and political system attractive for the neighboring peoples, or the kind of ideological “superiority” previously offered first by Christianity and then by communism, military annexation alone would not in any way equate to actual restoration of the tsarist empire or the USSR in a broader sense. To gain control over these hypothetically named and insignificant geopolitical acquisitions (compared to the rest of its territory), Russia would have to pay a tremendous price in its soldiers’ lives, economic resources, political isolation, and the creation of a hostile surrounding environment. Neighboring countries would join forces with more distant foes in an attempt to exploit any of Russia’s weak points and work from all directions to undermine its territorial integrity.

The only way forward with a future for Russia is the road of developing a civilized market economy and European-style democracy. At the same time, Russia should not and cannot just trail along behind the European countries, simply copying their historical evolution. Russia has to take its own historical road to the universal values of European civilization, if only because, unlike the rest of Europe, it is not progressing towards these high standards of public organization from an agrarian-feudal society to the emergence of manufacturing and trading capital and then on to the industrial revolution. Russia’s road takes it from a centralized state economy built on heavy industry and the defense sector and onward via today’s economy, based on the export of raw materials and corrupt state-monopolistic capitalism.
Russia’s huge territory and its raw material resources in the Arctic and Siberia cannot serve forever as the economy’s foundation, as the current economic crisis has convincingly demonstrated, leaving Russia particularly hard-hit by the fall in global energy prices. Abundant natural wealth is simply a resource for diversifying and modernizing the economy and raising the long-term Russian and foreign investment needed for high-technology development. Gradual rapprochement and eventual integration with Greater Europe is the highway of Russia’s post-industrial development and the road able to lead it out of the unenviable role of a backward and dependent raw-materials exporter of the 21st century’s economic giants, despite all its nuclear weapons.

Russia, which has the means to reliably defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, should spread its contacts and influence across the countries of the former Soviet Union and further into Europe and Asia not by force, but through economic and financial growth, an attractive social and political development model, and its scientific, technical, and cultural achievements.

This is not about carving out “spheres of influence” and “regions of privileged interests” or about seizing geopolitical bases or natural resources – these are all relics of past centuries. Global influence in the 21st century is defined by a country’s economic potential measured by the size of its real economy and its participation in global trade, especially in innovative sectors, the amount of foreign investment it receives, and its role in international economic and financial institutions. Only under these conditions can military power make a contribution to the country’s place in the world (and then only if it is also based on advanced technology and a high level of professionalism). With time, countries’ achievements in Internet technology, energy conservation, developing alternative energy sources, environmentally friendly technology, medicine, global telecommunications networks offering personal access, monitoring and command, and the convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science will play the biggest role.²
Foreign Policy As a Mirror of Domestic Policy

There is no doubt in the author’s mind that the policies of the U.S. and its allies over the last almost twenty years were the main factor that ultimately brought Russia and the West into conflict (the blame lies in varying degrees with both U.S. administrations from 1993 to 2008.) But Russia also bears a significant share of responsibility for the worsening relations with the West and for the failure of many of the hopes and projects of the early 1990s.

For a start, there is the historic phenomenon. In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet system, state, and empire took place, fortunately without a destructive civil war or revolution. However, this very fact was also what made the subsequent long and contradictory road towards forming a new state and society inevitable. The ideological confrontation of the Cold War era moved inside Russia itself. Western policies of the last twenty years have had a big impact on internal political struggles within Russia over choosing the country’s own economic, social, and political development path, and defining its allies and adversaries abroad.

One position is based on the idea that Russia, for all the specific aspects of its history, belongs to European civilization and its cultural heritage, which are seen as an enduring value, unlike changing economic and political systems. In order to break out of the vicious circle of successive cycles of oppression and chaos, Russia needs to adopt the main European value, namely that the state is not sacred, but is a more or less functioning organization of civil servants and elected officials hired to serve society and each individual citizen. This forms the foundation for giving priority to domestic development, the transition from a raw-materials export model to a high-technology innovative economic model resting on the democratization of the political system, guaranteed inviolability of private property, both material and intellectual, and attracting domestic and foreign innovation and investment. This road sets a strategic orientation towards developing multifaceted cooperation above all with the European Union, the U.S., and Japan.
This course does not exclude but, on the contrary, implies that efforts will also be made to build equal and respectful ties with Russia’s post-Soviet neighbors and develop mutually advantageous relations with China, India, and other non-European countries (incidentally, the West, which is unambiguous about defining its place in the world, is much more successful at this than Russia.) This strategy’s cornerstone is cooperation with the West, China and other countries, and international organizations on strengthening global and regional security, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and carrying out gradual nuclear disarmament, resolving climate change and environmental issues, and fighting international terrorism and other 21st century threats. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in this respect: “...The end of the Cold War destroyed the justification for bloc politics. The principle of ‘either with us or against us’ no longer works... In today’s globalizing world when we face transnational threats and challenges there is no objective justification for this approach. We have overcome the ideological division. If we face a choice today, it is between cooperation in the common interest, or its absence.”

A completely different approach is that based on Russia’s potential rejection of European values. Instead of European values, the cornerstone here is a philosophy that makes a fetish of the state, giving it total control over society, and that implies maximum state control over the economy and public life and a priority role for security and law enforcement agencies (hence the need for constant external and internal security threats). The main guarantee of the state’s prosperity is a wise (“truly national”) leader who stops bureaucrats from stealing and forces them to work for the good of the people.

This vision of Russia’s path is based on the existence of irreconcilable ideological and political differences between Russia and the West and sees confrontation with the U.S. and its allies and isolation of Russia’s people from their influence (associated with globalization) as the only means of preserving Russia’s “identity as a civilization.” Essentially, if we strip this “special road” notion of all the philosophical wrapping it has accumulated
over time thanks to the smart aleck philosophers (“the particularists”), it boils down to no more than continuing to keep the people as a cheap (even if unproductive) labor force and cannon fodder for ensuring the wealth, power, and expansionist ambitions of the ruling elite.

Adherents of this path see their priority task as the restoration of Russia’s exclusive economic and military-political supremacy over the countries of the former Soviet Union in one neo-imperial form or another. They view this region as a “buffer zone” protecting them from Western influence, a guarantee against looking towards the West as a partner for cooperation, and an attribute of Russia’s status as a global player, despite Russia’s minor role in the global economy, trade, finances, and innovation.

Having lost their supporting pillar in the form of seventy years of Marxist-Leninist scholasticism, supporters of this line fill the resulting intellectual vacuum with newly discovered century-old “truths” in the spirit of geopolitics, the balance of power, spheres of influence, and the struggle between the maritime and continental powers (sometimes with a thin coating of religious and ethnic myths on the differing political traditions of the Anglo-Saxon, Byzantine, and Slavic worlds). In the era of globalization, the information revolution, and the “common trans-border threats and challenges” that Lavrov spoke of, these archaisms are ridiculous as theories. As a blueprint for practical politics, they are fatal for Russia’s interests and in some cases could threaten international security in general.

Even more shameful and regretful is that having failed to obtain a suitable status in the outside world and order at home, a large part of the new elite has turned to rehabilitating Stalinism as the incarnation of Russia’s grandeur and great power status. Mass propaganda along these lines over recent years has influenced public thinking, and this in turn has encouraged politicians to make use of these moods (post-Weimar and post-Versailles syndrome) to bolster their own positions. Led astray by cunning historical falsifications and frustrated by external and internal problems, Russians have been taken in by this great-power chauvinistic campaign. In particular, in surveys for the Name of Russia project in 2008,
people, to their disgrace, chose Stalin (and also Ivan the Terrible) as Russia’s most outstanding historic figure (although formally the priority was given to Alexander Nevsky, who had defeated the Swedes but genuflected before the Mongols).

As for international politics, a very telling example in this area is the rhetorical storm whipped up in Russia’s parliament (with lukewarm support from the executive branch) over the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly declaration adopted in Vilnius in the summer of 2009. Its preamble states that “in the 20th century European countries experienced two major totalitarian regimes, Nazi and Stalinist, which brought about genocide, violations of human rights and freedoms, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.” Russia was mainly outraged because the Soviet Union was tarred with the same brush as Hitler’s Germany, despite its decisive contribution to the victory over the Nazis in World War II.

It is entirely possible that the declaration did set out to cast a shadow over today’s Russia and its foreign policy, playing on the associations between the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union, although it says nothing of this sort directly, nor does it say anything about the Soviet Union’s role in the war. But the stormy reaction by politicians in Moscow, who all but branded their own foreheads with the mark of Stalinism, played right into the hands of those behind such an approach. Both in the West and in Russia, however, this is really all clever juggling of the political and historical notions of “Stalinism” and “the USSR’s victory in the war” – things that in reality are not on one and the same plane.

Stalinism is a complete dictatorship built around a single leader and based on mass repression, a mobilization-distributive economy, ideological fanaticism, absence of rights, and ruthless exploitation of the workers, including slave labor by prisoners. From an academic point of view, one can identify quite a few economic, ideological, and other differences between German Nazism and Soviet Stalinism. But in their methods and in the disastrous results they brought for their countries, these regimes were very similar. This is above all true of the mass repressions that in Germany
and the countries it occupied were carried out on an ethnic basis, while in
the Soviet Union repression was carried out at first on the basis of social
and political criteria (Trotskyites, left and right deviationists, and so on)
and then without any criteria at all, but simply under the gathering iner-
tia of the mass purges needed to bolster Stalin’s personal grip on power
through the use of universal fear, suspicion, and terror.

In the resulting number of victims, Nazi repression and Stalinist re-
pression are entirely comparable, though the numbers have been calcu-
lated fairly accurately in the former case, while even today we have only
approximate figures for the victims of Stalinist repression. It is known that
12-14 million people went through the Gulag in the Soviet Union during
1934-1944, and an additional 10-13 million did so in 1945-1954. Around one
million people were shot (700,000 in 1937-1938 alone). But even today
no one knows for sure how many millions died in the camps from over-
work and illness or were killed by guards or common criminals. The fam-
ine unleashed by campaigns against the “rich peasant” kulaks and forced
collectivization, along with the exile of peasants to Kazakhstan and Si-
beria, took several million more lives. Stalinism destroyed the cream of
the Soviet, above all Russian, intelligentsia, scientists and artists, clergy,
peasantry, and officer corps.

The similarities between Stalinism and Nazism are demonstrated
in a curious fashion today by the various publications of the most reac-
tionary end of the spectrum of what passes for political science in Rus-
sia. Freed from the tight reins of Soviet censorship, various newly-hatched
pseudo-experts have enthusiastically set about whitewashing Stalin and
his executioners and doing the same for Hitler, his ideology, and political
regime. By way of illustration, here is a quote from one of the most odious
authors in this vein, who considers Stalin a genius and Beria, his secret
police chief, a great state organizer: “...The intelligent Russian has a duty
to read ‘Mein Kampf,’ but should do so intelligently,” he exhorts. “After all,
Hitler examined many social issues in ‘Mein Kampf,’ sometimes in mem-
rable and original fashion.” That is as far as the ideology is concerned,
and as for the practice: “Even the Nazis’ rise to power did not exclude the possibility of strong and comprehensive joint Russian-German influence on the fate of world civilization, which would have led in the short term to lasting peace in Europe and in the long term perhaps to world peace.”

Nothing could be clearer: Stalinism and Nazism could have ruled the world as brothers given that they shared such similar values and interests. The author noted in passing that Hitler was wrong to attack the USSR, but was otherwise an entirely acceptable long-term ally for Stalin. The author and others like him are not in the least bit bothered by the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Buchenwald and the mattresses filled with human hair (nor by the labor camps of Kolyma and Vorkuta, or the mass graves in which those shot by the NKVD were buried). Here we have a crystal clear illustration of Stalinism’s package of moral and ideological values: the leader, state, and people are a single whole, and the greatness of the state is everything, while human life and dignity are nothing. The ends justify any means and sacrifices. The Stalinists themselves put Stalin and Hitler on the same plane (and more clearly than the authors of the Vilnius Declaration), only they do so not with condemnation but with approval. Today, these views are shared by some in political circles and the media, and by a portion of those working in the security and law enforcement sectors and for the military-industrial complex (with which the author of the cited pearls of wisdom has direct relationship).

One senior Russian parliamentarian known for his blunt and spontaneous statements (to put it mildly) recently said that “the sins of Stalinism were redeemed by victory in the Great Patriotic War.” In other words, Stalin can be forgiven for everything because he led the people to victory in 1945.

There is indeed a link between Stalinism and the war. If the Comintern had not been so obsessed with carrying out Stalin’s orders to concentrate on fighting the social democrats (whom he called “social fascists”), the real Nazis with Hitler at their head would have probably not come to power in Germany in 1933. If not for Stalin’s mass purges of the army in 1937-38 (which
killed 50,000 officers) and the incompetent military development program he and his favorite cavalry commanders implemented, the country would have been better prepared for war. If not for Stalin’s blind trust in Hitler and the 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, the Wehrmacht’s sudden invasion would not have caught the Soviet Union unaware. If not for Stalin’s arbitrary decisions and fatal strategic mistakes in commanding the military operations, victory would not have cost the Soviet people the tremendous price in human lives, which to this day is estimated anywhere between 27 and 37 million dead on the front lines and in the rear.9 Stalinism brought the country to the brink of disaster in 1941 and 1942 and then forced the people at the cost of unthinkable sacrifice to redeem the guilt of Stalin and his flunkeys on the long road to victory. Yes, people often fought and died with Stalin’s name on their lips, but in their minds this name stood for their homeland and not for the Stalinist regime with its tortures in secret police prisons, flood of executions, and sea of camps.

We could ask the above-mentioned parliamentarian what then redeemed the new waves of purges after the war, the millions of former prisoners of war and interned people sent to the Gulag, the campaigns against the “cosmopolitans” and the “doctors’ plot,” and the repressions carried out against entire peoples on the basis of their ethnicity? We are suffering the consequences of these actions to this day in the North Caucasus. If these aspects of Stalinism are not “genocide, violations of human rights and freedoms, war crimes and crimes against humanity,” as cited in the Vilnius Declaration, then what is?

Unlike those trying to whitewash Stalinism today, most of whom have seen war only in the movies, Academician Georgy Arbatov, who was only just out of school, departed immediately for the front in June 1941. At the age of 19, he commanded an artillery battery on the front line, fought on the Kalinin front and in the battle of Kursk, took part in liberating the left bank of Ukraine and twice forced his way across the Dnieper, was wounded and decorated, was discharged after he contracted tuberculosis, and miraculously survived in army medical units and hospitals. This is
what he wrote about his experience: “…In addition to the officer corps’ destruction in the repressions just before the war, troop deployment along the new unprepared western borders, and Stalin’s demobilizing orders in May-June 1941 to ‘not fall for provocation,’ despite all the reports that the Germans were preparing to attack, there was much more besides after the war began.”

For example, during the first disastrous days of the war when the western front collapsed and the Germans advanced 40-50 km a day, the “great leader,” in a state of shock, retreated to his dacha, did not answer the telephone and did not receive any visitors, fearing that his acolytes would arrest him and hold him responsible for the defeat. Then there is the example of how millions of our people, who had been prisoners of war, were deliberately declared “traitors of the Motherland,” which incited many to join the ranks of the Vlasov army (which was fighting alongside the Germans). Tribunals and punishment detachments executed hundreds of thousands of soldiers and officers abandoned to their fate on the front lines by their commanders and forced to retreat.

Stalin in his despotic willfulness refused to allow the troops to retreat in time and entire armies thus found themselves encircled at Kiev, Vyazma, and Kharkov… Stalin’s excessive self-confidence led to a strategic miscalculation of the enemy’s plans in 1942, and the Germans seized Odessa, Sevastopol, and the North Caucasus and reached the Volga near Stalingrad. Stalin’s obsession with political effect forced the troops to simply keep plowing ahead despite huge unnecessary casualties, carrying out missions by particular dates, starting with the taking of Kiev in 1943 and ending with the head-on storming of Berlin in 1945.

Stalinism’s crimes included the repression of entire peoples: the Crimean Tatars, Chechens, and Karachais, punished because some traitors in their midst cooperated with the enemy. I personally knew several good officers arrested right on the front line and sent off to the camps. The same goes for the repression against freed prisoners of war and the people interned through no fault of their own in the occupied territories.
Tens of millions of people lost their rights after the war, and for decades to follow these shameful black marks stayed in their official records, making them second class citizens.”

Coming back to our own time, the Russian parliament and executive authorities should have responded to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s declaration not by taking offense for Stalin’s sake and confusing Stalinism and the Soviet people’s heroic fight in the war, but by firmly and unambiguously distancing themselves from Stalinism and decisively rejecting any attempts to cast the shadow of his terrible crimes on modern Russia and its policies.

The two above-mentioned policy outlooks characterizing Russia’s political elite have constantly, with varying success, exerted their influence on Russia’s foreign policy. The need for social and economic modernization and the real emergence of new threats and challenges in the 21st century are pushing Russia towards the first road. Historic traditions, the interests of a large part of the new ruling elite, internal and external failures, and the disappointments of the last twenty years are pulling it towards the second road. This leaves its mark on the so-called “multi-vector” nature of Russia’s foreign policy, which often exhibits a lack of clear priorities and of a logical fit between strategy and tactics, objectives, and resources.

The struggle flared up anew following Dmitry Medvedev’s election as president. Of course, supporters of the imperial road realize that the new president won the 2008 election with the backing of Vladimir Putin, with whom he has close political and personal relations. However, they know (or feel) Russian history quite well and remember the numerous examples of leaders coming into their own and gaining their independence from former colleagues (Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Putin himself are all examples of this type.) The traditionalists, seeing in Medvedev a new type of leader with modern and quite democratic views, therefore took preventive action and launched their own offensive, influencing a number of domestic and foreign policy decisions including, it seems, events surrounding the Caucasus conflict in August 2008.
Second, the lack of an effective and clear decision-making mechanism also contributes to the fragmentary nature of Russia’s foreign policy. The parliament’s inability to act as a counterweight to the executive branch and the lack of any real control over the executive authorities turn foreign policy into a forum for representing and lobbying ministerial and private corporate interests. Predominance of informal relations over official powers in the upper echelons of the state hierarchy break down order in the process of coordinating various approaches and setting a unified policy course even within the executive power framework.

Only the Foreign Ministry seems to try to pursue constructive and balanced diplomacy, and the Russian Security Council attempts to give foreign policy a strategic perspective. However, the practice that took shape under Yeltsin and was consolidated under Putin informally gives numerous other influential collective and individual actors access to this sphere, and President Medvedev has not yet succeeded in improving this system (or rather the lack of it).

Various pressure groups often succeed in getting official approval for their own projects, which they then carry out themselves. Gazprom, the oil monopolies, Rostechnologii, Rosoboronexport and other arms exporters, Rosatom and those selling rocket and missile technology, armed forces agencies and defense industry companies, not to mention numerous politicians, all act of their own accord on behalf of the state. To blame them for their active participation would be foolish, given that this very active quality is their reason for existence and means of getting money. The blame lies with the chaotic decision-making system that enables the lobbyists to “short circuit” state policy. The new “bicentric” executive power system further expands group interests’ room to maneuver.

Third, the increased military activity and surrounding fuss, especially after the Caucasus conflict in August 2008, are also largely explained by internal causes.

The military balance is indeed changing noticeably to Russia’s disadvantage. But the paradox is that this is happening in the absence of
deliberate attempts by the U.S. and NATO, which Moscow now officially perceives as its main security threats, to build up their military capability. Along with its politically deeply mistaken policy of eastward expansion, NATO is making significant cutbacks to its overall armed forces. In Europe the current 28 NATO members now have 40 percent fewer servicemen overall, 35 percent fewer ground forces, 30 percent fewer naval forces, and 40 percent less military aviation than the sixteen member countries had at the start of the 1990s. The number of American troops in Europe has decreased three-fold over this same period.\(^\text{10}\) NATO would hardly undertake these cutbacks if it were preparing to attack Russia.

The U.S. has made a close to three-fold reduction in its strategic nuclear forces over the last twenty years. It has carried out practically no modernization of these forces, which are 20-30 percent lower than the ceilings set by the START-1 Treaty (depending on the counting method used), and it has made a six to seven-fold cutback of tactical nuclear forces. It is not making cutbacks to its conventional forces, but it is reorganizing them and arming them to conduct anti-guerilla operations.

Objectively, making use of its huge economic and military-technical superiority compared to Russia, the U.S. is increasing its lead by developing new precision-guided conventional weapons systems, missile defense systems, and information and command systems. But there are no grounds for accusing the U.S. of being on a deliberate track to build up military capability, and its military developments are in any case aimed more at other likely adversaries, though their technical characteristics often raise doubts and fears in Moscow.

The perception of a growing military threat in Russia is due more to the failure of attempts to reform the military in the midst of a huge drop in defense spending in the 1990s, as well as serious mistakes in military policy in the following decade (with a five-fold increase in defense spending). This situation is the primary explanation for the continuing disintegration of the country’s conventional forces, the slow pace of modernizing the strategic nuclear forces, the collapse of the defense industry, the wid-
ening lag in modern military technology, and the increasingly frequent complaints from foreign buyers of Russian arms.

It is easy to get the impression that Russia’s military commanders often lead the political leadership and public astray by spreading two myths: the “growing military threat” from abroad and the “steady build-up of the country’s defense capability.” This includes the numerous recent military PR stunts at home and abroad, such as bomber flights and visits by naval ships to Venezuela, test launches of missiles, grandiose parades and equally grandiose statements, etc. These stunts aim perhaps at diverting attention from the stagnation of Russia’s military reform and the state program to upgrade weapons, along with the corruption, crime, and hazing practices in the armed forces, especially in light of the huge amounts of money spent on defense during the fat years before the crisis began.

Despite cheerful defense reports on successful reform and pronouncements of victory, an analysis of the Caucasus conflict of August 2008 reveals the various problems that still exist. The persistent shortcomings in troops’ combat training and technical equipment and in the command and coordination of the different forces, as well as problems in information support, communications, and radio and electronic warfare, have still not been resolved since the two Chechen campaigns in the 1990s. The losses to Russia’s ground forces and aviation in a five-day conflict in a tiny territory were greater than NATO’s losses in active military operations against Yugoslavia (1999), and also in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) before it installed occupation regimes in those countries.

For twenty years Russia has not been able to resolve the chronic problems of providing housing for officers, organizing contract service in the armed forces, re-equipping troops, improving the command and information support systems, raising the level of combat preparedness, organizing military needs according to a justified and clear set of criteria, optimizing the level, structure and composition of the armed forces, and drafting a suitable military doctrine and strategy.
A young and liberal Russian president (and the same goes for his American counterpart) could be more easily influenced by the generals and defense corporations, especially at first. Big stars on epaulettes and modern military technology make a big emotional impression on civilians, and generals and admirals are consummate masters at putting on impressive displays of firepower. Many decisions are made under the influence of emotions and under pressure from agencies and lobbyists, rather than based on objective analysis of the military issues. This was noticeable in a number of the decisions on military action and programs after August 2008.

The problematic state of affairs and future uncertainty dictate the military and defense industry’s negative attitude towards disarmament talks and the deliberately unrealistic conditions proposed by them, despite Russia’s worsening position in the global balance of military power. The economic crisis has seriously exacerbated all these problems.

The liberal young U.S. President Obama is under pressure from supporters of a hard-line foreign policy and real arms race. If the situation were to arise putting Russian and American strength to the test against each other, Obama would be forced to show a much greater degree of “firmness and patriotism” than his predecessor (as Kennedy found himself having to do during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962). In this situation, relations between the two countries could run into much bigger difficulties and even dangers than during the years of stagnation between the peak in relations following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the low point following the Caucasus conflict of August 2008.

Notes

1 Analogous to the American “neocons,” who formed a large part of the George W. Bush administration and led the U.S. into unprecedented crisis. Their current Russian counterparts include former liberals from the Gorbachev and Yeltsin periods from political, journalistic, and scientific circles, who are now
seeking to “rehabilitate” themselves for their democratic past or follow the “general line” set by the bosses, or who are genuinely disillusioned with their former ideals and thus have become zealous conservatives and neo-imperialists instead.


5 Preodolenie stalinizma (Moscow: RODP YABLOKO, 2009), P. 104.


8 No one other than Marshal Yazov announced the figures for losses: 9 million on the frontlines and 27-28 million among the civilians. See: V. Tatyanichev, “Poteri podschtany,” Ofitsersky splav, № 4 (33) (May 15, 2009).


10 Overall, NATO forces are 42 percent lower in numbers of servicemen than the ceilings set by the original Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, 25 percent lower in armored vehicles and artillery, and 45 percent lower in aircraft.
The Fall of the Berlin Wall: a Time to Reflect on Why Things Are Not As They Should Be...

*Lilia Shevtsova*

I do not like anniversaries and discussions about them. But there are some dates that remind us of historic turning points and the price paid to achieve them. Such dates are worth remembering so as not to repeat past mistakes, and find ourselves paying the price once again – this time for our forgetfulness.

The twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall reminds us of an event that is worthy of reflection. It reminds us of the concessions Russia made, of what we were unable to do or did not want to risk doing, and of what simply turned out to be a failure. These are useful reflections, whatever be the case, to snap us out of our drowsy, self-tranquilized state or “don’t-care” attitudes.

In 1989, the former Soviet satellite states tossed aside the dogmas that Moscow had forced down their throats so stubbornly for so long and turned to the West. Their return to Europe was a difficult and in some cases tortuous process. When you talk with the “new Europeans” today, they always complain, grumble, and criticize, expressing all manner of dissatisfaction with their European lives. But none of them want to return to the past, much less to Russia’s embrace. They express dissatisfaction not about the principles on which their life is organized, but about how their elites implement these principles.

Russia has continued on its own road since then, but heading in the opposite direction, attempting to find a new embodiment for an old matrix. I will not describe this experiment at returning to the past and the results it has produced. Russian essayists have been busy examining Russian
post-communism from every possible angle for the last ten years, and few have any doubts today as to its result. President Medvedev’s periodic statements about the failures of recent years show that something of a consensus has emerged in Russia – that we let one historic opportunity slip through our fingers and do not know if another will come our way.

There is no need to repeat the diagnosis. I suggest instead that we reflect on why Eastern Europe was able to return to European civilization, but Russia hesitated to move in that direction. My arguments are concise and repeat many well-known ideas, but the date we are marking offers a suitable occasion to try giving them a clearer logic.

Those who have already reflected on why the “new” Europe was able to make this move, while Russia could not find the corresponding resolution, usually advance three arguments. First, the “new Europeans” achieved national consensus on returning to Europe’s fold. In other words, all political forces, including the communists, supported this move. The second argument follows from the first – nationalism in the Eastern European countries turned out to be pro-Western and made it easier for these countries to integrate into the united Europe. Paradoxically, the nationalism of the “new Europeans” made it possible for them to limit their own sovereignty in favor of supranational European organizations. As we know, Russian nationalism remains anti-Western and seeks to follow a completely different road. Finally, the third argument usually boils down to the assertion that the transformation of an empire always has its own specific nature. I agree with these arguments, but the question is, why was the “new” Europe able to achieve national consensus on its new road, while Russia failed to do so? Why were their elites able to unite around the idea of transformation, while in Russia the elite united around a completely different idea? I do not dispute the importance of an empire in the transformation process, but why was it that the Russian elite were able to cast aside this notion of an empire in 1991 and play a decisive part in bringing down a world power? Therefore, the empire factor, during the initial stage at least, does not play the part we usually ascribe to it in Rus-
sia. Consequently, there must have been other factors that pushed Russia in the direction along which it has been creeping these last twenty years.

Finally, what factors made the fall of the Berlin Wall a watershed for the former Soviet “younger brothers,” but not for us? I will outline a few arguments that seem significant.

There are four factors that I think had an impact on Russia’s development after the Soviet Union’s collapse: historical legacy, structural contradictions in the transformation process itself, the personal factor’s role, and the West’s influence.

Let’s begin with history. Everything looks clear here. Russia was unlucky with its history and traditions. The Russian state’s long centuries of a history built on strict centralization and suppression of individual freedoms could only obstruct any moves toward liberalization. Indeed, until Gorbachev, there were no attempts to abandon the system of power concentrated in a single source. Attempts to partially liberalize the system always ended in failure. Alexander II’s experiment with constitutional monarchy in the 19th century fell through, and his successor, Alexander III, realizing that any liberalization of the monarchy could lead to its downfall, returned things to their older familiar pattern. The Khrushchev Thaw in the 1960s likewise got reversed and strengthened the Soviet elite’s fears that any kind of thaw could undermine the state’s foundations.

Russia avoided the revolutions that shook Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in the post-war period and helped create an opposition movement in those countries, as well as pragmatists within the ruling class, willing to accept political pluralism. At the decisive moment, when Gorbachev opened a window on the world and the country awoke at the end of the 1980s, there was no responsible opposition force in Russia and no responsible pragmatists able to live in a free society.

Equally significant is that Russia missed the historical period when the spirit of constitutionalism and awareness of the importance of the supremacy of law and the state’s duty to submit to it took shape in Europe. To use the late Ralf Dahrendorf’s words, Russia “missed the lawyer’s hour.”
The emergence of the “state of law” (Rechtsstaat) was one of 19th century Europe’s greatest achievements before European society actually reached the democratization stage. That Russia never got around to accepting the principle of the supremacy of law is reflected in the fact that after the fall of communism even liberals chose to follow a line of political expediency. Russia did not adopt other liberal principles either, such as civil freedoms, independent institutions, the guaranteed immutability of private property, and the complete separation of church and state.

The tradition of the state taking precedence over the individual and society in Russia always went hand in hand with state expansionism. Originally, the need to defend the people and a weak state organization against attacks by hostile tribes dictated the drive to create a buffer zone of colonized lands to serve as protection. Then the centralized state organization, which became a blend of Byzantine autocracy (only with no limits) and the traditions of the Tatar-Mongol Golden Horde – and which was given a superficial makeover by Peter the Great later down the line – could not but continue this expansionist course, bringing in new territories and peoples, which meant constant wars and, during the periods between wars, the search for the next enemy.

The centralized state kept society suppressed, called for constant reinforcement of the state’s power, and maintained suspicion towards the outside world. The power thus created only served to further encourage centralization. State power remained the means for uniting society after the fall of communism. The stereotype of a state organization based on territory, military force, and prestigious international status still fills the Russian elite’s minds today, along with the personified power system used to achieve these goals and the search for an enemy that justifies such power. Communism fell and the Soviet Union collapsed, but a centralized state organization not based on the rule of law – principles alien to the European tradition – continues to live on in the Russian ruling class’s political consciousness.

Let’s turn now to the second reason for our failure to seize the historic opportunity – the difficulties that Russia clearly experienced in its
transformation process in the 1990s. Russia found itself facing an unprecedented challenge after the fall of communism. Never before had an attempt been made to transform an empire as well as a nuclear superpower with a messianic ideological tradition all at once – simply because such a state had never existed before. To further complicate matters, the task involved transforming a state that had survived by militarizing daily life. Igor Klyamkin describes in convincing detail the unique features of Russia’s militarized state. I will not repeat his words.

Furthermore, the Russian elite had to work on building a new political regime all at once, mastering along the way the mechanism of its legitimization through elections and building a new state. State-building and democratization are hard to carry out simultaneously, and trying to fit them together often leads to tragic results, as in the collapse of Yugoslavia. Danquart Rostow and Robert Dahl, followed by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, were apparently right in warning that successful democratization requires a consolidated state, which Russia did not have at the start of the 1990s.

But the difficulties do not end here. Yeltsin and his team had to carry out four revolutions all at once: create the market, democratize power, reform the empire, and find a new geopolitical role for a country that until recently had been a nuclear superpower. Some of these reforms ran counter to each other. For example, it was difficult to build the market and democratize the political regime at the same time. Moreover, what the rest of the world had accomplished one stage at a time (nation-building, developing capitalism, political democratization), Russia had to accomplish all at once. This was an unprecedented undertaking in history. All of the successful post-communist transitions began by building a new political system, but in Russia the transformation began with the privatization of property without having first established independent political institutions.

Upon further reflection, another factor hampering our progress came to mind. Turning now to Francis Fukuyama, and no, I am not going to talk about the “end of history,” on which Fukuyama was mistaken after all, but he offered some more subtle observations about transformation in
Southeast Asia. He came to the conclusion that traditions are not always an obstacle to political liberalization but, on the contrary, can actually speed up its progress. As Fukuyama said, “traditional political gentlemen-scholars, could be jettisoned relatively easily and replaced with a variety of political-institutional forms without causing the society to lose its essential coherence.”¹ In other words, democracy can be built not on the basis of civil and individual rights, but on the basis of a “traditional moral code” and old forms of collective life. In Russia, however, traditional forms of social unity and old moral codes were long since eradicated. Stalinism was the radical instrument that uprooted old Russian traditions. However, it turned out that the resulting vacuum did nothing to speed up the formation of new political institutions. Attempts to build a new political system in the absence of mechanisms ensuring social unity led only to the further fragmentation of society.

Finally, there is one more factor, purely political this time, that perhaps played a decisive role at the critical moment, preventing the old matrix from falling apart. The factor in question is the emergence of two legitimate power centers in Russia by the time of the Soviet collapse – the Russian Congress of People’s Deputies, inherited from the Soviet past, and the presidency. They vied for a monopoly on power, and this led to a split in the political class and society. The resulting confrontation was an insurmountable obstacle on the road to forming a new national consensus on reform.

Russia was unlucky not only with its history and the contradictions in the transformation process that complicated its transition to a liberal model, but also with the personal factor. Yeltsin came to power at a moment when the society and the political class had become aware that the old system had no future, but were not yet ready to make a conscious choice to work on building a new system. The events of 1990-1992 showed that even progressive members of the political class were not ready to carry out liberal-democratic reforms. The mixture of naïveté, self-doubts, and excessive self-confidence, as well as the social insensitivity that character-
ized Russia’s elite, only hampered Russia’s progress toward new values. In the 1990s even Russia’s democrats understood democracy primarily as elections, which were to guarantee their power, and refused to even consider that the same elections could bring their rivals to power. Not surprisingly, with this sort of a mentality, the elite were incapable of making the compromises and entering into the pacts that form the foundation of successful democratic transitions. The elite were unable to agree either on Russia’s past or on its future, and yet they were trying to build a new Russia. The fall of communism was not perceived in Russia as a defeat of Russia’s traditions, and this made it impossible to reject the old rules of the game once and for all.

It is the political elite that bear responsibility for the fact that Russian society did not do any critical reassessment of its history. Not only did the elite not try to find new principles for uniting the society, but on the contrary, through their selfishness they only widened the divisions and sparked battles between clans, fighting not for their vision of Russia’s future, but to grab their share of assets and power.

Thus, there was no real force able to carry out the needed transformations in Russia in the early 1990s. The intelligentsia was the source of the democratic revival during Gorbachev’s *perestroika* years, but after Yeltsin came to power, the intelligentsia lost out and ended up reaping neither political nor economic dividends from communism’s fall. On the contrary, intellectuals saw their status decline and were relegated to the margins of political life. The new people in power had no need for intellectuals. This marginalizing process was accelerated by the collapse of the budget in the sectors in which the intelligentsia worked: science, education, and the arts. Those intellectuals who did find their way to power had to play by the *nomenklatura*’s rules, confirming the general rule that intellectuals lose their social and political role if they go into politics. Russia in the 1990s had not yet developed a middle class with an interest in liberal-democratic reform. The emerging groups that had the appearance of a middle class were those servicing the bureaucrats and oligarchs. The elite – brought to
the top after the Soviet Union’s collapse – fragmented into rival groups, each competing for a monopoly on power. Under conditions in which an alternative to the elite still had not been able to form, the experienced Soviet *nomenklatura*, injecting a bit of fresh blood into its ranks from other classes, managed to become the backbone of the new ruling class. Not only did this “old-new” ruling elite restore its hold on power, but it also gained control of assets and thus became even more powerful than it had been during the communist period.

During the Yeltsin years, the public could not develop civil society all on their own – they had no experience. The new rulers in the Kremlin, brought to power on the democratic tide, not only gave no consideration to how to help the emergence of civil society, but obstructed the process, turning their backs on the democratic forces that helped put them in power, above all the Democratic Russia movement. Society was forced to hand power over to one man and give him their trust, but the public gave Yeltsin this power on the condition that he would not take away the new freedoms they had won; this was the new social contract between Russia and its leader. This contract was never given any institutional embodiment, however, and thus remained fragile.

The Marxist approach taken by the technocrats who launched reforms together with Yeltsin also played a part. They thought capitalism alone could play a decisive role and ignored the need to establish new institutions, and all the more to place the state under the rule of law. As a result, Russia’s example confirmed Adam Przeworski’s observations on the interaction between democracy and capitalism in Latin America, namely, that there could be no liberal economy without stable liberal institutions. On the contrary, without liberal institutions, economic reforms could become a factor pushing the ruling class towards authority in a bid to protect its own interests. Russian practice confirmed this conclusion.

Russia did not have the right set of initial conditions for a successful transition. However, it is important to remember that history offers us a number of examples of successful democratic transformation when
effective leadership, “political engineering,” and the elite’s willingness to break with the past have made up for the absence of certain conditions for democratization. The cases of India, Taiwan, and South Korea show that democracy can take root in non-European, non-Christian, and even poor (as in India’s case) societies if they have leaders and elites that understand that democracy will better serve the national interests. Suarez, de Klerk and Havel facilitated democratization in Spain, South Africa, and Czechoslovakia, even though the right conditions were lacking in these countries. The presence of a democratically oriented elite in Poland helped to neutralize the authoritarian tendencies of its leader, Lech Walesa. As Giuseppe di Palma and Albert Hirschman showed, the absence of democratic leaders and democratic elites is also not always a critical factor, because democracy can also be built by non-democrats, i.e., pragmatists who realize that keeping the old system in place will only lead to their own and their country’s doom.

It is hard to gauge the extent to which a reform-minded leadership and a responsible elite in Russia could have offset, at least in part, the absence of the conditions required for transformation. Transformation of a communist country, empire, and superpower has its own specific nature that differs from transformation in Latin America or in Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe. However, we can assume that the existence of a leader in Russia, who would be ready to build independent institutions and recognize the importance of the supremacy of the law, could still have facilitated the country’s transformation into a state operating under the rule of law.

In my opinion, autumn 1991 was the decisive moment for post-communist Russia. It was specifically at that time, following the defeat of the old nomenklatura’s August coup, which attempted to stop the Soviet Union’s collapse, that Yeltsin won a huge amount of public confidence: around 70 percent of Russians were ready to support the country’s movement towards liberal democracy. Many of these people did not know what democracy specifically entailed, but they saw it as an ideal and a form of
existence. People in post-Soviet society sought individual freedom, Western living standards, and a Western way of life. In 1917, Russian society had not been ready to support freedom, and this had cleared the way for the Bolsheviks’ rise to power. But in 1991, society was no longer an obstacle in the way of breaking with the Russian system. Society gave Yeltsin its support, and he could have used this to build a new Russia. This would have entailed adopting a new constitution that introduced a system of checks and balances, and holding new presidential and parliamentary elections on the basis of the new constitution. Without a doubt, Russia would have supported these reforms in the autumn of 1991, and the Russian parliament would have legitimized them, following the example not only of its Spanish counterpart, which did the same in its time, but also the communist parliaments of Eastern Europe that legitimized their countries’ transitions to political competition.

However, Yeltsin took the opposite road and set about consolidating his own power. At the same time, he retained elements of the Soviet system, such as the parliament, which, under the old constitution, was the main center of power, and this made the confrontation that went on between the legislative and executive branches in 1991-1993 inevitable. Yeltsin gave his support to economic reform, but refused to build the independent institutions without which this reform was doomed to become what it did – a chance for the old-new ruling class to privatize assets in its own interests. The only real excuse for Yeltsin is that not even the liberals and democrats understood back then the need to abandon the parliament and constitution inherited from the Soviet period and carry out political reforms.

The liberals and democrats believed that it was enough to rely on the leader. Soon enough (in 1992), the government liberals had the chance to see whether it had been wise to place such trust in Yeltsin when he dismissed their government and formed a new government with Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister. The liberalism pursued by Yegor Gaidar and his team boiled down to privatization, and they carried this out in such a way that they, more likely accidentally rather than by design, laid the foundations
for the authoritarian-oligarchic regime that followed. Without independent institutions and respect for the rule of law, this fate was sealed.

Thus, Yeltsin and the Russian elite let the opportunity slip to lay the foundations of a system that would have guaranteed liberal freedoms in Russia. Even with all the obstacles in the way, if Russia had had a leader and a team aspiring to go beyond the old autocracy, it could have taken more decisive steps towards a new life. There is no possible answer to the question that remains as to the extent to which the leader and the elite, given their origins in the Soviet system and lack of any other experience, could have behaved any differently. But Gorbachev was also a product of that same communist nomenklatura, and yet all by himself, acting on his own initiative, he had begun undermining the Russian tradition! True, Gorbachev started dismantling the old tradition without foreseeing the consequences. But reformers never can foresee all the consequences of their efforts to shake up the status quo. If they could all foresee the future, how many of them would even have started out on the road to reform? Looking back over the Yeltsin years, we can conclude that autumn 1991 was the brief historic moment when Russia could have tried to cheat history and tradition (and geography) and bypass the Russian mentality and habits. But the fact that Yeltsin and his team didn’t even try to make use of this opportunity suggests that tradition and history in Russia proved a stronger force than chance.

Yeltsin’s limits as a leader were determined not only by his background and mentality as a product of the Soviet political system, but also by the way in which the Soviet Union dissolved. The Soviet Union was dissolved by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus – Boris Yeltsin, Leonid Kravchuk, and Stanislav Shushkevich – who carried out a constitutional coup, toppling Gorbachev. But the fact of the matter was that for the majority of Soviet citizens, the Soviet Union’s collapse was a tragedy. Yeltsin was aware of this, and, as one of the leaders who made the decision to dissolve the USSR, he could not allow the possibility of power falling into the hands of an opposition that would have held him responsible for
the Soviet Union’s collapse. The majority of Russians still feel nostalgia for the Soviet Union to this day, seeing it as a symbol of a more stable existence. Survey results show that 71 percent of Russian respondents regret the Soviet Union’s collapse, while 22 percent feel no regret; 24 percent think the collapse was inevitable, and 65 percent think it could have been avoided. Involvement in the Soviet Union’s dissolution was one of the factors (but not the only one) that forced Yeltsin and his team to attempt to hang onto power at all costs. Events soon followed that made it impossible for Yeltsin to establish the conditions for genuine competition.

I am referring to Yeltsin’s decision to shell the parliament in 1993. The Russian parliament became the focus of national-populist opposition after the Soviet collapse, but its liquidation and the accompanying bloodshed ended the hopes for a national consensus and signaled a return to force as the means of conflict resolution. Survey results show that 60 percent of respondents blame Yeltsin for the parliament’s dissolution and think the use of force was unjustified (in 1993, only 30 percent held this view). Yeltsin, together with the political class (including those who supported the parliament and those who supported the president) led Russia into a trap, forcing it to choose between a return to a new version of the Soviet system on the one hand and a new model of anti-communist authoritarianism on the other. Russia found itself choosing between two forms of non-democratic power in 1993. It was then, after liquidating the parliament inherited from the Soviet past, that Russia closed the door on hopes for greater political freedom in the near future, if only because bloodshed is the most unlikely soil for producing a pluralist democracy. Thus, Russia could have chosen liberal democracy only in 1991, and then during only a brief moment. Having used force to eradicate the opposition, Yeltsin was no longer ready for free elections.

The super-presidential regime that emerged in Russia after the end of the confrontation between the legislative and executive branches was cemented in the new constitution of 1993. Yeltsin went through this constitution personally and the authoritarian leanings of its provisions were
partly his doing. The new regime emerged from the victory of one political force over another, and the “all or nothing” nature of this victory meant that those who had liquidated their opponents were hardly likely to feel a need for political competition. The new constitution declared the sovereignty and freedom of the people, but in practice it consolidated a superpresidential regime that undermined these same principles. According to the constitution, the president does not represent any of the branches of power but stands above them, “sets the main outlines of the country’s domestic and foreign policy,” and “is the guarantor of the Russian Federation’s constitution and human and civil rights and freedoms.” The president’s powers are on a level similar to those of the Russian monarch from 1906 to 1917. The Yeltsin constitution laid the structural foundation for a regime of personal power, and Yeltsin supporters who worked on the document admit this.

In analyzing Russia’s transformations it is worth recalling Joseph Schumpeter, who gave particular importance among the five conditions for democracy to “the role of human material” in politics – the role and mood of the people who lead parties and get elected to the parliament and are appointed to the government. Schumpeter said that these should be people of “exceptionally high quality.” But in Russia, the quality of the “human material” in question – the country’s elite – precluded it from seeking greater public freedom and competition. This applies to the “quality” of Russia’s liberals and democrats, too. Finally, post-communist Russia gave rise to no new figures of the likes of Witte or Stolypin, because the system did not give modernizers the kind of independence the tsarist regime had been willing to offer.

But it is Boris Yeltsin who bears the main responsibility for letting the opportunity for democratization slip. A leader’s quality is measured by his ability to rise above society and political class and offer them a new vision. Yeltsin did not display such qualities, and his leadership was soon reduced to simply reacting to events that he could not always predict and with which he failed to keep up.
Yeltsin’s second presidential term not only turned politics into a farce, but discredited the elements of liberal democracy that he himself had helped to establish in Russia. In 1995-1996, Russia faced a new dilemma: hold honest elections with the possibility that the communists would come to power, or keep the ruling group in place by “managing” the elections. The experience in Eastern Europe showed that when communist parties came to power through honest elections, it did not automatically mean a return to the past. On the contrary, the “new European” communists were forced to carry out liberal reforms. The same was seen in Moldova, where the ruling Communist Party proclaimed the goal of taking their country into the European Union. True, these are communist parties that have evolved towards social democracy. It is hard to say what direction Gennady Zyuganov’s Russian Communist Party would have taken if history had given him the chance to take power. But it is worth noting that the government led by Yevgeny Primakov, supported by the communists in 1999, did not abandon market and democratic principles. Yeltsin’s efforts to maintain his hold on power by giving up free elections had obvious consequences that laid the foundations for strengthening the system based around a single center of power – this time in anti-communist packaging.

Sadly, looking back on those days, we have to recognize that Yeltsin did not become Russia’s Suárez. Russia’s liberals and democrats were likewise not ready for the role that their counterparts played in Eastern Europe in the 1980s-1990s. There were also no pragmatists ready to follow a new line of thinking in the early 1990s in Russia. As a result, the country failed to pick up the pace in the “maturation” of its civilization, but this does not mean that Russia had no basis at all for straightening out its road toward freedom.

In this context it is also worth noting the West’s role at the start of Russia’s transformations. The second and third waves of democratization in Europe showed that integrating the transitional societies into the European community framework was the most important guarantee for the success of their democratic reforms. But Russia’s integration into the Eu-
european community proved impossible. Europe was having enough trouble digesting East Germany and was not ready for new sacrifices. Moreover, the Russian elite, having started to build a new state, were not able to abandon Russian sovereignty in favor of supranational structures. Such a possibility was not even considered in Moscow at that time.

However, the West did have considerable opportunities to influence Russia’s development at the start of the 1990s. Russia depended on the international financial institutions and the Western community at that moment. Moreover, Yeltsin and his team sought rapprochement and partnership with the West, and this made them open to Western advice.

But what was the West’s response to the new Russia? The West concentrated its efforts primarily on forcing through privatization in Russia, which Western politicians, together with Russian liberals, thought would create the conditions for developing both the market and democracy. For understandable reasons, Western political circles did not insist that Russia strengthen independent institutions; they feared that communists would return to power or that nationalists might come to the fore, and Russia’s liberal-technocrats energetically supported them in these fears. The result was the emergence of oligarchic capitalism under a democratic facade and an elected monarchy that the Russian public came to associate with Western influence, which gave rise to a stubborn mistrust of liberal democracy and the West in general.

There was also a particular moment in 1993, when Western leaders had a direct impact on the development of events in Russia, though they perhaps to this day do not realize the role they played. I am referring to the moment when Boris Yeltsin tried to clinch the West’s support for his battle against the parliament. Judging by the evidence, it seems either that he received Western leaders’ support for his use of force to end the conflict with the opposition, or that he assumed he had their support. Without the West’s support, particularly if Western leaders had warned Yeltsin that it would not be wise to use force against the opposition, Yeltsin might not have resolved to move against the parliament as he did. At that time he
still listened to Western advice. He might have found himself forced to agree to the “zero option” that was being discussed in Russian political circles in 1993, namely, the adoption of a new constitution that would establish a system of checks and balances while keeping a strong presidency. But the West still considered the communist opposition in Russia a sworn enemy. By supporting radical measures against the opposition, Western leaders helped to push Russia onto an authoritarian development track without even being aware of it.

Such are the thoughts that come to mind upon this anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The past cannot be changed, and so it is pointless to try to wonder “what might have been if…” However, a study of the past helps us broaden our options for the future. These kinds of anniversaries that force us to reflect on past events and why they happened can be useful, but only if we use them to recall our past mistakes and examine our present direction.

Note

Humankind has come a long way in the twenty years since the “velvet revolutions” in Central and Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Back then, when the great changes were taking place, romantic illusions about the “end of history” became popular. People thought that following the historic defeat of communism as both a doctrine and political practice, mankind would inevitably join forces to build a new global civilization based on liberal democracy and a free market economy. But two decades later, what we see instead are new economic, political, and religious dividing lines. Russia, along with other post-Soviet countries, played an important part in this change in direction. The countries occupying the former Soviet Union’s territory proclaimed their intention to embody the values emblazoned on the banners of the democratic and anti-communist revolutions at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, but they ended up building a new transitional and interim reality of their own. The result is an eccentric mix of various principles: the state’s domination over society and the individual – inherited from the old system – and new institutions and relations such as private property, multi-party elections, and division of powers. It is still not clear just how long this transitional state will continue and what might eventually emerge in place of this “hybrid” reality. However, first of all we should try to understand why it arose in the first place. Was it the result of a dramatic coming together of unfavorable factors, or was it fated from the outset, programmed by the Soviet Union’s entire history from its birth to its collapse? This article reflects on precisely these questions.
The fact that a Soviet type social system contains such great potential for inertia surprises no one now. This kind of inertia can be seen to a greater or lesser degree in all the countries that “emerged from communism.” It can be seen in the new elites’ obsession with monopolizing power with the help of modified hierarchical-bureaucratic structures and the more technologically sophisticated manipulation of public opinion, their arrogant disregard for society, and their endless appetite for turning assets into an inheritance right. But in Central and Eastern Europe, these post-communist symptoms are kept hidden behind the European facades of new institutions, whose role and influence increase as one goes from east to west, from the Balkans and the Baltic states to the Czech Republic and Slovenia. These lingering remnants of the past raise their heads only when the new system enters a development crisis, such as the current situation. Then, as in the early 1990s, seemingly forgotten political actors make their reappearance on the stage – ultranationalists and anti-Europe activists proclaiming a new war against even older ghosts from the past such as communism and Stalin and their ideological supporters.

In Russia, as in most of the countries of the former Soviet Union, the post-communist reality continues to dominate politics and everyday life. Moreover, the new elite in power and the propaganda services that work for them assert that these kinds of hybrid forms, dubbed “sovereign democracy” in Russia, embody the true sense of post-communist transformation, for this part of the world, at least. Following this logic, although movement towards democracy (real, competitive democracy) is the ultimate goal of transformation, it is a lengthy process that under no circumstances should be hastened. As a result, a long period dominated by traditional institutions and public relations, updated a little to meet modern demands, is allegedly inevitable. Otherwise, society would face the inevitable danger of an abrupt anti-modernization turnaround. Such, they remind us, was the fate of the February 1917 Revolution which, encouraged by its easy victory, tried to race too fast into building democracy. Although the interest in maintaining the status quo is obvious in such reflections on the part of those in power, at the
same time, their fears of an anti-modernization turnaround are far from groundless. Indeed, these fears, albeit in a distorted fashion, reflect serious social realities. However, it is important to clarify here why the role and influence of post-communism varies so greatly in the different parts of the former “Socialist Commonwealth” – in the Central and Eastern European countries that have become part of “greater Europe” and in the countries of the former Soviet Union, in particular Russia.

Hundreds of books have been written on this subject. Summing up their content, two key conclusions are evident. First, the participants of the “velvet revolutions” had clear aims: a return to European civilization, which required them in their political practice to follow this civilization’s and its institutions’ particular demands and rules. Second, this conscious and voluntary choice on their part turned the European Union into a powerful player in all of the Central and European countries’ domestic politics during the years of market and democratic reforms. It was simply not possible not to take into consideration or disregard altogether the European Union’s views.

In Russia, as in most countries of the former Soviet Union, neither the new elite nor the general public had a clear idea of the goals of transformation. Initially, it seemed that everyone wanted to build democracy and a “society of plenty,” as in the West. But with the early difficulties that the reforms brought along this infatuation soon faded. However, an unclear situation with uncertain objectives remained. Of course, the post-Soviet elite set domestic policy and its priorities, and they were not about to let anyone else get involved in this process. Their aim was not to convert power into property, as was previously thought. Reality proved more imaginative than even the notable predictions of Leon Trotsky, who in the late 1930s painted a convincing picture of how the Stalinist *nomenklatura* would carry out a bourgeois counterrevolution. The new elite organized things in such a way as to maintain the power system with all of its familiar mechanisms, and at the same time become new owners of various assets. The general public did not have the awareness needed at that time (and still does not
have it, for that matter) to impede these plans. Unlike the citizens of the Central and Eastern European countries, they were inexperienced, clumsy, and naïve in political and civic terms. Democracy in their minds was associated more with having sausage, kitchen appliances, and their own cars than with some particular set of values and code of behavior that you had to follow even when you didn’t want to. Such a society could not act as a counterbalance to the new elite’s selfish plans. It soon forgot the euphoria of the anti-communist revolution of August 1991 and just tried to survive and adapt to life under the new conditions. European guidelines were not needed for such objectives. In any case, there was no particular pressure from outside to carry out democratic and market reforms. The American administration at that time had powerful levers with which to influence the government in Moscow, but its greatest fear was the restoration of the previous social system. Therefore, it closed its eyes to the new elite’s shameless actions, such as predatory privatization, lawlessness, “African” levels of corruption, and the emergence of an oligarchy. This combination of factors made it possible for the new Russian elite to achieve its goals with little effort. The result was the emergence of the transitional forms that continue to dominate Russian politics and public life to this day. However, Russia is not unique in this respect. A similar situation can be seen in the majority of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

This is the obvious aspect, the surface layer. Far more interesting is the issue of the institutions that are of critical importance not only for understanding the present but also for predicting the future. Russia, like all other countries of the former Soviet Union, did not develop strong and stable institutions – whether political, social, economic, or judicial. However, it is impossible to build modern democracy or carry out successful market reform without these institutions. A good example in this respect is the February 1917 Revolution mentioned above. The anti-modernization break-up that followed came about in large part because the freedom born out of the February events was not given a basis in institutions. The old tsarist-era institutions were swept aside, but the groups who came to power failed to
establish new, democratic institutions under the crisis conditions of development. As a result, anarchy was on the rampage. In any country, groups that categorically reject the idea of competition between ideas, social and political groups, and even goods usually take successful advantage of the spread of anarchy to take power, and such was the case in Russia.

If we study a different example of post-communist transformation – the cases of China and Vietnam in the Far East – we see that institutions also play a decisive role in these countries, not in affirming freedom, but in successfully developing the market. To meet the new objectives, market reforms have remodeled the institutions of the existing political system, the backbone of which is communist party power. The process of the transfer of power, which is a key element in transitional systems, has been strictly institutionalized and subjected to numerous rules and regulations.

Nothing of the kind has happened in Russia. Freedom and ownership rights have not been given an institutional framework, nor has there been a return to the numerous rules and procedures that the old system had for regulating the elite’s recruitment and the transfer of power. For various reasons (the interests of this or that group, the balance of powers within the ruling class, etc.) political institutions in Russia can continue to be strong or hardly noticeable, active or in a dormant state. Only recently it seemed that there was one stable institution holding all of this political mixture together – the presidency. However, the election of 2008 resulted in the formation of a new power structure, dubbed the “tandemocracy,” which clearly demonstrated that a stable presidential institution was yet another illusion. Although the previous super-presidential constitution has been preserved, real power has shifted to the prime minister’s office. This shows that power is not an institution but something based on relations of personal dependence. Thus, the political regime remains personalistic in nature, though it is based on two decision-making centers, which is unusual for such cases.

Private property rights, the most important underpinnings of a new political and economic order, have not been given solid embodiment in
Russia’s new system. On the contrary, they have become relative in nature, like back in the days of classic feudalism, as one wave of redistribution followed another. You can happily own land, factories, and banks, as long as you serve the state and government, but the minute you retire, you can only count on God’s kindness…

It is not hard to explain the causes for this institutional failure in the transition to post-communism in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union was so swift and unexpected that it was practically impossible to preserve the old institutions, but no one was ready to build new ones. There were no ideas or strategic plans to draw on. Past experience had happened long ago and had failed in any case, and so it could not offer a reliable blueprint for new construction.

However, little effort has been made to understand why, twenty years later, the Russian political scene remains just as bereft of institutions. Modern Russian social science literature presents various methodological ideas that can be used to come up with different theories, such as identifying cycles in Russian history, that can help explain why the country’s institutions are so weak. According to this theory, Russia is a country with a distributive-type economy, in which the state during long periods of time gathers assets and then distributes them to private owners.¹ The logical conclusion is that institutions in this environment are subject to frequent change and are therefore unstable. However, this interpretation is more helpful in describing the state of affairs today than explaining it. The problem is that without a clear understanding of what makes institutions so organically weak in post-communist Russia, we cannot understand the country’s development algorithm or develop a strategy suited to the Russian environment for moving the country toward new goals.

I will share a few thoughts and observations on this point. The state system in the Soviet Union was made up of a collection of bureaucratic corporations that were sector-based or territorial in nature. The Communist Party was the only institution able to coordinate the interests of these vertically integrated corporations. The political transformation process that
began destroyed this institution. The forces of civil society were too weak to replace the Communist Party in creating the effective new institution needed to coordinate the various interests. In a democratic market model the parliament would serve as this institution. This left the various corporations to turn into independent actors with their own resource base.² It turned out to be more advantageous for them to leave the coordination of interests and resolution of disputes up to the national leader, and this in turn determined the stability of the personalistic political regime that characterizes Russia today. The corporations soon began to intentionally obstruct the parliament’s development, seeing it as a threat to their own unlimited influence. Public opinion had no tradition of public representation of interests and thus accepted these new rules without protest, agreeing overall that “parliament is not the place for political discussion,” because in this capacity it is useless and is only something like a department for approving the executive branch’s legislative initiatives. Therefore, the first conclusion is that institutionalizing the political system requires strong public demand for the creation of such institutions – above all a national parliament – to represent interests. The current Russian parliament is not such an institution. It serves all manner of functions, but representing interests, whether political or regional, is not one of them.

Another problem in Russian politics today is the ruling elite’s chronic legitimacy deficit. The elite felt this lack of legitimacy during the crisis years of the 1990s, and this feeling persisted through the “fat” years of the 2000s. The elite to this day have the feeling that everything turned out so well just through simple luck, and this explains their feverish search for legitimacy for their power, first in the ideas of the democratic February 1917 Revolution, and then in the liberal reforms of Tsar Alexander II. Later, when the trend changed, they began looking for legitimacy in the conservative politics of Alexander II’s successor, Alexander III, and then in late Stalinism with its great power and strong-state ideas, which they zealously attempt to separate from communist ideology. Groups and politicians that sense they might not be around for long and are not serious
have no need for institutions, which only stop them from quickly solving their private problems.

Finally, the dramatic events of the 20th century that cost tens of millions of lives undermined the entire fabric of Russian society. The elite in power are well aware of this and have no faith in the country they rule or in its ability to resolve the fundamental problems of national development on its own. This explains why the members of the ruling class are so eager to transfer their assets abroad and send their children abroad to study, later buying them some business or other beyond Russia’s borders. The talk of a country risen from its knees is all for domestic consumption and manipulating the philistines. For an elite that has no faith in its own country, the complex and tiring labor of building new institutions could hardly be appealing.

All of this leads us to conclude that alone behind high walls, opposing the globalization processes, Russia will face an extremely difficult time trying to address the tasks before it as a consequence of the weakness of its internal development resources and the lack of interest of its principal actors in building strong and stable institutions. Only by cooperating closely with the West in all areas – the economy, technology, politics, and the free movement of people and ideas – will Russia reach the point when the pressure of globalization will lead to the emergence of a responsible elite and to the mass demand for strong institutions, that will, above all, be representative.

Notes

1 See: O. Bessonova, Razdatochnaya ekonomika Rossi: evolyutsia cherez transformatsii (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006).

A Society of Political Indifference

Maria Lipman

The local elections in October 2009 demonstrated Russians’ deep indifference to public politics. Party representatives and journalists spoke over and over again of flagrant cases of fraud, in particular in the election to the Moscow City Duma, but Moscow voters did not seem to care. Despite the fact that Moscow is home to the most enlightened, wealthiest, best educated, most entrepreneurial, and successful people in the country, they show as little interest in their own political rights as everywhere else in Russia.

People have taken to the streets in recent years, indignant that their will has been trampled, in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Iran, but in such cases in Russia people only give a cynical shrug of the shoulders and say, “What did you expect?” More than half of Muscovites had thought the Moscow City Duma election results would be rigged even before the election actually took place. Only a little more than a quarter of the capital’s residents hoped for an honest election.

Voting is no longer a political choice, and those who still go to the polling stations and cast their votes see it as more of a voluntary ritual than anything. The public shares a deep-rooted belief that their votes count for nothing. “We” don’t decide anything, they think. “They” decide everything. This conviction is an accurate picture of Russian life, and so it is no surprise that people seem so indifferent about election fraud. In the absence of public politics as such, the whole issue of civic activeness loses all meaning. It is impossible to tell the cause from consequence: is there no public politics because society does not stand up for its political rights?
Or does society see no meaning to these rights because there is no political process in which to take part?

This apathetic and fragmented society is an invaluable resource for the Russian authorities. All governments dream of being able to rule without having to share power or account for their activities to the public. This is an impossible dream in countries with functional democratic institutions, but in Russia, where the meaning of the institutions is distorted, this dream has become reality. The ruling elite has done its best to cultivate an apathetic, dissociated, and cynical public attitude, and it has been successful. In the Russian public’s eyes political parties are no more than Kremlin projects, Duma deputies do not represent their voters’ interests, the law is on the side of the strongest, the police threaten rather than protect ordinary people, and corruption is simply a fact of life. This is all seen as a given. You can try to adapt to it, but trying to change it is perceived as senseless, naïve, and simply foolish. The idea that the people have signed a sort of “pact” with the government in which they renounce their part in decision-making and the authorities guarantee them a tolerable existence is not entirely accurate. If such a pact exists, it is not with the masses but with the elite, who have indeed deliberately chosen to give up political representation and influence in exchange for privileges and opportunities for personal enrichment. The paternalist model of relations with the authorities is usual in Russia, and the vast majority of people have no particular desire to take responsibility for the country’s development.

Such was the case in Russia under the tsars, emperors, and Bolsheviks. An all-powerful, and almost always harsh state dominated over a powerless society. The only two times the people ever had the chance to decide for themselves how to live was when the state simply ceased to exist: at the start of the 20th century, when the Russian Empire collapsed, and at the end of the 20th century, when the communist regime fell apart. In the first case, society was split and slid into a terrible civil war, followed by decades of bloody state terror. In the second case, Russia seemed to make an attempt to extricate itself from the paternalist rut without re-
sorting to violence this time. There was the feeling in the late 1980s-early 1990s that Russians not only rejected Soviet power but knew what to do and what direction to take. For a time it seemed that in freeing themselves from communism and choosing democracy and the market they not only saw hope for a better life for themselves and their fellow citizens but, most importantly, were ready to put their efforts and energy into making these goals a reality.

But the energy soon ran out. After discovering that political freedom and the transition to capitalism did not signal the start of a better life, people were disappointed and disoriented. The public enthusiasm of the late perestroika and early Yeltsin years soon melted away, leaving at best a feeling of uneasiness at having exhibited such a burst of earnest naïveté, and at worst the conviction of having been intentionally and maliciously deceived, forced to swallow harmful and alien values. The pendulum swung yet again and willingness to follow Western models gave way to anti-Western feelings and the conviction that foreign recipes would never work anyway, because Russia has its own special path. Western political institutions – democratic checks and balances, a multiparty system, competitive elections – were borrowed and even cemented in the constitution, but have not taken root in Russian soil. The state remained weak, but society did not become stronger.

The feeling of liberation that many Russians felt when they rejected communism in 1991 soon faded from the national memory. With Putin’s rise to power, the Kremlin began steadily eroding political freedoms and restoring the traditional model of a centralized monopoly on power, but by this time the public did not perceive this as an infringement on its own rights.

Why, unlike the situation in the former Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe, did the liberation from communism in Russia not help the country set a new direction for its future development? Why did the enthusiasm for truth and freedom that so inspired Russians twenty years ago give way so swiftly and decisively to disappointment and cynicism?
The difficulties of overcoming the communist legacy alone are not enough to explain it; after all, the countries of Eastern Europe also had more than their fair share of problems.

One possible explanation is that Soviet citizens did not win their freedom, but received it as a gift. The fierce resistance that many Russians put up against the Bolsheviks during the Civil War is a distant memory now, and the winners in that war did all they could to ensure that all memory of the losers was eradicated, either exiling them abroad or exterminating them as a class. The dissidents fighting for rights and liberties during the Brezhnev years were very few in number and had neither the public's trust nor support. (The situation was somewhat different in the case of the nationalists in the Baltic states and Ukraine – but that already is not Russian history.) By the mid-1980s, the dissident movement had been entirely defeated.

It was Mikhail Gorbachev who began to gradually loosen the screws of state repression. The first and last president of the USSR was no freedom fighter, of course, but he saw the profound decay of the Soviet system and the approaching economic disaster and realized that the state would soon have no further means at its disposal for ensuring the population's loyalty. It was beyond his capabilities to improve the economy and the system of governance in general, but he decided to give the Soviet people freedom, and they responded, though not immediately, to his gift with mass enthusiasm and support, despite the fact that the economic situation continued its rapid decline. If this fervor proved short-lived, perhaps it was precisely because the freedom was obtained so easily and people did not view it as the fruit of their own struggle.

To be fair, however, not all of the former socialist bloc countries experienced a resolute struggle against a repressive regime. Resistance continued practically the whole time in Poland, which witnessed what would have been for Russia an unthinkable alliance between the intelligentsia and the workers movement. Poland was unique, however, in the intensity of its struggle. In a number of countries – Bulgaria, for example – the
people settled down quite peacefully to their existence under a communist regime and in the end received their freedom and independence from Gorbachev’s hands. Gradually, however, all of the former “fraternal countries” came to see themselves as victims of Soviet imperialism, and this helped them unite their societies, mitigated the hardships of the post-communist period, and helped shape the consensus on where to go from there.

Herein lies another very important difference from Russia: the former Warsaw Pact allies could declare communism an evil imposed on them from the outside, but Russia could not call itself a victim and communism an outside force, and therefore it could not make liberation from communism the basis for a new national identity.

Furthermore, the Warsaw Pact countries saw the collapse of the socialist bloc and the bankruptcy of communism as a chance to restore continuity with their pre-communist European past. In some of these countries this past is a historic fact, while in others it is a product of the imagination (some of these countries only became independent states in the last ten to fifteen years), but everywhere it was envisioned as a return to a “golden age.” This notion has spread even beyond the former socialist bloc and encompasses all of the countries that have recently joined the European Union or hope to do so in the foreseeable future. For example, a series of documentary films about the countries of southeast Europe released by an international non-governmental organization is titled “Return to Europe.” The “returnees” include not only Macedonia, Bosnia, and Croatia, but also Turkey, which was never a part of Europe, and Greece, which seemingly never left Europe. The name of the series sounds foolish, but its sense is eminently clear: Europe is envisioned as a valuable (democratic) reference point and a desired region that other countries should make their destination.

Unlike the new and future countries of Europe, Russia does not have a common national vision of a “golden age” to which it should return. For various reasons neither Bolshevism nor the Russian Empire fit this role. The former socialist bloc countries had no trouble deciding to celebrate
their newly obtained independence from Soviet communism as a national holiday and the departure point for their new statehood. Russians rejected the introduced June 12 holiday (Russia Day) and were greatly puzzled by the authorities’ decision that they celebrate National Unity Day on November 4 in place of the old anniversary of the revolution on November 7. People still have not figured out the starting point for Russia’s current statehood. However, without knowing where we came from we don’t know what to use as a foundation for building a nation today or which way to go from here. If we reject borrowed values, then what are our own values, apart from hostility to those of others?

Such a society is easy to manipulate, not because it is gullible, but because it believes in nothing. For the ruling elite, whose primary goal is to hold onto and consolidate their own power, such a society is no less a blessing than big oil reserves. But for Russia’s development, both are curses. The lack of national consensus on Russia’s direction is as much a brake on the country’s development as is dependence on oil and gas exports. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Russia cannot follow the road taken by its former “younger brothers”: it is too big to become a part of something else.

In Russia today, no one calls openly for a return to the past. On the contrary, the authorities call incessantly for modernization, but in reality there is no blueprint for the road ahead. The vacuum is inevitably filled by fragments of old models and symbols: paternalism, an anti-Western outlook, single party and single ideology projects, the Soviet national anthem, and Stalin in the Moscow metro.

“Back to the USSR” is nevertheless more of a metaphor than a reality, and the last two decades cannot be seen as having been entirely lost. Of course, the absence of public politics turns political rights into a hollow concept, and the civil liberties written into the constitution are violated at every turn, but compared to Soviet times, the space of individual freedom has become practically unlimited. The Soviet regime imposed restrictions on people at every step: it declared private property and making profit
a crime; banned travel; and decided what people could or could not read, watch, and listen to, and what they could or could not write, film, and perform. These restrictions no longer exist, and a whole generation that cannot imagine any other kind of life has grown up. But can we hope that these personal freedoms will gradually give rise to a civic spirit that will inspire people to seek something not just for themselves but for their fellow citizens as well? Will this help to shape a national consensus, or can the acquisition of new meanings come only though new cataclysms? The answer is not clear today. However, maintaining the paternalist model threatens Russia with inevitable decline, and sooner or later the country will have to reinvent itself.
Russia’s Regional Elites in 2010: Twenty Years On

Nikolay Petrov

Over the nearly twenty years that Russia has existed independently with its regional elites, humongous changes have taken place. The direction of the regional development has been different. First there was an upswing that culminated in 1999 (when the regional leaders who were in complete control of the situations in their own regions were even able to challenge the Kremlin), and then the steady decline that continued for the entire “Putin Decade,” sometimes at a crawl, other times tumbling downhill. We are now at the very bottom; therefore, a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the situation has become particularly interesting and important.

The election “hole” of 2009-2010 also turned out to be a turning point for most of the remaining old “heavyweight” regional leaders (Eduard Rossel, Mintimer Shaymiev, Murtaza Rakhimov, etc.), who were replaced by new leaders, thus completing a decade-long renewal process for the regional elites.

As a rule, descriptions of the regional political elites devote most of their attention to the regional heads, who, however, represent only the very tip of the iceberg. Meanwhile, the entire upper echelon of the regional elites has been fundamentally reshaped in recent years, radically altering both relations between the regions and the Center (for the sake of which so much has been undertaken) and the political situation in the regions themselves.

Without attempting to fully explore the subject (which would demand an entirely different scope of study), we shall here identify those aspects of the contemporary state of the regional elite and of the political
logic of its defining processes that, in our opinion, are most important and interesting.

**The Role of the Regionals: from Controlling to Minority Shareholders**

If Russia is considered as a giant corporation (which is exactly how the ruling elite sees the country), then the dynamics of the past decade may be described as a reduction or dilution of the “regional portfolio” in “Russia Incorporated” from a controlling to a blocking share with powers that are further diluting further down. Moreover, this portfolio has become fractionalized among regional stockholders.

After 2000, the system of control over Russia’s regions (and inside the regions themselves) changed significantly. During Putin’s first presidential term (2000-2004), these changes were mainly aimed at restoring the federal Center’s earlier role, which it had previously been unable to perform due to its weakness, primarily financial. The pendulum thus began to swing back toward the Center after having gone too far in the direction of the regions. Aside from various purely administrative innovations and organizational changes, the significant financial reinforcement enjoyed by the Center (which in particular extended its ability to make the judiciary independent of regional authorities) and the passage of the Budget Code (sharply strengthening the Center both in form and in fact) played a great part in this. If at the end of the Yeltsin period the regional share of the consolidated budget compared to the federal share was 60:40, then under the Budget Code it was set at 50:50; the current ratio is 40:60 or even 35:65.

Expansion of the Center at the expense of the regions (including both a usurpation of numerous areas of joint control and a reconsideration of the balance of authorities and financial resources) had already begun during Putin’s second term and has continued over his third “Medvedev-Putin” term, as well.
The initial stage began with the Center vying for dominance on the “platforms of interaction”: the Council of the Federation and the associated Government Council and the Council of Legislators, the State Duma (in transition from a mixed to a proportional structure), the federal districts (where regional cooperation associations were squeezed out), and the “power party,” Edinaya Rossia (United Russia).

After weakening the governor and depriving the office of its key support and allies at the regional level (in the form of those very same regional military, police, and national security agencies figures – siloviki – who gradually and to an ever greater degree were becoming “interlopers,” with no previous connection to those regions whatsoever, rather than representing the regional establishment), the Center could then deprive the office of its independent legitimacy, shifting in 2005 to the appointment of regional heads. The appointments of governors, which at first were more formal, became indicative of increasingly more radical changes in the composition of the regional elites. At the same time, the Center more and more frequently began to apply the “interloper” model. It cannot be said, however, that the hands of the Center were completely free. It is no coincidence that the Kremlin could only begin the final dismantling of the old heavyweight regional heads (Eduard Rossel, Mintimer Shaymiev, Murtaza Rakhimov and Yury Luzhkov, who had led the fronda in the regions since the 1990s) at the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010.

Other results during the second stage include centralization of the electoral committees and the entire system of control over elections at various levels with the assistance of judges and law enforcement under federal control, the role of which at the elections has grown significantly.

Another important result of the second stage was the completion of the transition from the model of first establishing control over all the moderators and platforms of interaction between the regions and the Center to the model of exercising control regionally over the main figures in the regional political elites.
Governing the Regions

The particularities of the new system of governance

We have described the system of command over the regions as a whole and its individual new elements in a number of previous publications. The key features of this system include: unification and depersonification, as well as stricter subordination; general reinforcement of vertical links and weakening of horizontal ones; depolitization, reduction in public openness, and extreme weakening of contacts with society; and sharply intensified rotations with numerous, frequently chaotic changes in individual figures and of entire command blocks.

The old system had not been ideal; however, it had had a number of advantages over the new. It primarily meant relative autonomy for the regions that provided the system as a whole with both flexibility and a great reserve of strength. It is noteworthy that, although the old system had weathered its test of strength by surviving a whole series of political and economic crises, the new system until very recently had existed under “hot-house” conditions. Governance was reduced to the distribution of an increasing stream of financial resources and control elements, while the citizens experienced general satisfaction and on the whole were favorably disposed toward the authorities, as they saw visible growth in their well-being. As soon as the Center attempted to initiate large-scale social and economic reforms at the beginning of Putin’s second term, the decision-making and implementation systems they had erected demonstrated its ineffectiveness. Against the backdrop of rapid improvement in financial well-being at the time, rather than attempting to improve the system of command, the Center decided to cut back on reforms.

The defects of the new system (aside from its super-centralization, as manifested in its inability to solve problems at a level that is as close as possible to the citizenry) include rigid and primitive command schemes and its mechanistic command structure, all of which reduce the flexibility of the system and lower its efficiency and ability to adapt to changing conditions.
Like a conveyer belt, such a system can function relatively well when addressing standard problems, but it can hit a dead end when faced with any deviation from the standard. The absence of any degree of freedom for the individual nodes deprives the system of its own ability to adapt and its resistance to external influences. Inertia is also too great: too much time is spent initially on transmitting signals step by step from the bottom to the very top, where the decisions are made, and the subsequent transmission of the decision downward. Any attempt to straighten the command schemes under such a super-centralized framework would be fraught with a decline in the coordination of actions among the individual elements of the system.

This can all be illustrated with the example of the abandonment of federalism in favor of unitarism. Federalism is a complex and conflict-prone model that assumes difficult coordination between the levels of authority in developing decisions requiring special concerting procedures. Instead of all of this, the model transitioned to one of strict subordination that incorporated first the governors, then the elected heads of local self-government into the vertical. Fiscal federalism was also essentially disassembled, as the regions and municipalities lost their relatively independent financial bases.

The political geometry of relations between the Center and the Regions

The role of the configuration and relative positions of the power pyramids is important at the federal and regional levels. Before 2000, the pyramid of federal power had been oriented with its broad base toward the regional pyramid, while the regional pyramid faced the federal with its tip (represented by the governor). The governor played the key role as the neck of the hour glass, through which the federal network could communicate with the regional. Practically all contacts between the federal and regional elites were intermediated by the governor, as the chief representative of the interests of regional elites. Now the picture has changed fundamentally, and the federal pyramid has overwhelmed the regional. The pyramids have grown together, and many verticals from the Center
to the regions now bypass the governor altogether. It is currently more of a single unitary pyramid that has to varying degrees incorporated and absorbed the formerly independent regional pyramids.

If the governor had previously been the senior figure in the regional elite, representing it to the Center, he is now more and more frequently the Center’s representative who has been deployed to the region. The governor himself has, in essence, become the chief federally appointed bureaucrat. Although only on one occasion has a regional head previously headed another region, and in this sense the analogy between the new procedure of appointing governors and the old Soviet system of appointing secretaries to the regional Communist Party Committees does not quite work yet, a significant portion of key bureaucrats in the regional administrations below the level of governor are like condottieri roaming from one region to another.

Recently the influx of “Moscow Blood” has proceeded particularly actively. Entire teams of Muscovites working “in shifts” have appeared in the regions, especially in the political blocks of the regional administration, which probably works to the advantage of the regional elites: in the areas where the influx turns out to be bad, the elite consolidates its efforts against the “interlopers;” where it is good, it joins with them.

Aside from the administrative and bureaucratic pyramid, there are also business and corporate pyramids delegating entire teams of managers to the regions, who also frequently use the “shift” method. Cases of both replacement with managers and a direct overlap of the bureaucratic and business pyramids one over the other are also not infrequent.

In the regions, the shortest path to the highest bureaucratic command positions now runs through Moscow.

The web of command: hypertrophinated radii and underdeveloped chords

If the system of command contacts is to be described as a web, then under Boris Yeltsin the vertical lines of “Center/Region” communication were
relatively weak, the horizontal lines between regions were very weak, and the horizontal lines within regions were very strong. Under Vladimir Putin, the vertical communication lines were strengthened significantly, including with the intermediate level represented by the federal districts. The numerous lines of vertical communication began to resemble something like multi-strand cables. At the same time, the horizontal contacts, on the contrary, were in many cases weakened and disrupted by these verticals. Overall, the network of command resembled a spider web with hyper-developed radials and underdeveloped concentric contacts. In practice, this means that the shortest path frequently passes through the Center; contacts are often intermediated by the Center, not only between neighboring regions, but also between different federal agencies within a single region.

At one time, collegia of regional branches of the executive federal agencies were set up to coordinate the various federal structures operating within a region, and these were headed by the Chief Federal Inspectors (CFIs). Such coordination, however, has turned out to be not so much institutional as personal. Much of it depends on the personality of the CFI and the degree of his integration into the regional elite. Among the other forms of inter-agency interaction in a number of regions are Security Councils headed by the governors, anti-terrorism committees led by the department heads of the Federal Security Service (FSB), and anti-narcotics committees led by the department heads of the Federal Narcotics Trafficking Control Service.

The regional boundaries remain the bottleneck. They are absolute in nature and are present in all governance grids without exception, both on the whole and within agencies. There are obviously too few stitches between the individual pieces of this quilt. Inter-regional contacts, whether neighboring or far apart, are too weak.

**Verticalization with respect to political parties and non-commercial organizations**

The number of federal parties dropped from 37 to eight, or in fact to four represented in the State Duma: United Russia party, Communist
Party of the Russian Federation, Liberal Democratic Party, and A Just Russia party (through financial and other mechanisms), following their re-registration and the passage of a new law on political parties in 2001 that prohibited political parties at the regional level. The remaining political parties were essentially forced out of the political arena through a sharply increased administrative and financial pressure.

Simultaneously, the quasi-verticals of the civil society were incorporated with the Public Chamber at the top, with the delegates at the district level and with the regional Public Chambers (of which there were 50 as of early 2010). The Public Chamber performs the function of the “ministry for civil society” and serves as a foundation for the growth of new structures: Public Observer Commissions for monitoring human rights in places of forced detention (2008) and the system of ombudsmen for children’s rights (2010). The formation and delegation of these bottom-up quasi-civic structures and the top-down allocation of budgetary financial funds “to support non-commercial non-governmental organizations participating in the development of the institutions of civil society,” were brought under administrative control.

The inclusion of local government into the vertical of command

Municipal reform, the implementation of which has stretched out over long years, started in full measure on January 1, 2009. In contradiction to its stated goals, it made the municipal level much more dependent upon the regional level (and on the state rule overall). With the reform, the state power vertical penetrated the municipal level as well, turning local self-rule essentially into “local state rule.”

With respect to the regional elites, the reform of local self-government has meant a significant weakening of a large group that constitutes this government: the mayors. First, the governors and municipal deputies (two “natural enemies” of the directly elected mayors) began joint efforts to dismantle the institution itself, forcing transition to a Soviet-style mod-
where a “deputy who has become head of local government is a hired city manager.”

By the beginning of 2010, approximately a third of the more than 24,000 municipal formations in the country had already transitioned to this model. Of these, however, only several dozen are both strong and self-sufficient (principally in the financial sense), mostly the large regional centers. Second, it was precisely these sorts of mayors against whom the hunt began. They were arrested on various charges and removed from their positions (because the changes in the law adopted in 2009 at the initiative of Dmitry Medvedev allowed deputies and governors to remove elected mayors extrajudicially). After a series of significant defeats at the local elections between autumn 2009 and spring 2010 (in Irkutsk, Bratsk, and cities in the Urals), the United Russia party set the course towards the final dismantlement of the institution of elected mayors in all of the important centers. By autumn 2010, Nizhny Novgorod, Perm, Chelyabinsk, Murmansk, Ulyanovsk, Penza, Vladimir, and Smolensk had switched to the city manager model.

Notably, this resulted not only in diminished regional political diversity and a reduced number of autonomous actors and areas for maneuver, but also in the disappearance of the two most widespread types of conflict among the regional political elites that ensure a normal political life: between the mayor and the governor and between the mayor and deputies.

On the positive side, the reforms of local self-rule are universally conducted elections to agencies of municipal power and the introduction of new managers.

**Top-down and bottom-up dynamics**

All systems of government always consist of two components: top-down and bottom-up, which when in balance are essential for the normal functioning of the system. During all of the past years, the top-down flow (“top-down component”) has been increasing. Commands, conditions, schemes, etc., are forced down with the help of the following:
integration of the governor into the Kremlin’s vertical of power;
horizontal rotation of the regional heads of subdivisions of the federal structures;
subordination of the super-regional/inter-regional levels to the Center;
centralization of parties and inclusion of regional parliaments having a United Russia party majority in the party’s “vertical of power.”

The positive consequences of this were that the previously closed regional elites were opened up like a can of preserves, the autarchy was overcome, and top-down command and unification within reasonable limits were improved; the negative consequences included the disruption of contacts and, hence, a decline in the efficiency of government within a region, excessive measures of unification; and disruption of the balance between direct communication and feedback. The concept of delegation of authority has been turned upside down and can be described as the principle of reverse subsidiary, where a higher level reserves for itself the powers that it wants, passing down only those it doesn’t need. With such an approach, the real source of power becomes the federal bureaucracy, rather than the people.

Suppression of initiatives from below and strict regulation of social and political forms will lead to the loss of differentiation and diversity, suppressing the very best and most active and perhaps pulling up the worst, thereby leveling everything at the average.

Dismantling “fool proof” mechanisms

Beginning in 2000, all the principal mechanisms intended to protect the system from serious management errors have been gradually weakened or eliminated altogether: independent media (2000-2003), the “oligarchs” (2000-2003), the upper (2000-2002) and lower (2000-2004) chambers of the parliament, the governors (2000-2004), and independent non-commercial organizations (since 2005).
One principal aspect of the governor was his role as a filter, diverting or delaying decisions or initiatives from the Center that could be harmful to the region. The governor knew that as the time for the reelection campaign approached, the main criterion both for the Center and for the population would be the region’s successes under his leadership. Now, however, even if the governor remains in office, first, he does not have a four-to-five-year reserve of time to prove that he had been right, and second, the effectiveness of his work, as for any bureaucrat, is determined more by his diligence and speed in performing his job rather than by the final result.

A clear example of this would be the monetization reform, first discussed and pushed through in mid-2004. Then, however, the démarche of a number of regional heads in Siberia and the Far East frightened the Center and provoked an extremely negative reaction, finally leading to the adoption of the Beslan package, which provided for the transition to the system of appointed governors and caused a sharp decline in their influence on deputies to the State Duma as a result of this transition to the proportional system. The result was that resistance to the inadequately thought through plans for reform was broken, reforms were pushed through the Federal Assembly, the attempts to implement them led to massive social protests in January-February 2005, and the abandonment of reforms led to colossal budgetary expenditures.

The most recent example is the forest fires of 2010 that caused such great damage in the country. One of the main factors causing this was the passage of the Forestry Code in 2006 (in spite of protests from a number of forest regions), which demolished the system of forest protection, as well as the inability of the super-centralized command system to react to the situation expeditiously.

The situation at the regional level can differ fundamentally both in condition and in dynamics. The governor has been weakened as the dominant player, and in a number of places there exists quite an effective system of checks and balances.
The business component: loss of autonomy

A long time has passed since the days when business could be purely regional and could be seen as a relatively autonomous player. Today businesses have been restructured into large federal groups and holding companies, and they actively participate in forming executive power, particularly at the municipal level. They also delegate their own representatives to the representative power structure. In the larger regions, where there are several large business players, this enhances pluralism and concurrency. When a single player dominates the economy, its monopolistic approach is usually reproduced in the political sphere as well.

There is also the phenomenon of “region-forming” companies: Gazprom in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, Rosneft in the Nenetsk Autonomous Region, NLMK in Lipetskaya Oblast, Severstal in Vologodskaya Oblast, and EVRAZ in Kemerovskaya Oblast... The monopoly of such companies over the economy frequently results in a monopoly over politics, as well.

The role that the oligarchs played in the 1990s is being shifted towards State corporations and large national companies to an ever greater extent. They are the entities that are ever more frequently being designated by the Kremlin as being responsible for their regions (Rostechnologii in Samarskaya Oblast, and in 2008-2009 also in Irkutskaya Oblast; Bazovy Element in Khakasia and partially Irkutskaya Oblast, and Interros in Krasnoyarsky Krai and Tverskaya Oblast). In light of the accelerating replacement of regional heads and especially of their teams, any such list would quickly become dated. The fact remains, however: more and more frequently corporate management and resources (financial, administrative, etc.) are being relied upon for regional governing, as they are capable of bringing federally significant players to their “own” regions.
Appointment of Regional Heads

The head of Mariy El, Leonid Markelov, who was appointed by the parliament on the very eve of 2010, became the twenty third governor appointed by Dmitry Medvedev; he was also the last of the remaining elected heads. The first full cycle of replacement of elected heads by appointed ones that had begun in January 2005 was thereby completed in all of the 83 regions.

With the arrival of Medvedev, certain changes began to occur in the system of appointment of regional heads, including the simultaneous replacements of the four heads in Voronezhskaya, Orlovskaya, Pskovskaya Oblasts and the Nenets Autonomous District that took place in February 2009; the reasons for this are not clear. It is possible that it was the Kremlin’s reaction to the rising wave of individual protests by the heads, that could have initiated collective action led by former Speaker of the Council of the Federation Yegor Stroyev. This provoked his removal from the position of Orel governor, and the others were removed simultaneously as a warning. In yet another initiative, the right to submit candidates for gubernatorial posts was transferred from the presidential representative to a dominant party. The trick, however, lay in the fact that candidates on behalf of United Russia (the only dominant party there is) may be nominated not by its regional branches, but by the party’s leadership at the federal level, with Vladimir Putin as party leader.

The transition in 2009 from nomination of gubernatorial candidates by the presidential representatives to a system of nomination by the dominant party did not make the procedure of selection of personnel for gubernatorial posts any more effective, but it did make it more transparent and public. By the end of 2009, United Russia had nominated 51 candidates in fifteen regions, of which only five cases resulted in appointment before the end of the year: in Sverdlovskaya, Astrakanskaya, Kurganskaya and Volgogradskaya oblasts and the Republic Mariy El. The number of candidates in the regional rolls varies from three to five. Universally (except in the
Jewish Autonomous Oblast) their numbers include active regional heads (twice out of five appointments). Aside from these, deputy governors and heads of the regional governments are also represented in the rolls in nine of fifteen regions. One new governor (in Volgogradskaya Oblast) came from this category, as did speakers of the regional parliaments (six regions), deputies to the Federal Assembly (five regions), federal government bureaucrats (four regions, including Sverdlovskaya Oblast, where one of them received the governor’s post), mayors (two regions), and university principals (two regions).

The dynamics of gubernatorial appointments for all of the years that the new system was in place are presented in Table 1. At first, the Kremlin reappointed sitting governors eagerly, and when seeking their replacements, more often used locals rather than the “interlopers,” who had no connection to the local elite clans. Moreover, the number of reappointable heads declined over time. There were two reasons for this: the first task was to have the system take root, and not to replace a particular governor; subsequently, however, it turned out to be much simpler to find an “interloper” than to select a local candidate acceptable to the main clans, not to mention that it can be much easier to control an “interloper” than a local. For this reason, when choosing between loyalty, which was greater in the case of the “interloper,” and effectiveness, which was greater in the case of a local, the Kremlin would more and more frequently favor loyalty.

When the crisis began, the Kremlin significantly expanded the use of the “interloper” model in appointing governors (Table 2), as it had done earlier with respect to the “regional generals” as heads of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), prosecutors, judges, and even heads of the federal inspectors. During crises, loyalty to the Center turned out to be significantly more important than incorporation into the regional elites and an ability to communicate with them. Effectiveness at the national level (understood as obedience and subordination) was preferred to effectiveness at the regional level.
Table 1. Appointment of regional heads by year, 2005-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of appointments</th>
<th>Number of reappointed/new heads</th>
<th>Percentage of reappointed heads</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32/12</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14/11</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>59/45</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 (January-July)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12/14</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2010</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>71/59</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 – number of representatives of the upper echelon of the regional elites among appointees; 2 – number of other “regionals;” 3 – number of “interlopers;” 4 – percentage of “interlopers.”

Table 2. Appointment of regional heads during the period of intense crisis, 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of appointments</th>
<th>Number of reappointed/new heads</th>
<th>Percentage of reappointed heads</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 (January-August)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Year of Crisis” (September 2009 - August 2009)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 (September-December)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 – number of representatives of the upper echelon of the regional elites among appointees; 2 – number of other “regionals;” 3 – number of “interlopers;” 4 – percentage of “interlopers.”
Rearranging Personnel Through Rotation

If there have been long-term projects steadily being carried out during the entire “Putin decade” in Russia, then the renewal of horizontal rotation of the personnel heading the federal structures in the regions is certainly one of them.

The system of horizontal rotation (continuous replacement of highly placed state officials being transferred from region to region to ensure independence from local interests and loyalty to the Center) had been instituted under Stalin. Then, over the period of stagnation, the system gradually fell into disfavor. During the stormy years of Yeltsin’s reign, there was absolutely no time for it. By the time Putin came to power, of all the federal executives in the regions, only the figure of head of the FSB remained separate and retained autonomy with respect to the regional elites, in part due to the operation of the rotation mechanism. It was therefore specifically from among them that the new presidential representatives (and subsequently the CFIs, upon whom Moscow could rely) were recruited.

The campaign to bring regional law into compliance with federal law, which started at the beginning of the “federal reforms,” turned out to be a convenient means of checking the extent of regional prosecutors’ loyalty to Moscow and replacing those among them who were too closely connected with the local security agencies. In parallel, a process of “uprooting” senior figures in the regional police began. If they had previously been crème de la crème of the regional elites and had made their careers exclusively within their own region, then everything now had begun to change. First, a rule was implemented under which the last step in the career ladder (from deputy to head of the DIA) could be taken only in one of two ways: either through Moscow (or optionally Chechnya or a federal district), or through a different region. Second, horizontal rotation began to be practiced actively, with heads of the DIA transferred to another region following five years of service.
Over the past couple of years, the rotation system has begun to be actively applied with respect to the three figures of the regional Mount Olympus that have continued to belong to local establishments longer than any others: the CFIs, the chairmen of the courts and the governors. No less important is the fact that over time, as the rotation system expanded to include ever newer positions, ever fewer regional components have remained in the regional establishment. Although at first essentially all the ethnic republics were considered to be exempt from rotation mechanics, Moscow gradually, and with a certain amount of caution (trying to select ethnically suitable candidates, even if from outside the republic), began to apply the rotation mechanism to them, as well. Currently only two regions remain where the rotation mechanisms are very weak, if they exist at all: Tatarstan and Moscow.

Using a rotation system when coordination of action between the different verticals is inadequate could lead to the opposite result – weakening rather than strengthening the degree of control over the regions as a consequence of the simultaneous replacement of a number of generals and the arrival in the region of neophytes previously unfamiliar with it.

In the crisis year of 2009, the volume of personnel reassignments grew significantly and differentially.

Taking six of the main “federal generals” as examples (department heads of the FSB and of the Department of Internal Affairs, prosecutor, department head of the Investigative Committee, judge, CFI), it turns out that the rate of their replacement has increased by nearly one and a half times: from 70 positions in 2008 to 98 in 2009. However, considering that there are some 80 regions in the country, the average rate of replacement in 2008 per region of 0.9 per six positions shows that a full replacement cycle for all “federals” would stretch out over seven years. This process accelerated in 2009: 1.2 on the average, with a five-year cycle for full replacement.

The greatest total number of replacements of “federals” by category were the CFIs (nineteen in 2008 and 25 in 2009) and secretaries of the Unit-
ed Russia party (31 in 2008 and twelve in 2009); the least number were heads of the Investigative Committees, which were only introduced in September 2007. Another category with sharp growth in rates of replacement is the department heads of the FSB (twelve in 2008 and 24 in 2009).

The macro-geographic picture is also uneven: the greatest rate of replacement can be seen in the two regions that have attracted the greatest amount of attention from the Center: the Southern District and the Far Eastern District (each with 3.7 replacements per region over two years); the least is the Northwestern District (with 2.1). Moreover, in three districts: the North Western (13/11), Southern (27/20), and Siberian districts (19/16), there were more replacements in 2008; in the Volga (20/21) and Ural districts (8/7), they remained approximately even; while in the Central District (17/22) and especially the Far Eastern District (10/23) significant growth was seen during the crisis year.

The Regional Political “Mount Olympus”

The main change over recent years has been the decrease in the independence and individuality of the political “Mount Olympus” in various regions, which has been transformed ever more into a projection of the federal security agencies onto the regional base, which in a number of cases, however, can strongly distort the original picture. This is the general rule of thumb; Moscow and a number of the national republics with their political machinery are exceptions.

Real authority in the region continues to be concentrated in the hands of only five to ten persons. If their influence had previously been exercised frequently via informal mechanisms, then now the status hierarchy is much more rigid. On the regional political Mount Olympus there are ever fewer personal positions that are held by individuals and ever more numerous positions ex officio. The speaker of the regional parliament and the mayor of the capital more and more frequently perform the role of sen-
ior figures in the core regional political elite. The replaceable portion of the political elite consists of the governors and the teams of landsknechts, including some from among the business managers of the companies that brought the governor to power.

Recently, the topiary model for forming regional elites (as when a gardener works long and painstakingly on something that was already growing) has been transformed into a “pyramid of flowers” model (as in a metal case having replaceable flower pots that can simply be brought in and put up wherever is convenient). Moreover, the new model itself, which lacks the foundation of regional roots and must unavoidably rely on constant irrigation from above, especially in light of its prompt implementation, would be more appropriate for a unitary centralized state than for a federal nation. A situation of a deepening economic (and inevitably political) crisis can exacerbate the defects in the adopted model and increase the risk that the inadequately rooted new elite in the region would disengage. The new model has, however, brought about one particular benefit: it has opened the previously closed autarkical regions and established a single field for the elites, for spatial and social intermixing, acceleration of the political dynamic, and circulation of initiatives.

The efforts by the Center to renew the political elite at local levels accelerated the natural course of events, and a generational shift took place in the regions. The nearly universal figures of the Soviet period, who had long retained their positions within the elite, either left completely or faded into the background. The generational shift among business elites occurred earlier, characterized by the trend of recent years toward the replacement of independent owners with managers appointed from outside the borders of the region, together with the integration of regional businesses to become nation-wide or international.

Of all of the representatives of the political and business elites in the regions, the greatest amount of analyst attention has been given to those heads of regions, who due to their high visibility were natural objects of study. In the meantime, although the governors/presidents of republics
continue in the vast majority of cases to remain the most influential figures in the regional establishment, the nature of this influence, its mechanisms, and the entire configuration of the regional political “Mount Olympus” have undergone strong changes in recent years. The following may be cited as the main causal reasons for this: 1) incorporation of the relatively autonomous regional political system into the overall system and gradual transformation of the regional power pyramid into a regional link in the overall federal pyramid (with intensive horizontal rotations at all levels, including regional heads as well to an ever greater extent); 2) altering mechanisms for forming and reproducing the regional links of the political and business elites; their departure from the arena of public politics, and replacement by administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms; 3) overcoming the relatively regional autarchy in the sphere of the economy by major reinforcement of the role of large financial and industrial groups, including national and transnational ones.

A consequence of all these tectonic changes has been the significant structural and personal shifts within the regional administrative and economic elites. As far as the structural changes are concerned, research conducted by the Institute of Situational Analysis and New Technology (ISANT) is helpful in evaluating the significance of the individual positions and the dynamics of recent years. We have studied dozens of the most influential persons in the individual regions based on the results of the 2007 ISANT research (34 regions), comparing them with data from 2003 for the same regions (30) (Table 3) in order to identify these shifts in the body of the regional elite.

A comparison of the findings for 2003 and 2007 reveals several trends.

1. In the regional “Mount Olympus” a depersonification has occurred among the figures, who are aligning ever more frequently along their formal status lines. Characteristically, the figure of the governor, generally
Table 3. Degree of influence of the main positions of status within the regional elite (based upon data from ISANT 2003 and 2007 research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total points</th>
<th>Average points</th>
<th>Average ranking</th>
<th>Spread of positions</th>
<th>Number of regions</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional head</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>S. Darkin (Primorsky Krai) was ranked 11th, Khodyrev (Nizhegorodskaya Oblast) was 5th, with seven other heads also not taking first place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy regional head</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1st place was taken by S. Shishkin in Irkutskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1st place was taken by A. Aparina in Volgogradskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy of the State Duma</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1st place was taken by A. Aparina in Volgogradskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region’s capital head</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1st place was taken by Yu. Savenko in Kaliningradskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy of the Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2nd place was taken by L. Beluga (“PetrozavodskMash”) in Karelia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor, District head</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3-9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3rd place was taken by the mayors of Vorkuta (Komi), Nakhodka (Primorsky Krai), Pokrov (Vladimirskaya Oblast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief federal inspector</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Most influential (3rd place) in Kemerovskaya and Tula Oblasts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Degree of influence by position in the regional elites in 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total points</th>
<th>Average points</th>
<th>Average ranking</th>
<th>Spread of positions</th>
<th>Number of regions</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senator</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2nd place was taken by V. Zhidkikh (Tomskaya Oblast), 3rd place was taken by N. Kondratenko (Krasnodarsky Krai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the Department of Internal Affairs/Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Most influential (4th place) in Belgorodskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the FSB Department</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Most influential were in Kostromskaya Oblast (1st place), in Altaysky Krai and Nizhegorodskaya Oblast (2nd place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutor</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1st place was taken by A. Chadov (Orenburgskaya Oblast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Electoral Committee</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Most influential was S. Knyazev (4th place) in Primorsky Krai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Regional court</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional head</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2nd and 3rd places were the Khanty-Mansiysky Autonomouus District and Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, since their governors were under the rating for Tyumenskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Total points</td>
<td>Average points</td>
<td>Average ranking</td>
<td>Spread of positions</td>
<td>Number of regions</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy regional head</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>These ended up being more than the number of regions, since some regions had several deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2nd place was in Stavropol and Khabarovsk Krai, and Vorsklaya and Tomskaya Oblasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional capital head</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2nd place was held by mayors of Vladivostok, Omsk, Perm and Yaroslav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy of the State Duma</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3rd place was taken by V. Vasilev (Ministry of Internal Affairs) in Vorsklaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief federal inspector</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2-9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2nd place was taken by S. Kharitonov in Tuskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy of the Legislative Assembly</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4th place was taken by I. Grinberg (RUSAL) in Irkutskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the administration, of the office of</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2nd place was taken by V. Lobko in St. Petersburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the regional head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department of Internal Affairs/</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5th place was taken by A. Safarov in Tatarstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the city council, Duma</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5th place was taken in Kaliningradskaya and Novosibirsk Oblasts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total points</th>
<th>Average points</th>
<th>Average ranking</th>
<th>Spread of positions</th>
<th>Number of regions</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayor, District head</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5th place was mayor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur (Khabarovsky Krai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential representative, deputy presidential representative</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2nd place was taken by A. Konovalov in Nizhegorodskaya Oblast and A. Datsishin (deputy) in Kaliningradskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3rd place was V. Zhidkikh (Tomskaya Oblast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the FSB Department</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5th place was taken by O. Khramov in Nizhegorodskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecutor</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>4-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4th place was taken by M. Zelepukin in Yaroslavskaya Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the regional court</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7th place was in Krasnodarsky Krai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of electoral committee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5th place was taken by S. Knyazev in Primorsky Krai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The column “Spread of positions” shows the spread over the top entries of the regional lists.
significantly less independent and influential than previously, is now always at the top.

2. On the whole, the role of executive power has grown notably. A weakening of the role of representative power (particularly regional representatives at the Federal Assembly) has also been taking place against the backdrop of an overall decline in the number and influence of elected figures. At the same time, the figure of speaker has been enhanced. Judicial authority is also becoming significantly less visible.

3. Examination of the levels of power reveals a sharp increase at the federal level (particularly considering that the regional head is now the senior federal bureaucrat, in fact appointed by Moscow). The declining role of the municipal level (except in regional capitals) is also noteworthy.

4. The number of figures of the regional political “Mount Olympus” having roots in the area on the whole has declined, while the number of “interlopers” has increased both among federal appointees (now also including governors) and among key members of the gubernatorial teams. The figure of the speaker of the regional parliament is more and more frequently nominated to perform as a senior in the regional political elite.

According to the ISANT-2007 research on the overall levels of political influence, the regional hierarchy of official positions appears as follows:

1) Regional head: 8.5;
2) Regional speaker of the Legislative Assembly: 6.2;
3) Mayor of the regional capital: 6.1;
4) Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church: 5.2;
5) Head of the FSB Department: 4.9;
6) Chief federal inspector: 4.9;
7) Speaker of the Assembly of Deputies in the capital: 4.6;
8) Prosecutor: 4.6;
9) Head of the DIA: 4.4;
10) Chairman of the Oblast Court: 4.2;
11) Member of the Council of the Federation: 4.0;
12) Representative from big business: 4.0;
13) Deputy of the State Duma: 3.9;
14) Head of the Municipal Government: 3.8;
15) Representative from the research community: 3.8.

The following conclusions can be immediately drawn: the significant lead of the regional heads in the influentiality rating; the abundance of generals from the military and security agencies (who occupy the entire center portion of the list in the following order: FSB department head – chief federal inspector – prosecutor – head of the DIA – judges); the noteworthy position of representative power, with four positions out of fifteen (regional speaker – speaker of the capital – member of the Council of the Federation – deputy of the State Duma) or six out of nineteen (considering the deputy of the regional Legislative Assembly and the deputy of the Municipal Assembly); and the surprisingly high position in the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church (fourth place, immediately after the mayor of the capital and ahead of the FSB department head), which caused some to doubt the accuracy of the evaluations. The representative of big business appears under-estimated, which, however, can partially be explained by their latent presence among the deputies at various levels.

The status hierarchy can change if important individual spheres of activity are considered. In decision-making, the governor’s lead over the rest increases (8.6 compared to 6.0 for the speaker). In influencing placement of personnel it is even greater (8.6 for the head compared to 5.5 for the mayor of the capital and the speaker of the Legislative Assembly that follow). In influence over economic processes, the order is once again the regional head (8.2), mayor (6.0), and speaker (5.3), with the representative of big business following in fourth place (5.1). The governor’s lead in influence over security agencies is minimal (7.5 with 7.1 for the department head of the FSB, 6.7 for the head of the Police, 6.6 for the prosecutor, 5.3 for judges, 5.0 for the chief federal inspector, 4.7 for the speaker, and 4.5 for the mayor of the capital).
The Dynamics from 2007 to 2010

Many changes occurred following the last ISANT research study. Above all, the “interloper” model for gubernatorial appointment began to be actively practiced, which significantly weakened the role of the governor in the local elite. The Investigative Committee became an independent player, adding yet another general to the region and somewhat weakening the prosecutor. The decline of the role of the CFI has continued, due both to appropriation of his function as the senior federal official in the region by the appointed governor, and to the weakening of the figures of both the president himself and his presidential representatives. In principle, a decline could also be expected in the role of the speaker of the regional Legislative Assembly, who following the shift to the new system is in effect appointed by the leadership of United Russia party. The center of gravity has begun to shift towards the party vertical headed by the leader of United Russia party. The siloviki on the whole became more atomized due to rotation and uprooting. A paradoxical situation arose where each vertical of power could win individually, yet the Center as a whole would lose. The position of mayor of the regional centers continued to weaken (both elected and even more so appointed).

Despite the lack of any broad comparative studies, the above can be illustrated by data for Nizhegorodskaya Oblast for 2010 from results of the regularly conducted expert survey on the most influential figures in politics, which were somewhat similar to the ISANT results for 2007 but uncovered significantly more about the role of the “federals” (it should also be remembered that Nizhny Novgorod is the center of the Volga Federal District.) Of the top ten most influential politicians, only three were “locals”: the governor (# 3), the mayor of the regional center (# 4) and the bishop (# 5). The rest were all “federals”: the presidential representative (# 1), two deputies from United Russia (# 2 and 6), the prosecutor (# 7), the head of the FSB Department (# 8), the head of the Taxation Service (# 9), and the head of the Police (# 10). Correspondingly, the
hierarchy of the siloviki figures appears as follows: prosecutors – FSB – tax officials – police.

Key Replacements in the Regions

In recent years the political and administrative elites have undergone radical changes. It is now more frequently federal/regional than merely regional elites. A significant portion of them are managers from Moscow and other regions. There are between 50 and 70 branches of various federal structures operating in the regions, and the number of federal civil servants there exceeds the number of regional civil servants by approximately two to one.

We shall analyze the situation with the six most influential “federals”: the heads of the FSB, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Office of the Prosecutor, Investigative Committee, chairman of the Court, and chief federal inspector. It is specifically these figures who comprise the core of the team of federal agencies of executive power in the region headed by the deputy presidential representative and CFI.

The transition to the new system, accompanied by the uprooting and intensive rotation of personnel, was uneven both for the various segments of the elite (corporations) and for the regions. As noted above, the Center’s approach to the ethnic republics was most measured and cautious. Specifically for this reason, Table 4 may serve as a good illustration of the picture for the 26 ethnic entities. The strongest regional ties among the categories of “federals” studied were maintained by the chairman of the Court (3.9 points and average term of service of nearly eight years). The term of service of the regional head is just over half of that (four and one half years), although the degree of “rootedness” is the same (3.8). The terms of service for the rest of the bureaucrats are approximately equal (three to four years for each), although the degree of rootedness varies significantly. If the Investigative Committee is left out
as least indicative, since this structure itself appeared recently (in 2007) and has been headed in the regions by the first deputy prosecutors (up to this level the Prosecutorial officials are homegrown), then two extremes become apparent. At one end of the spectrum with the least amount of rootedness in the regions (1.3) are the department heads of the FSB; at the other are the CFIs having a relatively high factor of local rootedness (3.0). Prosecutors (1.8) and senior regional police officers (2.1) occupy the intermediate positions.

Table 4. Length of service and roots of heads and “federals” in ethnic republics in Russia (as of July 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Heads</th>
<th>CFIs</th>
<th>FSB</th>
<th>MIA</th>
<th>Prosecutors</th>
<th>Investigative Committee</th>
<th>Judges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dagestan</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1? * (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingushetia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N. d.</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N. d. (1)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabardino-Balkaria</td>
<td>5 (3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N. d.</td>
<td>N. d.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachaevo-Cherkessia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Ossetia</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>N. d.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N. d.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A judge has formally been appointed, but as of December 2010 had not yet assumed his duties.
** On October 27, 2010, moved to the Supreme Court of Russia.

Note. 1 – “interloper,” before appointment not connected to the region; 2 – “semi-interloper” – person from outside, connected to the region only ethnically or by birth; 3 – person from outside, who has taken up roots in the region and worked there for a certain amount of time before appointment; 4 – “insider,” representative of the local establishment, who has worked before appointment in another region or does not belong to the core regional elite; 5 – “insider” totally, from the core of the regional elite. The figures in parentheses indicate the degree to which the previous governor or “federal” had roots in the region and are shown only for the regions where replacement occurred in 2009-2010.

There is even greater variation expressed among the regions: between 1.2 and 4 for the points on rootedness and from two to over ten years
of service. Among the leaders in “federal” rootedness is Tatarstan (4.0 and nearly eleven years of service), Dagestan (3.9 and a little over two years), Komi and Udmurtia (3.6 and over five years of service), and Chechnya (3.4 and 3.5 years). The lowest levels of regional rootedness are shown for the government and security elites in the Nenets Autonomous District (1.2 and three and one half years), Ingushetia (1.9 and slightly less than two), Bashkiria (2.1 and under three years), Mariy El (2.2 and a little more than four years), and Khakasia (2.3 and slightly less than two years).

The personnel dynamics intensified with the onset of the crisis, as presented in Table 5, this time for all 83 regions of the country.

Table 5. Replacement of key federal bureaucrats in regions, January 2009-July 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Governors</th>
<th>Prosecutors</th>
<th>Investigative Committee</th>
<th>MIA</th>
<th>FSB</th>
<th>Judges</th>
<th>CFIs</th>
<th>ER</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of replace-</td>
<td>15 (4)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional connection</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010 (January-August)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of replace-</td>
<td>24 (11)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional connection</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the results for the six main federal “generals” (FSB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of the Prosecutor, Investigative Committee, Courts, and CFIs), the rate of personnel replacement has increased by one and a half times (from 70 in 2008 to 98 in 2009). At the same time, how-
ever, considering that there are about 80 regions in the country, the average replacement rate of about 0.9 for the six positions means that it would take about seven years to complete one full replacement cycle for these six “federals.” The process accelerated in 2009: 1.2 on average for the same positions, or about five years for full replacement.

Group Portraits 2010

Governors

Of the 83 active regional heads, 45 can be considered politicians, 31 are bureaucrats, and seven are businessmen. This proportion is continually shifting in favor of the bureaucrats. Of the appointees between 2008 and 2010, bureaucrats comprised over half (eighteen persons), while the number of politicians was half that. Aside from those listed, there are also a number of former military officers among the heads who are working on these positions between their military service and their gubernatorial terms, including former military officers Dmitri Dmitrienko (Murmanskaya Oblast) and Vyacheslav Dudka (Tulskaya Oblast), police officer Igor Slyunyaev (Kostromskaya Oblast), military Prosecutor Leonid Markelov (Komi), and military propagandist Dmitri Mezentsev (Irkutskaya Oblast). Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov holds a special position, having received the rank of general of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2009 while already the head of the republic.

In the past, siloviki have been quite numerous among the governors. Now there are only four remaining: Army Colonel General Boris Gromov (Moscow Oblast) and three “locals”: Yunus-Bek Evkurov in Ingushetia (Army colonel, later promoted to general), former local Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs General Aleksandr Berdnikov in the Altay Republic, and Police Colonel Sergey Morozov in Ulyanovskaya Oblast.

Although there were still 28 regional heads of the “Pre-Putin Draft” as of the end of 2009, within several months, as of the beginning of autumn
2010, there were only three of them remaining: Omsk Governor Leonid Polezhaev, Tomsk Governor Viktor Kress and Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov. Also decreasing sharply was the group of erstwhile “red” governors (communists who had at one time defeated “democrats” at the polls, then subsequently suspended their membership in the party or even joined the United Russia party, such as Nikolay Vinogradov in Vladimir and Aman Tuleev in Kemerovo).

During the Soviet period, the appointment of a secretary of the Oblast Committee of the CPSU in a large industrial region to the Central Committee apparatus of the CPSU would reinforce the clan system and strengthen connections between the federal and regional elites. Now, however, no such system of “regional peerage” essentially exists. There are now three representatives of the upper echelons of regional power among the federal ministers: Sergey Sobyanin (Tyumen governor in 2001-2005), Viktor Khristenko (Chelyabinsk deputy governor in 1991-1996), and Yuriy Trutnev (Perm governor in 2000-2004). Another couple of former heads can be found at the deputy minister level, but in their cases this was more a sine cura than a step up the career ladder.

ics in 1998-2000, deputy minister for industry, science and technology in
in Kostromskaya Oblast (deputy minister for cooperation with CIS mem-
ber states in 1998, deputy minister of transportation in 2000-2004), and
Aleksandr Karlin in Altaysky Krai (deputy minister of justice in 2000-2004,
department head of the State Service Agency in the president’s admin-
istration in 2004-2005). A special case was Stavropol Governor Valeriy
Gaevskiy, who had come to the post from the position of deputy minister
for regional development, where he had worked for a couple of months,
before that had been deputy presidential representative in the Southern
Federal District in 2006-2008, and even earlier had been deputy govern-
ment representative for Stavropolsky Krai in 1996-2006

A new type of career path is becoming popular: becoming governor
after working first as a State Duma deputy or Federation Council member.
Superficially this might seem to be a political career move, but in essence
differs little from the practice of Soviet times, when appointments were
made through Moscow. Before occupying a high post in a region, a bu-
reaucrat or manager would be “examined” and given the opportunity to
acquire contacts in Moscow in a position of, say, instructor for the Central
Committee of the Communist Party. Such was the case with Nikolay De-
min (Bryanskaya Oblast), Vyacheslav Shport (Khabarovsky Krai), Sergey
Antufiev (Smolenskaya Oblast), and Andrey Nelidov (Karelia). A different
kind of test can also be used before appointment to governor, when an
“interloper” might be briefed and made the representative for the region
in the Federal Assembly, as, for example, in the case of Andrey Turchak
(Pskovskaya Oblast) or Dmitri Mezentsev (Irkutskaya Oblast). The career
path of Arsen Kanokov, head of Kabardino-Balkaria, appears similar, but
at one time he had gotten to the State Duma on a mandate sponsored by
the Liberal Democratic Party.

A particular category of politicians comes from the business sector, such
as Dmitri Zelenin (Tverskaya Oblast since 2003), Oleg Kozhemyako (Kor-
yaksky Autonomous District, 2005-2007, Amurskaya Oblast since 2008), and
Arsen Kanokov again (Kabardino-Balkaria since 2005). Until recently, this category also included some who left the regions in 2010, such as Aleksandr Khloponin (Taymyrsky Autonomous District, 2001-2002, and Krasnoyarsky Krai, 2002-2010) and Georgy Boos (Kaliningradskaya Oblast, 2005-2010).

Recently the model of appointing young technocrats from the business sector as regional heads (after a probationary period of sorts) in a high position in the region has been gaining popularity. Examples of this are Vladimir Yakushev (Tyumenskaya Oblast since 2005), Anatoliy Brovko (Volgogradskaya Oblast since 2010), Vyacheslav Gayzer (Komi since 2010), and Lev Kuznetsov (Krasnoyarsky Krai since 2010).

Another option is “cross pollination,” when the deputy governor of one region is appointed as a governor of another, as for example Valeriy Shantsev (Nizhegorodskaya Oblast since 2005), Mikhail Men (Ivanovskaya Oblast since 2005), and Vyacheslav Nagovitsyn (Buryatia since 2007).

On the whole, it can be said that the shining, even extravagant personality, common to the governors of Yeltsin’s time, has now almost disappeared and has been preserved at best as an artifact – while the vanishing breed of old timers is coming to the end of its political life. Above all, the modern governor is a disciplined bureaucrat who is trying to be not too prominent at the federal level; therefore, the genre of group portraits best fits the gubernatorial corps.

Gubernatorial Candidates

In autumn 2009, with the transition to the new method of selecting candidates for regional heads, not only did the respective procedures become more transparent, but an entirely new group appeared into the regional elite: gubernatorial candidates. We shall analyze the composition of this group based on the example of its first hundred: the candidates for the post of head in 31 regions, beginning with the very first region where the new method was applied – Sverdlovskaya Oblast (announced in August 2009), and ending with Bashkiria (announced in July 2010). Our sample included 103 candidates overall.
A fifth of the candidates (22 persons) were active governors, fifteen of which were reappointed. In nine cases, there were no incumbents on the rolls: in some places this was the result of early departure by a regional head (Krasnoyarsky Krai, Yakutia, Bashkiria), while in others it was reported that the governor had personally asked the president/United Russia not to consider him as a candidate for another term. Of the remaining 80 candidates, “insiders” (representatives of the current regional elites) comprised slightly more than two thirds: 56 persons, eleven of which became heads. Of 25 “outsiders” (who could be either representatives of the elites of other regions or “federals,” particularly from among those who are locals by birth), five ended up becoming heads (again, one third).

The breakdown by status among the candidates is as follows: ten chairmen of the governments of the respective regions, of which two (in Tatarstan and Yakutia) became heads; nine deputy governors, of which also two (in Volgograd and Komi) became heads; and five mayors of regional centers, of which also two (in Birobidzhan and Chelyabinsk) were successful (if, however, the mayors of second cities in the region are included, the result becomes 3:3 due to the contribution of Orsk, whose mayor became the governor of Orenburg.) Incidentally, premiers and deputy governors were also among the pretenders to the top post in other regions, as well, aside from only their own regions (Perm’s in Primorye, Kaluga’s in Kurskaya Oblast, Tyumen’s in the Khanty-Mansiysky Autonomous Region), however, without success. Numerous other regional speakers (seven of them) and fewer CFIs (four; another couple of assistants of presidential representatives in Mariy El and Yakutia could also be included) were also unsuccessful. Both of these were acting more as extras. Another point of interest is the purely status-orientated republican model, which in our sampling was seen in Tatarstan and then again in Kabardino-Balkaria, where the regional “triangle” – head/premier/speaker – was present.

Along with the representatives of the regional establishment among the candidates for the highest regional post, there were also many “federals,” some connected to the region and some not. First, there were the
federal parliamentarians: eleven deputies to the State Duma, only one of whom (Natalia Komarova in the Khanty-Mansiysky Autonomous District) managed to achieve success, along with members of the Council of the Federation, of which four were active and one had only just handed over his authority (it was he, Andrey Nelidov in Karelia, who became the head.) It is noteworthy that the majority of Duma members had no connection to the regions to which they had been nominated, but were rather from the high ranks of United Russia, with status, and that the vast majority of those participating in the Oblasts were Duma members, while there were more members of the Council of the Federation in the ethnic republics. Also interesting is the fact that parliamentarians frequently would “group together” and run in pairs, for example in Kurganskaya Oblast, the Khanty-Mansiysky Autonomous District, and Karelia.

The federal government was represented by six candidates at all levels of deputy minister, as a rule originally from the region. They ran mostly in the powerful regions: Chelyabinskaya Oblast (two at once), Primorsky Krai, and Krasnoyarsky Krai. Only one of them became regional head: Aleksandr Misharin in Sverdlovskaya Oblast.

It may be said that it is difficult to make any judgments upon candidates running for governor from the United Russia party (on consultation with the Kremlin), because some of them are just pro forma, while others are real candidates. This may be so, although the opinions of experts on who was more and who was less serious a candidate frequently did not coincide with the final election results. In any case, however, the composition of nominees to the highest position in a region reveals how the current and prospective regional elites are perceived in Moscow.

CFI

The chief federal inspector in a region within the apparatus of the presidential representative in a district is an innovation of the Putin era. Under Yeltsin, there were presidential representatives in the regions who in 1991 (when they were introduced) were seen as being equivalent to the
administration heads, but as a result of individual political dealing between the Kremlin and the respective governors, they gradually ended up deeply in the shadow of the strengthened heads.

Once Putin was named acting president, he also made the presidential representatives acting presidential representatives, and over the next several months in a couple of dozen regions he replaced them with his entrusted people, some of whom were active department heads of the FSB (as a second job). From this draft came, for example, Aleksandr Bespalov, current department head of Gazprom and past chairman of the General Council of the United Russia party.

In May 2000, the system of federal districts headed by the presidential representatives was introduced, with the CFIs staying in the regions. Within a few months, the appointed presidential representatives formed their administrations and appointed the CFIs. There was a great degree of sorting that went on during this process, and only one quarter of the former presidential representatives in the regions were to become CFIs. There were two special cases: Viktor Kazantsev in the Southern Federal District had CFIs who answered for several regions at once, instead of having one for each region; and Leonid Drachevskiy in the Siberian Federal District practiced a system of rotation under which former presidential representatives in certain regions were appointed as CFIs for completely different regions. The first CFI draft of 2000 made quite a strong impression: among them were former department heads of the FSB, Drug Control, and Ministries of Internal Affairs of the respective regions, other managers of federal structures, and directors of administrations of heads and apparatuses of government.

Now, after ten years, only ten from the first CFI draft remain. The majority of the current CFIs are already the second, third, or further shifts. Half of all the present CFIs were appointed in 2008-2010. Among them are also a couple of veterans who have simply been appointed to other regions.

Every fourth or fifth (eighteen) was from the FSB, including eleven who were already appointed under Medvedev. FSB department heads,
however, are no longer appointed; it is rather deputies and section heads. Another nine had military backgrounds (including the Main Intelligence Directorate), three were from the police (including the CFI in St. Petersburg, and from the Main Department for Implementation of Punishment in Sverdlovskaya Oblast), and two were from the Prosecutor’s Office. Thus, there were a total of 32 former siloviki. This does not appear to be a coincidence, considering the coordination needed for the CFI, above all by the security agencies and law enforcement. It is also no coincidence that the lion’s share belongs to the FSB, since personnel work is their field. As one former CFI for Permskaya Oblast said, “we control all the rest, and they control us.”

Appointment to the post of CFI is more a political than a career move. Of the federal inspectors, only five have made it to the CFI level. In turn, the CFI is something of an evolutionary offshoot. From this post, the only likely move up would be to deputy presidential representative or to deputy governor. Moreover, this position is not for young talent, but for serious state figures.

If previously the integration of the CFI into the local establishment was valued, then after about the mid-2000s (once control of the Center over local political elites had been reestablished), the post of CFI began to be filled more and more frequently by “outsiders” or even filled through overlapping appointments, introduced by Aleksandr Konovalov in Privolzhsky District, when, for instance, the CFIs in Kirovskaya Oblast and Ulyanovskaya Oblast were simply exchanged for one another. Recently Viktor Ishaev in the Far Eastern Federal District has been actively reshuffling the CFIs. The recent appointment of a new CFI for Perm in April 2009 is telling: it was Aleksey Andreev, former political analyst from Krasnodar, who became deputy in the State Duma, chairman of the regional executive committee of United Russia party, and then made his way to Moscow.

Two of the active CFIs have already changed two regions each, with Viktor Ilyukhin within the Far Eastern Federal District (the Koryaksky Autonomous Region, Yakutia, Kamchatka), and Andrey Rutsinsky from the
Southern Federal District to Uralsky (Karachaevo, Karachaevo-Cherkes-
sia, Stavropol, and Tyumen).

The dean of the CFI corps is, without a doubt, Nikolay Shuba, who twenty years ago became Yeltsin’s first presidential representative in Altaysky Krai, then worked a certain time in Moscow as deputy head of the Department for Coordination of Presidential Representatives in the president’s administration, then again returned to Altay, and since 2002 has held the post of CFI for Moscow Oblast. Although in Altay he had been one of the most scandalous figures in the political establishment, he has rarely been visible in Moscow Oblast.

Conclusions

Over the past years, the entire upper echelon of the regional elites has been fundamentally rebuilt, both in composition and in structure, as have the relations within the regions and with the Center, radically changing both the overall nature of these ties (for which purpose this has been undertaken), and the political situation in the regions themselves. The latter, which could have important consequences (both positive and negative), is usually underestimated. Moreover, its benefits are seen in routine, everyday life, while its negative aspects are more prone to flare up at critical moments.

Among the positive aspects is the formation of a single elite universe to replace the several dozen individual cell regions affected by mixing and cross-pollination. This will be good not only for the elites themselves, who break into the field of operations from the often small, stagnant backwaters, where they were moreover strictly controlled by a boss who was never replaced. This could also be good for the citizens, and not only due to the rise in the managers’ professionalism and the quality of government, but also to the demonopolization and decentralization at the regional level.
The negative aspects include the threat of weakened ties between the citizens and the “top” and the perception of the latter by the local population as an “occupying” power imposed upon them from above – with the potential loss of control over the main corps of the regional elites and over the situations in the regions. The governor, having become a federal bureaucrat incorporated into the power vertical, is now much easier to control from the Center. Simultaneously the governor, part of his team, and the entire group of senior executives representing the various verticals of power in the region lose their connection with the local community. The entire system of command over the region from the Center begins to resemble an automobile in which the driver (trying to make things easier for himself) has made the steering very responsive by loosening the connections between the steering wheel and everything else. The steering wheel now turns easily, but it has lost its connection with the wheels that drive the automobile. That doesn’t matter so much, as long as the road ahead remains straight, but if the need should arise to make a turn, it will become apparent that in incorporating the regional elites into the various power verticals, Moscow has gone too far.

Notes

1 The very concept of “elite” as it applies to contemporary Russia is by no means accepted by everyone. Without getting into a discussion on the extent to which the Russian elites have taken root and are seen as good, the extent that they are seen as “the cream of society” (a role they aspire to) or the extent to which society accepts their role, etc., we will use the functional definition of the concept of “elite” as our point of departure. Thus, membership in the elite is established based on an individual having real power and influence, with no great reliance on their intellect or moral/ethical qualities. Based upon this approach, in the vast majority of cases, membership in the elite is established by having a position in the administrative system. For this reason, the current Russian elite may be called “bosses.” At one time, Petr Kropotkin, a prominent Russian philosopher of the end of the 19th-beginning of the 20th century, sug-
gested this term for the power elites in general. Here, however, the emphasis will be on the fact that membership in the elite is determined by external factors, i.e. the person’s post, which can be given or taken away.

These include, above all, the changes in the procedures for forming the Council of the Federation and appointing the heads of the regional Department of Internal Affairs (DIA), introducing the post of chief federal inspector, re-structuring joint authorities to the advantage of the Center, unification of the electoral and political systems, and installing regional links in the numerous new verticals: anti-terrorism and anti-drug commissions, electoral committees, parties, etc.

This was the case of Oleg Kozhemyako, who before becoming head of the Amurskaya Oblast headed the Koryak Autonomous Region, and before that ran for the post of governor of Primorie.


Take, for example, Andrey Yarin. In his less than forty years he has managed to work as head of the government of Kabardino-Balkaria for three years (2006-2009), before which he had been the premier of the Ryazanskaya Oblast (2004-2005), first vice premier of Chechnya (2002-2003), and vice governor of Vladimirskaya Oblast (2001-2003); moreover, each time between regional appointments he worked in federal agencies: the Immigration Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Drug Control Agency, and the Office of the presidential representative for the Southern Federal District. Mikhail Babich (same age) in 2000-2003 managed to have been both vice governor of the Moscow and Ivanovskaya Oblasts and head of the government in Chechnya. Then there is Sergey Voronov, the vice governor of Nizhegorodskaya Oblast (1992-1993, 1997), Krasnoyarsky Krai (2002-2003), and Irkutskaya Oblast (2002-2003), and Deputy Mayor of Nizhny Novgorod. Sergey Sokol: vice governor of Krasnoyarsky Krai (2002-2008) and Irkutskaya Oblast (2008-2009), and former candidate for head of the Altay Republic.
Officially as of July 1, 2010, there were 83 Federation administrative units in the country; however, the number of positions for the federal “generals” is less than that, due to the “doubling up” of the capital’s departments of the FSB (for Moscow and the Moscow Oblast and for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast) and the State Department of Internal Affairs for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast. In the past, there have even been cases of chief federal inspectors heading not one, but two or more regions (especially in the Southern Federal District).

The basis for the present section is the chapter, “Politicheskie i biznes-elity” in the book: Vlast, biznes, obshchestvo v regionakh: nepravilny treugolnik, ed. N. Petrov and A. Titkov, Carnegie Moscow Center (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010).

At the beginning of the Putin presidency the Kremlin relied upon the generals and in every way promoted them as potential heads of the regions. These were the department heads of the FSB: Vladimir Kulakov in Voronezh, Viktor Maslov in Smolensk, and Murat Zyazikov in Ingushetia; police generals such as Alu Alkhanov in Chechnya; and Armed Forces generals such as Vladimir Shamanov in Ulyanovskaya Oblast and Georgiy Shpak in Ryazanskaya Oblast. Later, however, after the Kremlin lost faith in their effectiveness as administrators, many of them were removed and no replacements were appointed.

In October 2010, former head of the government apparatus Sergei Sobyanin was appointed to replace Yury Luzhkov, removed as mayor of Moscow.


It is noteworthy that the migration of federal bureaucrats to the regions had taken place in the past as well. For example, Nikolay Fedorov in Chuvashia (1994-2010) had been federal minister of justice (1991-1993); Boris Gromov in the Moscow Oblast (since 2000) had been first deputy minister of internal affairs back in the USSR (1990-1991) and Russian deputy minister of defense (1992-1995); Orenburg Governor Aleksey Chernyshev (1999-2010) had been deputy minister for agriculture in 1993-1994; and St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matvienko (since 2003) had been vice premier in 1998-2003.

Only nineteen of Yeltsin’s presidential representatives and four of the number appointed by Putin in January 2000 ended up being appointed to new positions as chief federal inspector. See: N. Zubarevich, N. Petrov, and A. Titkov, “Federal Districts–2000,” Regions of Russia in 1999, Annual supplement to
Besides the aforementioned Southern Federal District, where the CFIs work under a different principle, most of their replacement was observed in the district capitals, except St. Petersburg and Moscow, where they are not very prominent and are not considered among the most influential of the players (in Nizhegorodskaya Oblast over ten years six inspectors were replaced), as well as in regions of conflict: Primorsky and Permsky Krais, Kaliningradskaya, Kamchatskaya, Ulyanovskaya Oblasts, Yakutia and the Nenetsky Autonomous Region (at four replacements each). Another important factor was the replacement of the presidential representatives. Therefore, in the Central Federal District, where the presidential representative was not replaced, the CFIs have been more stable.

An exception was Vladimir Kabanov, appointed in 2008 as chief federal inspector for Orlovskaya Oblast, where the entire administrative elite was replaced.


From the time when the list of gubernatorial candidates was officially published, the chief federal inspectors have already been named several times in this capacity, but every time in order to give real pretenders company. However, in mid-2010 two former CFIs were appointed to high posts simultaneously: Rustem Khamitov, who had held this post in 2000-2002 in Bashkiria, became president of Bashkiria, while Vadim Yakovenko, who had worked in this post in 2006-2008 in Krasnodarsky Krai, became the department head of the Investigative Committee for Moscow.

Here is what Andreev himself had to say: “The documents were submitted to the personnel reserve for the President’s Administration at the end of last year. Geographically I went to the regions of the Volga Federal District. One of the first vacancies that appeared in the District was that of the chief federal inspector in Permsky Krai. Based upon this, they suggested that I consider the possibility of being appointed to that position. After three or four days of consultation and familiarization with the region, I decided to agree.” (Business-class, April 27, 2009).
What Happened to Democracy: Society at the Crossroads

Natalia Bubnova

Nearly twenty years ago, a democratic revolution swept through Russia. In resisting the State Committee of the State of Emergency in August 1991, the people broke through Russia’s Berlin Wall with their own hands. Acts of courage and a general sense of resolve and unity created widespread expectation of change. Though the three men who died in clashes near the Russian White House during the night of August 21 (Dmitri Komar, Vladimir Usov, and Ilya Krichevski) were the sole victims of these events, they personified the country, representing three classes – worker, intelligentsia, and entrepreneur – and three ethnicities.

The revolution, however, remained unfinished. It changed the means of production but not the ruling class. Those who made it happen did not come to power. The people, who had suffered so much, proved capable of making the breakthrough, but neither those in the White House nor those who kept vigil at the bonfires and manned the barricades had any clear vision of the future.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which followed the events of August 1991, was a drama for most of its citizens. There may have been consolation in its relative bloodlessness, in its overthrow of totalitarianism, and in the freedom it provided those who escaped the debris to build their own destiny. But for the vast majority of people (who had expressed a preference for national unity in the Gorbachev referendum of 1991), the lost country remained their homeland, for which their fathers and grandfathers had fought. Tens of millions of people, including 25 million ethnic Russians, found themselves “abroad,” the economy and the cultural landscape in
tatters. What is surprising is not that Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union a major geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century (though the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917, the World Wars, the Holocaust, and the repression of millions of people in the USSR, China, and Cambodia were also major geopolitical catastrophes of the 20th century), but that so many national and international politicians and experts took these words to be evidence of a nostalgia for totalitarianism.

The reforms of the 1990s were inconsistent, and socio-political breakdown and economic disruption led to a sharp decline in production and the standard of living, the exacerbation of social and interethnic problems, and the spread of violence. But the democrats who were blamed for these failures had never been “in power” (or were at best only “near power,” given that Yegor Gaydar was prime minister for only nine months). The history of the decade was the history of the attempts by democrats to influence the decisions of those in power – sometimes more, sometimes less successfully. And since 2000, the new government has focused on building a “power vertical,” with authoritarianism essentially restored and the fragile democratic structures of Yeltsin’s time eroded and diluted.

The pendulum has swung back. The people, who twenty years ago had anticipated change (even among members of the Communist Party in the late 1980s, 80 percent favored change), now advocated “stability” and “order.” The most peaceful of countries in the early 1990s now applauded bullying neighboring countries, and the interethnic tolerance that once ensured “friendship between peoples” became a thing of the past.

This trend was a logical outcome of the poignant “leap” of the 1990s and the difficulties associated with it. Paradoxically, however, the tendency toward authoritarianism was accompanied by a growth in personal liberty. Crimson jackets and gold chains became artifacts of a distant past. Attitudes toward work also changed: employed by companies with modern work practices, many Russians now perform on a par with Europeans and Americans and still stand up for their rights. At the end of the Soviet period, labor productivity in Russia was (by some estimates) fourteen
times lower than that of Western countries; it is now only four times lower, and in Russian branches of Western companies, productivity is the same as in their head offices. During the 1998 crisis, Western companies in Russia replaced the majority of their foreign managers with Russians, which turned out to be an effective step. Also, Russian public opinion surveys now list self-worth at work as a key factor in personal fulfillment.

The “apartment–car–dacha–wife–lover” formula for success is fading. Orientation toward family has become more common, as well as the acceptance of common-law marriage, single motherhood, and divorce. If, in the early nineties, stress on education dipped as it lost its association with income, its position has now been fully restored, and the majority of parents would not dream of sending their children into the future without a university diploma. With less intrusion from the state, relations between parents and children have also changed greatly. A new trend, though by no means universal, emphasizes a cooperative approach to the harmonious upbringing of children, and fathers are more closely involved and recognize fatherhood as one of the main criteria of a successful man. The perception of abortion as a tragedy has been revived, and the number of abortions has declined sharply, from 8 million in the USSR in the 1980s to 1.2 million in Russia in 2009.

To the deep regret of many, belief in heroism and interest in our national literature have faded into the past. But Russians have been building and renovating their homes – doubling the number of square meters per person, the most important statistical category in Soviet times – and, for the first time in centuries, altering the rural landscape. Many families have bought their own cars, and yet the number of road fatalities (adjusted for the increase) has fallen by almost 80 percent.

Deep problems remain in all these areas, yet the positive turn toward a more civilized domestic life cannot be ignored. Even the endless radio and television talk shows, the broadcasts allowing online input, and the ephemeral surveys on popular issues, all of which can be seen as a distraction and a dumbing down of intellectual life, nevertheless can, through repetition,
prompt reflection about Russian society’s development. Some experts believe that, with the growth of capital and formation of a middle class, Russia, on its own, will inevitably follow the same path as other European countries; those with more to lose will have an interest in the supremacy of the law and guaranteed rights for themselves and their children.

Meanwhile, according to the latest annual national viability rating (the Failed States Index), published by the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine in late June 2010, Russia is a country with a “less than average level of stability.” This characterization is based the country’s record of limited civil liberties, growing corruption, and strong autocratic tendencies. According to the estimates of Freedom House, in ten years Russia has deviated further from democracy than any other post-communist country. Of course, democracy in itself is no guarantee of modernization or effective management. At the beginning of the 1990s, Adam Przeworski, citing Latin America as an example, showed that, of the eleven countries in the region that implemented democratic reform, only four had achieved meaningful socio-economic development. Of the countries that had taken the path toward authoritarianism, however, not a single one had prospered. Exceptions such as Chile and China are rare and possible only at the stage of industrial development, not at the post-industrial stage.

Democracy in Russia has never had a fortunate path, in theory or in practice. Every Russian knows that the 19th century revolutionaries Alexander Gertsen, Nikolay Chernyshevsky and Nikolay Dobrolyubov were called revolutionary democrats. Even Lenin’s “new type” party, which did not shun expropriations and advocated the use of violence, was called socialist/democratic. For the entire Soviet period it was customary to bash “bourgeois democracy,” contrasting it to “socialist democracy.” Eastern European countries were called “peoples’ democracies.” This nomenclature has led to a great deal of confusion within Russia around the concept of “democracy” (confusion that, incidentally, affects many other concepts that are understood differently within Western political science: socialism, nationality and nationalism, fascism, terrorism, etc.). During the 1990s,
on top of everything else, democracy became associated with illegal privatization, economic chaos, impoverishment, and gang violence, while now, on the other hand, paradoxically, most people in Russia are convinced that the country is on the road to democracy.¹

When it is proclaimed that Russians hold “different values” from those held by people in the West, it is important to ask what this means. According to public opinion surveys, Russians value property rights, personal and family safety, the right to change their residence, and the right to travel abroad no less than their counterparts in the West. The overwhelming majority of Russians advocate freedom of the press and freedom of religious belief. Romano Prodi, former chairman of the European Commission, once said that Western countries and Russia will have everything in common “except their institutions.” But such institutions are the very tools that, historically, have developed to ensure that, when the reins of government are passing over to the “majority,” they don’t end up in the hands of power-hungry tyrannical groups – just as the Marxist slogan “Factories to the Workers” inevitably led to totalitarianism. These institutions include competitive and replaceable political authority, subordination of government to the people by means of free elections, an independent alternative mass media, and an autonomous judicial system. It is, however, via these institutions that Russian “values” do, in fact, diverge from Western ones: the realization that one can participate in political processes through elections has not yet taken hold in the country (it has not had the time to emerge.) There has traditionally been an ambiguous attitude toward the law and the courts (as a Russian proverb goes, “A law can be turned in any direction”), and the media have not yet become a true fourth power.

A special feature of Russia is also its national search for meaning. In order for such institutions to sink into the national consciousness, they must not only become rooted in everyday life and be patently useful, but (especially important for the Russian national consciousness) also perceived as a force for good. This can only be possible if they are genuine institutions, rather than imitations. As it turns out, institutions must actively operate so
that people can become accustomed to having them, yet it is the people who must implement them. Though the contradiction is obvious, in the analysis to follow, an attempt is made to explore the state of principal institutions alongside the dynamics of the prevailing attitudes toward them. Since the author is, by professional specialization, more familiar with developments in the United States than elsewhere, citations in a number of cases are made to similar experiences in the United States. The volume of this collection of articles makes it impossible to illuminate the topic completely; this is not an in-depth expert analysis, but a series of sketches on the topic that in many cases can only outline problems and trends.

Patrimonialism and Paternalism

Other than during the so-called Times of Trouble (the early seventeenth century, the two revolutions of 1917, and the recent upheaval at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s), Russia has always been power-centric, and this power has always been marked by despotism and coercion. The trend toward liberalism (to use the modern term) has existed for most of Russia’s history: during the 12th and 13th centuries, cities were governed by general assemblies called veche, and self-rule in Novgorod continued until the last quarter of the 15th century. Liberal reforms were carried out under Catherine II, Alexander I and Alexander II, Nicholas II, and in our day under Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Liberal thought, which, as Lord Byron put it, is “brightest in dungeon,” has existed in Russia for many centuries. Aleksander Yanov traces to as early as the 16th century the roots of the classic confrontation between advocates of Russian uniqueness and adherents of development along Western liberal lines (Slavophiles and Westerners), which lasted for the entire 19th century and has spilled over into current times. Attempts to move forward have always ended in failure, but it is equally true that after periods of reaction, such attempts have always continued.
The turbulent 1990s, despite their difficulties as a period of transition, were years of hope for the development of democracy. Reforms were carried out, although inconsistently, and fragile democratic institutions were created and began to function. The shelling of the White House in October 1993 and the war in Chechnya were tragic events, but political life continued throughout the decade and the press was free. The country attained the highest democratic rating of all of the post-Soviet states with the exception of the Baltic countries.

In the early 2000s, events began to move in the opposite direction. The unique parameters of this transformation have been described in many studies. Under the slogan of “sovereign democracy,” power in Russia became non-elective and essentially immutable and non-competitive. Ownership and government began to merge, leading to a growth in corruption, governmental intrusion into the economy, and monopoly of state-owned companies (which had long proven themselves non-competitive compared to private companies, both in theory and in practice). Totally dependent upon the state, business has been stifled. Development of small- and medium-sized enterprises has become very difficult. The government apparatus has grown beyond reasonable proportion and the ranks of bureaucrats have been filled predominantly by former siloviki personnel (a trend that has only recently begun to wane). In a number of regions, government agencies have been linked to organized crime, as was recently seen in the southern village of Kushchevskaya in Krasnodarsky Krai where twelve people – including four children – were massacred in a farmer’s home by a local agricultural baron – with connection to the authorities, the former pressuring farmers to hand over their land. Many articles of the constitution are being violated: gubernatorial elections have been canceled in order to create a power vertical, the procedures for forming the Council of the Federation have been changed, and the State Duma has been transformed from a representative body to the place where the Kremlin’s decisions are rubber-stamped. Presidential elections take place without open, competitive debate, or equal access to political process and the media for
all political parties. The selection of a successor and “tandem” rule have also departed from procedures specified in the constitution. The list of cities where mayoral elections have been cancelled continues to grow, and now includes essentially all cities with a million inhabitants or more.

This concentration of power, to a significant extent, corresponds to public expectation. According to Vladimir Ryzhkov, there has been a consolidation of society based upon authoritarianism, although it must be said that this means only a part of society, even if it is the majority. If in a poll in 1989 the largest group (45 percent) of those surveyed answered that “power should never, under any circumstances, be concentrated with one person,” by 2008 this number had fallen to 17 percent. The same number of respondents was convinced that “our nation always needs a strong hand”² (although recently the number of advocates of such a position has declined).

But as with many of the other parameters, people have an obviously ambiguous attitude towards the authorities. Over 60 percent of Russians believe that democracy would be the best system for Russia, but many take this to mean order and a fair distribution of produced benefits, and by no means necessarily the division of powers or competitive elections. About 70 percent advocate government control over the harvest of natural resources and key industries, while approximately the same number are convinced that government bureaucrats are thieves. According to the results of a Levada Center survey, 33 percent of respondents believe that power in Russia is maintained by “a tweed ring style of corruption” (the most frequent answer); 30 percent believe it to be supported “by the full force of a state machine that serves only the interests of those in power;” and 21 percent feel that it relies upon those “brought to power based upon personal loyalty.” Nearly a quarter of citizens polled criticized the authorities for the “lack of social control and contempt for the law.”³

Meanwhile, most Russians have a very different attitude towards government from people in the West: not as accountable and replaceable agencies that provide services, but rather as centers of power. Viewing the
government as something holy and God-given, with the chief ruler seen as the father of the nation anointed by God, is certainly a thing of the past. Yet government is perceived as a given—something impossible to influence. The majority of Americans are also convinced that politicians are dishonest and that politics is a dirty business. However, unlike Americans, Russians generally do not believe that anything depends on them and do not feel responsible for what the authorities have done to them in the past or will do in the future. In the summer of 2010, Putin’s and Medvedev’s popularity declined, yet the ruling tandem wields enough power to decide “between themselves” who should be nominated for the next presidential term.

Paternalism is a frequent topic in the press, but such assertions do not reflect the full picture. The expectations Russians have of their government are based more on the government’s taking on itself everything, so it might as well do something. Workers in the USSR used to receive an average of 10 percent of what they had earned, with the remainder going to weapons and heavy industry—machines producing machines plus a centralized and largely ineffective social sphere. Moreover, during the lives of the current generation alone, the authorities have “changed” or “replaced” money four times, making decisions that led to sharp devaluation and evaporating accumulated savings within hours.

Only Western Sovietologists or people born since the collapse of the USSR could think that the Soviet government provided care for everyone. The citizens of prosperous Western Europe had become much more accustomed to the role of government services in their lives and to social benefits provided by the government. Living in the Soviet Union, people knew very well that they had to do everything themselves (tinker, fix, “arrange,” “acquire,” “ram through”). As a famous Soviet song went, they “were producing rockets and conquering the Yenisey,” 80 percent by hand, lived within several square meters of space per person, stood in lines for four hours per woman per day, never knew of disposable syringes or Pampers, sewed and knitted, grew their own food in gardens and “canned” the bulk of all the vegetables and fruits consumed in the country. Services, in
the contemporary sense, were nearly non-existent or exceedingly few and of poor quality. People were resourceful and thrifty, though in an unusual way. It is no coincidence that Russians adapted to the totally new market conditions after the communist regime collapsed with an entrepreneurial spirit and ability that surprised the West. It is also telling that, based upon data from the mid-1990s, Russians were the highest paid immigrant group in the United States.

Contemporary nostalgia for Soviet times compares current conditions, which have never been easy in this country, with Soviet propaganda and mythology. Yet even for those who lack impartiality, housing problems and chronic shortages inevitably elicit a feeling that the government owes them something. Though people believe that the authorities “must do” (even judicial appointments and the provision of charity are expected to come through state auspices), at the same time they remain convinced that the government “must, but doesn’t.” In a recent poll, 60 percent of those surveyed said that they have had no contact with any state organizations over the past three years. The survey results, published in the Moscow Times in spring 2010, indicated that Russian managers, even in a crisis, were significantly less inclined to rely on the support of the government than their colleagues working in Europe.

Experts differ on the potential for the government’s transformation towards liberalism and whether it would be useful to work with the government the way it is and try to effect change “from inside.” Some believe that the point of no return has already been passed, and political modernization within the existing system’s framework of power is no longer possible. Others continue to hope for a gradual transformation of the country towards greater liberalism under pressure from market imperatives and globalization.

Within government agencies, understanding of the need for liberalization is only at a surface level – and even then priority is given to modernization of the economy. In 2007, when he was still the first vice prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev spoke in Davos about the need to “create new
institutions based upon the fundamental principles of a viable democracy.” However, his landmark article “Russia, Forward!” published in autumn 2009, when he already had been president for two years, included no plans to revive any real mechanisms to implement society’s interests, or to use such levers for influencing government. Speaking at a forum in Yaroslavl in September 2010, President Medvedev said that democracy is a precondition for the country’s development, but his interpretation of democracy did not include restoration of the division of powers, fair and competitive elections, independent courts, or a free mass media. In November 2010, one week before his annual message to the Federal Assembly, Medvedev spoke in an Internet video message about the dangers of stagnation and the need for real competition between parties. A week later his televised presidential address, broadcast to a much larger audience, failed to mention these points.

We hear the authorities speak of “sovereign democracy.” Some government ideologues interpret this term as some special form of democracy in which the authorities determine which institutions should receive particular attention and when. Others see it simply as democracy in a sovereign country independent of external influences. However, both are convinced that “democracy should suit the level of development in the country,” and that the government sets and guides the agenda and uses political instruments to control the people, rather than the other way around (when the people elect their government and require it to accountably execute their will). Chief Kremlin ideologist Vladislav Surkov, first deputy head of the president’s administration and deputy chairman of the presidential Modernization and Technological Development Committee, asserted recently that consolidated government authority is the main and the only instrument of modernization.4

The Russian people have the government they have and not the government they deserve – as has been the case over nearly the entire course of their history. In order to change the situation, elections need to be restored from top to bottom with free competition and equal access to mass
media for all political candidates. The cynical assertions pushed by the government and its servile press must not establish that “it is this way everywhere,” that true democracy does not exist, that elections are manipulated everywhere and all courts are pressured, that in all countries the press is bought off and permission required to hold demonstrations, and if it hasn’t been given, then people are, using Putin’s words, “beaten on the head with a club.” What does exist everywhere, however, is the need for a significant number of people in civil society to exert pressure continually on the authorities – which will be further discussed below.

Parties for Show and Parties for Elections

In 1987, the process of establishing non-governmental organizations began, leading to the birth of a multitude of parties and discussion clubs. The not-yet-quite-free but still competitive elections of 1989-1990 also helped to increase the number of parties. As in a number of other areas of political action, however, party-building resumed after an interval of nearly seventy years. As new as it was, without a tradition of practice, it differed significantly from the way such activity was conducted in the developed democracies. During the last years of the USSR and the first half of the 1990s, party-building was characterized by a lack of direct links between the new parties and particular social groups. Very few parties had a developed organizational structure with local branches. According to the joint research done in the summer of 1991 by the University of California and the Russian Institute of the State and the Law, only 42 percent of the population knew of the existence of any party other than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s, the intelligentsia, business people, and the nascent middle class – which together represent the most independent and active strata of society – had parties they could vote for, and their votes actually counted. In the early 2000s, on the other hand, the govern-
ment pursued a line aimed at marginalizing democratic parties by preventing their access to broadcast media, complicating the registration of electoral candidates, confiscating whole editions of informational publications, and rigging election results. The declining influence of the liberal democratic parties also suffered from the reduction in the ranks of the intelligentsia, on which they had greatly relied. Many had emigrated (at a rate of around a hundred thousand per year); others couldn’t find a place in the new epoch and became disillusioned and marginalized. Democratic slogans were being discredited not only because of the economic difficulties associated with reforms, but also through inadequate organization, and lack of action, flexibility, and initiative on behalf of the democratic parties themselves.

The government needs parties in order to facilitate control over political processes and to legitimize its candidates through elections. But it is also interested in having parties under its controls that represent the government’s interests (which is why the United Russia party was created), or in having submissive decoy parties that it can use to attract and neutralize the votes of the discontented. Appropriating the ideas and the electorate of other parties, the government skillfully manipulates public opinion. It is content with the current “one-and-a-half party system,” including the pro-Kremlin United Russia party and several “second echelon” parties of the “inside-the-system opposition” (A Just Russia, also created from above, but more socially oriented, the subservient but outwardly provocative Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) with its socially active but predictable electorate). Representatives of the government have declared on numerous occasions that the country has a well-established party system, making it clear that the authorities are not interested in having other political associations, although in his Internet video message aired in December 2010, Dmitry Medvedev admitted the desirability of political competition with the participation of other political parties besides United Russia.
The 2001 Law on Political Parties greatly complicated the creation of new parties. It introduced a requirement to collect 50,000 signatures in order to register a party, under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, and these signatures are to be collected in all regions. Seven parties in Russia managed to achieve registration. Four of them, United Russia, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Liberal Democratic Party, and A Just Russia, are represented in the State Duma, while the other three, Yabloko, the Right Cause, and the Patriots of Russia, did not win elections to the legislature parliament. Thus, a significant portion of society has no representation in the upper legislative body of the state. When registration of new parties is excessively complicated, both legally and as a result of the government counteraction, it becomes more realistic to launch political movements, although under the 2001 law political associations lost their right to nominate candidates to federal or regional elections.

Still, a demand for new political forces in society does exist. According to Levada Center surveys, the majority of Russian citizens believe that Russia needs a political opposition, while 71 percent see the need for “Social movements and parties that would be in the opposition and could seriously impact the life of the country,” an opinion that is growing year by year. Over 20 percent of Russians also believe that there is a future for liberal democratic parties in Russia. About the same number are favorably disposed towards the coalition For a Russia Without Arbitrariness and Corruption, established in September 2010 by Boris Nemtsov, Mikhail Kasyanov, Vladimir Milov, and Vladimir Ryzhkov, which intends to register as a party for participating in elections.

United Russia, like the CPSU in the Soviet days, is not a party in the true sense, but serves as a lever for implementing the government’s decisions and mobilizing those who wish to advance their careers by participating in such activities. The United Russia party presents itself as having plans that reflect a variety of opinions, where there is “room for everyone’s interests,” whether a “statist” or an advocate of modernization. However, realistically it only has the support of the bureaucracy, military personnel,
and people with high-school or vocational education engaged primarily in physical labor or agriculture. The difference between how the educated people who use the Internet and the mass audience of federal television view the United Russia party was illustrated during the regional elections in March 2010. After its active television election campaign, United Russia received a decisive number of votes, but an online interview with Boris Gryzlov on Gazeta.ru provoked a sharp rejection by visitors to the website, who posted several thousand negative questions and comments. Beginning with the Duma elections of 2007, when the party gained strength by having Putin placed at the head of its candidates list for regional elections, the party’s results steadily declined in spite of pressure from above and systematic wriggling of votes, and experts placed its actual rating at no more than 35 percent.

United Russia’s declining popularity was influenced by governmental inaction during the wildfires of summer 2010, which coincided with the start of the primary election campaign. The dismissal of Yury Luzhkov, one of the founders and co-chairman of the party, also damaged its position. However, despite the recent decline in the tandem’s ratings, the party’s political levers, along with its ability to manage the elections, remains enough to guarantee United Russia’s victory at the polls. Also, because other parties are kept “equidistant” from the airwaves of the federal television channels, the party’s decrease does not necessarily lead to an increase in the popularity of its rivals. The ratings for the CPRF, LDPR, and A Just Russia have fluctuated within the bounds of statistical error (under 3 percent); in summer 2010, 9, 8, and 4 percent of voters respectively were prepared to cast votes for them.

The CPRF remains the only second party with real influence, developed organizational structures, divergent networks in the regions, and an active, though aging, electorate uncorrupted by political technologies. Predictions in the 1990s that the Communist Party would transform itself into a social democratic party have not been realized. Although the “first-stage” program for the CPRF allows for a “multiform” economy and
advocates creation of “conditions for the development of small and middle enterprises,” it continues to call for nationalization, first of the strategic industries, followed by socialization of production and the restoration of Soviet structures of power. At the same time, the communists consistently take anti-Western positions, explaining the fall of the communist regime as the result of a “Western conspiracy” and describing the reforms of the 1990s as the plottings of a “fifth column” and deliberate “national genocide.” They also consider globalization an imperialist reconstruction of the world. Reading the party’s documents and materials on its website evokes a depressing sense of déjà vu: “Nationalization will create the strong economic foundation needed for further transformation;” “social forms of ownership over the primary means of production will predominate;” “socialist forms of economic activity are more efficient in providing for the well-being of the people;” “science will clearly demonstrate its significance as the direct production force in society;” “the CPRF views socialism as a society free from exploitation, based upon common property and distribution of the fruits of life based on the amount, quality and results of labor.” It is a case of “been there, done that” – the seventy years of Soviet history were enough to prove what these postulates mean in practice. Moreover, the Communist Party in recent years has begun to use Stalin’s name more and more frequently.

In the 1990s, it was widely believed among liberals that the CPRF posed the greatest danger. In order to prevent its accession to power, the Yeltsin government instigated mortgage auctions and even went along with the rigging of the 1996 presidential elections. However, using all methods to exclude communists from power on the principle that “the ends justify the means” was hardly less of an evil.

The aging communist electorate still has the potential to grow because of the general dissatisfaction with the economy. This forces the other parties to play on the same field, trying to grab the agenda of defending social rights and pulling a portion of the social democratic voters to their side. During the elections of recent years, when there has been no viable
alternative, many of those dissatisfied with current policies have also voted for the communists as the only alternative to the existing government. At the same time, the CPRF has positioned itself as a party that calls for the observance of laws, honest elections, accountable government, and an independent legal system. Some experts believe that the CPRF has even taken steps to attract the business sector, promising to ensure that the established rules of the game are observed.

The real risk of destabilization comes not from the communists, but from the fascist and nationalist movements. The authorities are more favorably inclined toward them than toward anti-fascist associations and even try to play them for their own purposes, steering nationalist groups in a direction that creates support for the regime. The Rodina party was registered to participate in the Moscow Municipal Duma elections in 2005 with a nationalistic video clip that for a while ran on TV. On Peoples’ Unity Day in 2010, as it had been the preceding year, permission was granted for Russian Marches to take place on central avenues in Moscow and St. Petersburg, while demonstrations planned by the anti-fascist movement Antifa were allowed only on the outskirts of the two capitals. On November 4, 2010, there were even two Russian Marches in Moscow, one of which (passing along Taras Shevchenko Naberezhnaya) included the pro-Kremlin movement Nashi. Their participation was probably intended to maintain their leadership and dilute the nationalist implications of the actions, giving it a patriotic flavor. But playing the nationalist card is dangerous, given the increased number of crimes based on nationalism. Nationalist groups are quite capable of using force to serve their interests, as demonstrated by the events of December 7 and 10-11, 2010, when the Spartak soccer club fan Yegor Sviridov was murdered and dissatisfaction with the investigating authorities led to thousands of soccer fans and nationalists blocking Leningradsky Prospekt, rioting on Manezhnaya Square, and mass beatings and pogroms. During the course of that week, there were also demonstrations and clashes between Russian and Caucasian nationalists in Moscow and other cities.
In Russian domestic political life, there continue to be no mechanisms that allow various groups and individual citizens to defend and consolidate their interests. However, there is a demand in society for new political forces. The imitation, bureaucratic, and clone parties created by the authorities cannot fill the political vacuum and cannot aid in creating an effective process for developing solutions. Despite the government’s obstruction of the registration of new parties, and its blocking of equal access to the mass media and meaningful political competition, liberal democratic groups will have to built relations with social circles of broad appeal and establish coalitions of citizens interested in open and competitive elections, representative and non-corruptible government, and an uncontrolled and honest mass media.

Laws for the Non-Abiding

The new Russia has inherited a challenging situation with respect to courts, laws, and the attitudes of the people toward their observance. Lawless years of war communism, Stalinist repression, and the subsequent “stagnation” rest upon many centuries of a scornful attitude toward the law. The new country also inherited legal codes in which one law contradicted another, with priority given to the one preferred by party leaders or local officials.

Post-communist Russia retained many of the old “superlegal” habits: the subordination of the courts to the government, the entrenched system of “telephone law,” and selective application of the law in general, not to mention widespread abuse and corruption, the scale of which has grown exponentially since.

This long history has led to a situation where the laws are not perceived as an expression of the collective will of society and do not correlate with concepts of morality: it is no accident that legal cases in Russia over the centuries have been judged “not based upon law, but based upon justice.” This
is why the Russian writer and philosopher Alexander Gertsen, a believer in social-democratic ideals, wrote in the 1850s, “the legal paucity that has plagued the [Russian] people from the beginning has become something of a school. The scandalous injustice of one half of their laws has taught them to hate the other half as well; they submit to laws as they would to force. The absolute inequality before the law has destroyed any respect that they might have had for the law. A Russian, no matter what his title, will skirt the law or break it at every turn, when he can get away with it unpunished; moreover, this is exactly the way the government acts, as well.”

The Russian intelligentsia has always abided by its own internal laws, believing that they were better, stronger, and more just than the written laws. Its self-image was formed in large part in opposition to the government ...and the laws. A major stage in the development of jurisprudence in Russia was the legal reform by Alexander II in 1864. It separated the courts from administrative and legislative authority, introduced the presumption of innocence, and competitive and open court proceedings, and established trial by jury, as well as the irreplaceability (and therefore, independence) of judicial investigators. However, even this reform, though a colossal leap forward, did not lead to the replacement of the dominant anti-legal paradigm. As Bogdan Kistyakovski wrote in the famous collection “Landmarks,” published in 1909 with contributions from leading Russian thinkers of the time, “the Russian intelligentsia consists of people who have no individual or social discipline, and this is due to the fact that the Russian intelligentsia has never respected the law and has never seen any value in it; of all their cultural values, law is off to the side. Under such conditions, our intelligentsia has been unable to establish a solid appreciation for the law and has, on the contrary, left it standing at an extremely low level of development.”

Nevertheless, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, institutions of jurisprudence have been developed within a framework of liberal reform and under the influence of the market development imperatives. To a significant degree, they inherited the core of judicial reforms undertaken by
Alexander II: courts of arbitration, the Constitutional Court, and magistrate courts were established; beginning in 1993, initially as an experiment in a number of regions and then gradually throughout the country, jury trial courts were set up, although subsequently the sphere of their activities was subjected to many restrictions.

In recent years, the Federal Service for the Execution of Punishment has been reformed.\textsuperscript{11} Incarceration under guard has been abolished for people accused of economic crimes, although this provision is frequently ignored or openly sabotaged, especially in the provinces or in political cases. Prison conditions have improved (although they still do not satisfy modern requirements), largely because of the demands of international conventions to which Russia belongs, as well as financial input and monitoring by the Council of Europe. As of July 1, 2010, Law № 262-FZ came into effect, calling for information to be provided on court hearings in the Russian Federation and to be posted on the Internet, except in cases when it represents a state secret or other information protected by law. The Pravosudie national Internet-based system has been launched to broadcast all open court sessions.\textsuperscript{12}

There has also been some progress in people’s perceptions of the role of the legal system. They have begun to appreciate the constitution as unconditionally valuable. In response to questions posed by the Levada Center (“How is power maintained in Russia?” and “On what basis and under which principles should power be maintained in the kind of country in which you would like to live?”), 51 percent noted that power should be based upon “observance of the constitution.”\textsuperscript{13} The authorities also make reference to the constitution (Putin did not venture to go for a third consecutive term as president), as has the opposition in protesting violations of the constitution under “Strategy-31,” a movement to defend the rights of assembly and free speech, which are constitutionally guaranteed though not observed by the authorities.

Recent research by the INDEM Foundation has noted an increase in people’s trust of the court system, especially by those who have had some
experience in court. As long as a case does not involve politics and the citizen is not suing the government, government agencies, or VIPs, the courts more or less manage to perform their function. In another study conducted in December 2008 by the ZIRCON Research Group jointly with the Carnegie Moscow Center, dedicated to social activity during the crisis period, the largest segment of respondents (33 percent) stated that of all of the ways to protect their rights after being dismissed from work, the most preferred is to go to court, although less than 10 percent actually do so.

Over the previous ten years, the percentage of those who chose observance of the law as the most important social value had almost doubled, from 17 to 34 percent. Many of the respondents, especially the young, choose unwillingness to comply with bribery, as a matter of principle. Many Russian citizens have traveled abroad, in particular to Europe and America, and thus have been exposed to the way things are done in other countries. Many have also had work experience in Western firms and subsidiaries of international companies with structured rules for conducting business and corporate governance.

The development of law in Russia has also been aided by Russia’s membership in European organizations and by its obligations under international agreements. The ability to turn to the European Court of Human Rights, where complaints from Russia represent the greatest number of cases from a single country under consideration (28 percent in 2009), not only often serves as the last resort for those seeking justice but is also an impetus for the development of citizens’ awareness of their rights and, indirectly, acts as a lever to influence the government. There are also the obligations under the Helsinki Accords and the Council of Europe. In 2009, Russia’s Constitutional Court, guided by the obligations that Russia had taken upon itself in connection with its membership in the Council of Europe, upheld what was essentially a moratorium on the death penalty (for its full prohibition, Protocol 6 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms would need to be ratified.) In January 2010, Russia was the last of 47 member states of the
Council of Europe to ratify Protocol 14 to that Convention, providing for a more expeditious judgment by the European Court.

Paradoxically, two processes have proceeded in parallel: more Russians have come to expect civilized norms, including compliance with the law and the ability to have their interests legally protected; and at the same time corruption within government organizations has continued to grow. Based upon many indicators, the country usually ranks toward the middle of surveys that measure quality of life, which generally (although this isn't pleasant for those who are accustomed to believing that we always have to be “leading the world”) corresponds to an average income per capita, average lifespan (sixty-five years), availability of the Internet, etc. Russia was rated number 51 among Newsweek’s 100 best countries to live in published in August 2010 (but compiled just before the wildfires!). However, Russia ranks number 154 out of 178 based upon the Transparency International rating for the extent of corruption, and 116 of 131 according to Global Economic Forum data for the condition of the legal system. Per these rankings, we have rolled far downhill, approaching the lowest 10 percent of the countries in the world on the list. According to surveys, only 9 percent of Russian citizens believe that Russian courts are independent.

The campaign against corruption and for reinforcing the law has been encumbered by the passage of imperfect, incorrect, unjust, and even bad laws. Law bills are frequently drafted by the very agencies they regulate and are rushed into the agenda of the State Duma in raw form, with no public discussion. This was the case with, among others, the laws on expanding the authority of the FSB, the new law on the police, and (outside the sphere of politics) the laws on healthcare and on high school education. The hearings on the YUKOS affair were a travesty of jurisprudential procedure: in the second court case, former managers and employees of the company were accused of stealing the very same oil for the failure to pay taxes on the sales of which they were convicted the first time. Not surprisingly, the prosecutor’s allegations were convincing only to 13 percent of the population, and only 8 percent felt that the main motive in
the criminal affair had been a desire to restore the rule of law and justice (Levada Center survey from September 2010).

The government has been acting as though the law applies to the people but not to itself, placing state interests and the personal interests of its representatives above the law by adopting and interpreting laws to solve their own utilitarian issues. In the eyes of many in society, there are two kinds of corruption, yet both caused by the government. The first is related to big business and nationally important affairs and amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars per year; the second affects the everyday life of the people in obtaining certificates, medical assistance, education, etc. The only possible or cost-effective solution for many is to skirt the stodgy legal system or to bribe a bureaucrat to do his job. This, however, is a dead-end: there is no way to modernize, other than by reinforcing the preeminence of the law.

Some experts believe that the rebirth of institutions in Russia must start with independent courts. Business needs the courts to settle disputes, elite groups need the property they have acquired to be legally documented, and broad layers of the population need protection from arbitrary treatment and for seeking justice in civil or criminal cases. However, others believe that the independence of the courts is impossible without restoring true parliamentarianism. Be that as it may, without independent courts, all other efforts at modernization will be fruitless.

The Mass Media: Heroes and Pragmatists

An independent mass media is the most important tool of democracy, without which competitive elections, government accountability, and dialogue between the government and the people become impossible. It is the principal means of combating corruption and abuse. Journalists were the heroes of the perestroika period. Gorbachev only cracked open the door; it was the mass media itself that rushed in and seized
freedom of the press. The press became freer by the day: first they crit-
icized Stalin, then Lenin, then the state structure, the CPSU, and the
KGB – and after that all the skeletons came out of the closet. Newspapers
were published in editions of millions, and half a dozen of the “thick”
journals would frequently be ordered for an entire collective, so that as
each reader finished an issue, it would be passed on, and then the whole
collection would be saved. Crowds gathered at the newsstand in front
of the Moscow News editorial office on Pushkin Square upon the release
of each new edition, eager to read it. While there is no such thing in the
West as “yesterday’s” news (newspapers are considered hopelessly out
of date if they are a week old, and those who save and re-read newspa-
pers are considered eccentric), in this country people used to cut out
and save the best articles, passing them along to others to read – even
if their liberties would have been taken away, they would at least have
reading matter. Historical documents uncovering true stories of the past
were seen as topical and timely. Newspapers and magazines broke down
the Berlin Wall of state censorship and public awareness by criticizing,
exposing, and condemning. The law on the press adopted in June 1990
(the last year before the collapse of the USSR) prohibited censorship,
a prohibition reinforced in the Russian constitution in 1993 under free
press rights.

At that time, our press was even more freewheeling than the Ameri-
can media. It may not have been the most professional at times, but at its
best it engaged consistently with high culture. Of all public professional
groups in the early 1990s, journalists enjoyed the greatest trust, more than
the military, national politicians, or social activists. Freeing itself from ide-
ology and repressive control, the mass media pursued the truth ...and the
self-expression of journalists. Periodicals competed with one another in
the depth and import of their content, elegance of language, grandiosity
of phraseology, and the strength of headlines and beaux mots. The emo-
tional effusiveness and opinionated expression of Russian journalism of
those days was much like contemporary blogging.
The Anglo-Saxon journalistic tradition emphasizes facts and commerce. The U.S. press, for instance, from the beginning was created for two purposes: to provide information (the first American newspapers printed trade tariffs for maritime shipping) and to be sold – so that news had to be in demand, and this demand had to generate money. The first Russian private newspapers and journals were created for cultural and educational purposes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, outstanding cultural figures such as Nikolai Novikov, Aleksander Sumarokov, Denis Fonvizin, Ivan Krylov, and even Aleksander Pushkin started publications. Journalism in the 1990s was a continuation of traditions inherited through the lessons of Russian literature, which during Soviet times replaced religion, exiled from the life of the community. This journalism was more open and critical than in Western countries, though it continued to function under economic conditions that were more reminiscent of Latin America and Asia, where government control of the media is much stricter. The Russian free press of the 1990s was passionate and denunciatory. The “critical realism” of Russian culture, taught from middle school, resonated with the rebellious spirit of the times.

In 1993-1994, as part of a graduate seminar course in international communications at Marquette University in Milwaukee (U.S.), conducted together with James Scotton, chairman of the journalism department, the author led students in an analysis of the position of the mass media in Russia compared with other nations. Proceeding from one country to the next, we came to the conclusion that the mass media in post-Soviet countries were in a unique position, though not one that could continue for long. In trying to control the mass media so that it would no longer expose, or no longer only expose and rebel, the government chose to limit its freedom, mostly of television (in particular the national channels), but also increasingly that of radio broadcasts, newspapers, and magazines.

In the early 2000s, government control over the mass media steadily increased. Journalism and journalists lost much of the trust and authority they had enjoyed in the early 1990s, partly due to the commercial nature...
of their activities, and partly from governmental pressure. Instead of fulfilling their informational function, many among the mass media outlets began to serve as a mouthpiece for the authorities. Within ten years, control had been established over the federal television channels and their audience of millions, and pressure on radio broadcasts had increased. NTV, the first private television channel, had its policies and broadcast content changed and many of its personnel fired, allegedly to satisfy the demands of a new business entity but in reality to change its broadcasting policy. Government control over the national channels concentrated primarily on news and political programs, but combined with the dictates of the ratings system, it also defined the style and quality of other television broadcasts. The rare exceptions, such as the TV Channel Kultura or the news programs on REN TV, only confirmed the general picture. Most broadcast television was filled with reports on meetings or trips by the president and prime minister, knock-off entertainment shows, and endless mediocre drama. Live broadcasts almost entirely disappeared.

As Leonid Parfenov said in late 2010, when accepting the Vladislav Listyev award for television excellence, “Television information has become governmentalized. Journalism and life itself have finally been divided into TV-broadcastable and TV-non-broadcastable themes. Every significant political broadcast speculates on the goals or tasks of the authorities, their moods, attitudes, friends and opponents. Institutionally, this is not information at all, rather a government PR or anti-PR campaign (which is what the airtime devoted to preliminary agitation against Luzhkov’s removal was) and, naturally, the government’s PR for itself.”

There is a Kremlin pool of journalists who are invited to report on government events. Meetings are set up for them on a regular basis, at which they are told what they are to report and how. At federal channels and in the regions, there are lists of people who may not be shown on television. There have also been odious instances of canceled broadcasts and programs. During the heated anti-Luzhkov campaign in September 2010, Andrey Karaulov’s program “Russian Hell” on the Moscow television
channel TV Center was removed for presenting an alternative position. Several episodes of Andrey Makarov’s program “Justice” on REN TV were prohibited, since they dealt with the draft law on the police, after which the program was taken off the air altogether.

A number of regions and cities also block unfavorable radio stations or specific broadcasts. When the radio station Serebryanni Dozhd (Silver Rain) was interviewing Aleksey Dymovski live (the first of the “whistle-blowers in epaulets,” the policeman who had posted an Internet video of his speech criticizing the abuse rampant in the Ministry of Internal Affairs), the transmission was blocked to the cities of the Moscow Oblast.

Compared with television, the print media have retained a certain measure of freedom, probably because fewer than 20 percent of Russians regularly read newspapers or magazines and such a low percentage, apparently, reduces their significance to the authorities. As opposed to Western countries, where newspapers are increasingly giving way to electronic editions, the Russian mass media have been less subject to competition from the Internet. Although the number of objective, high-quality newspapers has declined since the 1990s and their print-runs have decreased by many times, both in Moscow and the regions, many of them have continued to report on events with a variety of views. The leading Russian socio-political newspaper Kommersant and the business newspaper Vedomosti have been functioning successfully since their creation over a decade ago, and Novaya Gazeta and many local newspapers continue to give an unbiased picture of what is happening.

But pressure on print media is also increasing. Regional departments for press affairs and mass communication methods are used against the press. Local newspapers have directives dropped on them from above about the publication of particular materials, sometimes with special lists of “recommended” keywords for articles. There have been several instances of direct censorship, persecution of journalists, beatings, and arrests. In 2008, Mikhail Beketov, who had written about Khimki and its mayor, Vladimir Strelchenko, was brutally beaten and crippled. Oleg
Kashin, the *Kommersant* journalist and active blogger who had published articles on the Khimki forest affair, youth movements, extremists, and opposition demonstrations, was beaten nearly to death. Russia leads the region in the number of murdered journalists and is fourth in the world: according to data from the Committee to Protect Journalists, 52 journalists have been murdered in Russia since 1992 for reasons connected with their work.¹⁸ In 2010 alone, eight journalists were killed and 40 assaulted. Many cases remain unsolved: the murders of ORT TV station’s anchor Vladislav Listyev, *Novaya Gazeta* correspondent Anna Politkovskaya, editor in chief of *Sovetskaya Kalmykia* Larisa Yudina, and Yury Shekochihin, a liberal journalist and State Duma deputy. Also, the beating of Mikhail Beketov has not been solved. Under a 2002 law set up to counter extremist activity, journalists and other media figures have often been accused of criticizing representatives of the government. Per an FSB decision, Natalia Morar, the Moldavian journalist of the Moscow magazine *The New Times*, was denied entry into Russia. Manana Aslamazyan, who headed the Internews NGO (which trained regional television journalists in how to work honestly and professionally), was forced to leave the country under pressure from the FSB. Newspapers and magazines have been hammered with court cases concerning the publication of supposedly slanderous articles.

According to the “Glasnost Map,” compiled over four years by the Glasnost Defense Foundation, the situation for the press over the period of study has worsened, and the tools used to pressure it have increased.¹⁹ There remains not a single region in the country with a completely free mass media, and those territories that do have relative freedom of the press allow criticism of Moscow but not the leadership of their own oblast, region, or republic. New “technologies” that have appeared with the passage of anti-extremist legislation are used ever more frequently. Irek Murtazin, press secretary of the first president of Tatarstan, Mintimer Shaimiev, and editor in chief of the newspaper *Kazanskie Vesti*, received a real prison term for an allegedly slanderous piece in the social media source
Live Journal. According to the amendment to the law against extremism passed in 2006, criticism of government representatives also falls under the definition of extremism. A list of publications, articles, and Internet resources that the authorities deem extremist was published in July 2007 and is regularly updated. If a publication ends up on this list, it can only be removed by court order. By 2011, the list had grown to some thousand titles. Another widely used approach is the dismissal of journalists or editors for publications not to local authorities’ liking, particularly around election time. During protest demonstrations, journalists are subjected to mass detention and beatings.

Paradoxically, approximately an equal number of people in the country (a majority in each case!) 1) advocate free speech; 2) believe that there is free speech in Russia; and 3) advocate the introduction of censorship, which they understand as measures to fight pornography and protect morals. At the same time, according to the aforementioned Levada Center survey, only 5 percent of Russians believe that Russian authorities rely on the support of public opinion, while 15 percent feel that the government manipulates public opinion. 20

Whenever mass media has been controlled in the country, the communication vacuum has always been filled by alternative means. From the 1960s to the 1980s, in spite of thorough prohibition, samizdat magazines were produced manually on personal typewriters. The amateur singing clubs (KSP) that spread throughout the country presented an alternative way of life and a kind of folklorish mass media, as did anecdotal humor, which served as the main entertainment and favorite pastime to accompany political and cultural discussion in kitchens throughout the country. However, since the inception of the world-wide web, centralized control over information has become more technically difficult. Polytechnological manipulation of mass consciousness via the mass media is increasingly stymied by modern communications technologies. This is somewhat reminiscent of the mid-1980s, when the start of satellite broadcasting inevitably set limits on totalitarian control behind the Berlin Wall; authorities
could not interfere with satellite signals as they had jammed the radio “voices.” As digital broadcasting (with its hundreds of channels) becomes more wide-spread, television will become less and less centralized and, accordingly, less subject to control. This is even more true of the Internet and other modern means of communication.

Although the total TV audience in Russia, in contrast to the West, has not declined (83 percent of the public watches television, the same as ten years ago), younger citizens and the intellectual elite have been moving toward the Internet. Accessible to about one half of the population, the Internet has introduced an additional layering to society, separating its users from those without access. Yet the former continues to increase, and the Internet remains a free zone in the Russian media universe. Along with the Internet, mobile telephones, which have practically covered the entire territory – more rapidly than in other countries – are also creating expanded opportunities for social communication.

The authorities are well aware of the growing significance of the Internet. Dmitry Medvedev maintains a Twitter account. In July the image-building Internet project “Modern Russia” was started, designed to promote the country internationally. Vladimir Putin’s speeches (in particular his press conferences during the trip along the new Siberian Highway) have been presented with a backdrop that shows the address of the government’s website. Medvedev has spoken of the goal of 90 percent Internet access over the next few years. Will efforts to control the sites match the spread of the Internet? Despite statements to the contrary (including Medvedev’s speech at Yaroslavl), control of the world-wide web by agencies and local authorities is distinctly possible, especially if it is technically achievable. However, the government’s priority is likely to create its own controlled Internet resources by the time the Internet begins to dominate the mass media (Internet media, social networks, video hosting, and search engines), and it is already taking specific steps in this direction.

A national search engine has been launched with the Cyrillic domain name “.рф” that would not be accessible to a non-Russified computer. This
idea first arose when, during the conflict with Georgia, authorities discovered that in any search non-government sources would come up first. In this sector, where things are fine already (there is an effective domestic leader, Yandex, market relations are functioning, annual growth is large, and there is no monopolization), the government has nevertheless striven to give itself priority. It has been proposed that the use of the national search engine be made mandatory in organizations financed out of the budget (educational establishments, government agencies, and medical institutions) to serve as its launching pad. In parallel, national software is being created for the use of government authorities, educational institutions, and defense enterprises.

Two years ago, when Yandex emerged as a powerful national company, the government began efforts to place it under its control. In the spring of 2009, the government (represented by Sberbank) obtained the “golden share” of Yandex from stockholders, giving it veto rights on the sale of more than 25 percent of the company. Some experts believe that the authorities had decided to create a new national search engine in order to pressure Yandex and bend its owners to cede control over the company for possibly both commercial and ideological purposes.

In early November 2009, Yandex announced it would no longer publish its list of top Internet search subjects. The appearance of a subject on the list had been one way to get the government’s attention, continually used by the public to highlight urgent problems. After the accident at the Sayano-Shukinskaya hydroelectric power plant, the main topic on the Yandex list was the people who were reported to be trapped under the rubble. Yandex explained its decision by stating that some dishonest bloggers had been artificially “inflating” their popularity. Be that as it may, Internet users were deprived of an effective instrument for drawing attention to important topics.

Direct attempts by government agencies to control the Internet, however, are also possible. Opposition and independent websites, such as Grani.ru and the website of the radio station Ekho Moskvy have been
subjected to numerous DdoS (distributed denial of service) attacks, with automatic programs directing thousands of messages at sites in order to bring them down. Spoilers have been widely used on the Internet (so-called trolling). There was an attempt to close the left-wing opposition website Forum.msk.ru. In April 2009, the Cherepovetsk court prohibited the electronic journal Samizdat, after calling extremist an article criticizing the city-forming enterprise SeverStal. In July 2010, the Khabarovsk court forced a local Internet service provider to block YouTube and the websites Librusek, Lib.ru, and Zhurnal.ru for publishing “extremist information” (the nationalist video “Russia for the Russians” and excerpts from “Mein Kampf”).

Skype, which defies any control, has been accused of operating without a license, paying no taxes, and creating unfair competition. Although this action has probably been dictated by a desire to remove a competitor from the market (Skype provides an essentially free alternative communications service), the possibility of a political motive cannot be excluded.

Old-time Russian journalism, as a feature of high culture, may be dead, but long live Journalism. A society cannot function normally without an independent and objective mass media. The press need not necessarily follow in the traditions of the West (impartiality and impersonality, strict division of publications by genre, and the five “Ws” to start the article), but it must be professional, reliably presenting the facts and granting opposing sides an opportunity to express their opinion. An independent mass media, uncontrolled by the government and perceived as a true fourth estate, is critical for modernization. A professional journalistic community must also develop house rules that place “political technologies,” falsehoods, manipulation, and “black PR” outside the realm of acceptable practice. The Internet and other new means of communication define a fresh battleground: the new journalism is expanding its methods via these new technologies, but the authorities are keen to take over the initiative.
Society, Civil Society, and Active Society

In spite of Russia’s uniqueness (a loaded term, as every country is unique), the country is European, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok. At the basis of the culture is the language which, in spite of the immense distances, is more uniform as a result of the imperial past and Soviet homogeneity than the language of, say, the city of London. However, divisions that have existed since the time of Peter the Great have still not been bridged and have been exacerbated and expanded by the removal of the Soviet equalizing paradigm: between the well-off (with an education and career potential) and the destitute; between the inhabitants of the capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and those in the regions, settlements, monocities, and villages; between those who grew up in the Soviet Union and those who were born after its collapse; and now, additionally, between those with access to the Internet and those without it. Such divisions lead to a parallel existence of two paradigms, two states: people who do not expect the government to be responsible for their well-being and are independently building a life, and the majority who are used to counting on the government’s involvement in everyday life and are living in anticipation of its plenipotentiary will.

Previously, as Fons Trompenaars has shown, Russians have had the smallest room among nations for the present, and significantly more room for the future and the past. But things have changed; the new generation lives for the here and now, and despite perceptions of the prevalence of apathy, there are indications of increased social activity. According to joint research data from the Center for the Study of Civil Society and the Non-Commercial Sector of the School of Economics and the Public Opinion Foundation, two thirds of young people under eighteen years of age consider themselves to be socially active. One half of young men and women under eighteen (and 40 percent of the eighteen to thirty-five group) have, during the past two or three years, organized independent collective action to address common problems. Civil activism has been encouraged by
an increase in the popularity of the social networks and the universal hold of mobile communication, which have simplified self-organization, especially among the young, in addressing common problems.

The popular Russian thesis that society is atomized, the social fabric disintegrated, the sense of collective good and collective responsibility gone missing, needs at least some correction. Russia’s characteristic communal life has been destroyed over time by both the forced liquidation of the pre-revolutionary rural lifestyle and the natural process of urbanization and consequently the disappearance of communal apartments. Although social cohesion is less a feature of Russian lives than it once was, the levels of social detachment are comparable to those in other industrialized countries. Richard Pipes, the prominent American historian, was incorrect when he wrote of a general lack of trust within Russia. Surveys have revealed a slightly lower level of trust in people in general compared to Western countries, but a greater amount of trust in acquaintances, friends, and family. Friendships tend to be closer here than in the West (even the Russian word “droog” has nuances of kinship and sharing lacking in the English word “friend”), and the institution of the Russian “babushkas” – grandmothers helping raise children, the Russian tradition of offering the best food to guests even in times of hardship, the habit of borrowing money from friends or asking a neighbor to fix a fence or a computer – none of these characteristic Russian social patterns indicate detachment from society. Anyone who has gotten their car stuck in winter snow or slipped on a sidewalk knows that there will always be people around willing to help. Those who earn more in the family have traditionally supported the less financially secure. In the early 1960s, for example, it was the elderly who typically received help; on the other hand, in the 1970s and 1980s, when government-imposed earning patterns had changed, the families of elderly intelligentsia supported their “young” children (thirty to forty years old), “until retirement,” as the joke went at the time. Although the intensification of life under market conditions and the lack of time mean that a third of Russians now feel that the level of friendly discourse has
declined, to a certain extent it has been replaced by new means of communication: electronic mail, mobile and digital telephone communications, and social networking. Studies have shown that about half of Russians have close friends and that relations with their friends are nearly as important as their relations with family members. Good, friendly relations with their next-door neighbors were reported by 60 percent of Russians.

More than half of the respondents (54 percent) reported that over the past year they have helped or supported someone on their own initiative, taken steps to improve the lot of others, or engaged in philanthropy, and this is not with respect to their close relatives.

It is true, however, that Russian society lacks the habit or tradition of collective thought, of solidarity in achieving common goals. The deep suspicion of mass action was a characteristic trait of the intelligentsia even before the Revolution, and in Soviet days most people were unwilling to take part in collective protest, as it could put an end to one’s personal life and endanger family members, while official mass demonstrations were staged and hypocritical, and hence to no point. The pseudo-movements organized by the authorities over the past decade have reinforced this negative attitude. Many people are weary, skeptical, and suspicious of the idea of taking part in collective action and attempting to influence the course of events in this way, yet they do so if they feel that they can make a difference.

During the wildfires of summer 2010, seeing the helplessness of the authorities and the lack of centralized information, people collected clothes and food for those who had been burned out and found flashlights, shovels, face masks, motorized pumps, and fire hoses for the volunteers, and frequently for the firefighters themselves. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers, including city dwellers, joined in fighting the fires and delivering clothing to the newly homeless who had lost everything. In a survey conducted by *Pyatnitsa*, the weekly supplement of *Vedomosti*, to which 42 percent responded to the question, “Can the volunteers change the situation with the fires?” by answering, “Yes, because the current efforts are inadequate;” another 36 percent answered, “Yes, because no one will un-
less the volunteers do.” Only 20 percent answered, “No, this is something the professionals should do.” There's paternalism for you!

From the onset of the 2000s, many experts have predicted an inevitable increase in popular demonstration and loss of control by the authorities. They have anticipated that an unspoken social agreement, formulated by experts as “stability in exchange for non-participation in politics,” and then, “limited rights in exchange for growing personal well-being,” will come to an end soon, when the government turns out to be incapable of fulfilling its social promises, and there will be mass acts of protest and a mandatory change in course. However, they have continually pushed forward the time when they expect this bifurcation to take place. As long as the economy was growing and oil prices were high, the government “could” (and it can’t be said that the people “didn’t want to”) continue to live “in the same old way.” There was also a certain sense of exhaustion following the stormy years of change and economic perturbation. Even the crisis did not provoke mass protest. Although the GDP declined by 8 percent in 2009, the government continued to use its exhausted financial resources to plug social holes.

However, according to public opinion surveys, social anxiety has increased. The number of people who are willing to participate in protest demonstrations is growing. According to data from the Public Opinion Foundation, in 2009 their numbers averaged around 20 percent, while in 2010 they were no less than 25 percent. According to a Levada Center study, nearly 40 percent of Russians tend to support actions similar to Strategy-31. 85 percent of respondents believe that government must listen to the opinions of protesting citizens. Only 29 percent believe that this already happens in Russia, while 56 percent are convinced of the opposite. From March 2009, the number of Russians who think that the authorities are too severe in their reactions to protestors has grown from 18 to 28 percent, while the portion of those who are uncertain how to answer has declined from 47 to 33 percent.

Legal statutes adopted over the years that relate to civil activism have been primarily repressive. The law increasing the authority of the FSB,
allowing it to summon citizens and warn them about their “inappropriate behavior,” and the new law on the police, which in essence removes the presumption of innocence from citizens and grants it to the officers of law enforcement, are obvious examples. Characteristic was Vladimir Putin’s comment on unsanctioned gatherings. He referred to Great Britain, where, in his opinion, demonstrators are treated in the same way as they are in Russia: “[If you] go where you’re not supposed to, they’ll beat you on the head with a club. Not supposed to be here? You’re here? Take what’s coming to you.”

Despite repressive laws, protest action has increased. The first wave occurred in 2005 in connection with the “cash for benefits” reform, changes to the pension system, and increases in the prices of residential utilities and services. The government then backed down and changed the procedure for replacing benefits. The second wave of protest began in 2010. In January, and then again in August, up to 10,000 people demonstrated in Kaliningrad against high tariffs and local and federal government policy. In February, there were mass protests by drivers against the chaos on the roads caused by state officials’ vehicles equipped with flashing lights. In March, under the framework of the all-Russian Day of Anger protest action held in over 50 cities, demonstrators protested against growing tariffs, increased taxes, unemployment, and declining living conditions, and also made certain political demands. Drivers in Vladivostok protested against the prohibition of cars with right-hand steering, and in Pikulev there were demonstrations against the mass dismissals that had resulted from the closure the city’s major enterprise. From mid-2009, and throughout 2010, protest meetings were held every other month on Triumphalnaya Square in Moscow as part of Strategy-31; the meeting was finally allowed by the city authorities only on October 31, 2010 (for the first time in a year and a half), following the departure of Mayor Yury Luzhkov. Aside from Moscow, Strategy-31 protests involved more than 60 Russian cities and have begun to be held abroad as well, mostly with the participation of expat Russians and émigrés from the former Soviet republics. The brutal beating
of Kommersant journalist Oleg Kashin in November of 2010 rocked the entire country, including the journalistic community, the blogosphere, and the public at large. There were protests and picket lines in many cities, with 2000 journalists signing a letter to the president demanding a fair investigation. In December, thousands of citizens of Samara, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Izhevsk, and Khabarovsk took part in demonstrations and signed letters against the previous year’s presidential initiative to reduce the number of time zones, which could degrade their living conditions.

Protests by swindled people who prepaid for their apartments in buildings that were never constructed have never waned; neither have demonstrations against city building policy, which has proved detrimental to residential housing and historical buildings and led to highway collapse and corruption. In spring of 2010, the entire country watched the stand-off between local authorities and the inhabitants of the village of Rechnik near Moscow as their homes were being demolished. In Moscow, defenders of architectural legacy protested in Kadashi, on Bolshaya Nikitskaya, Strastnoy Boulevard, and many other parts of the city against the demolition of historical buildings. In Moscow, demonstrations were held against the new General Plan for the city’s development as well as so-called dotty construction (inserting new buildings into the scarce remaining slots of historic districts). In St. Petersburg, there were continued protests against the construction of the Gazprom skyscraper, which would have destroyed its historical skyline. Unlike the story of the Khimki Forest, however, these protests resulted in victory for the defenders of the city when the authorities decided to move the construction to a different site.

Multivector protests have not necessarily overlapped with the liberal democratic agenda. The unprovoked murder in July 2010 of soccer fan Yury Volkov by a young Chechen at Chistye Prudy in Moscow provoked a demonstration by soccer fans demanding a fair investigation. In October, there were many demonstrations in support of Yegor Bychkov, who had been arrested for organizing a drug-free center at Nizhny Tagil, where compulsive and cruel methods were used to cure addicts (though many
were actually cured). In Moscow, on December 11-12, and then in other cities as well, mass demonstrations took place in reaction to the murder of soccer fan Yegor Sviridov.

As the Khimki Forest example and the demonstrations against the demolition of historical buildings in Kadashi in Moscow show, multivector protest movements do have the potential for solidarity. Hundreds of the people who had gathered to protest against the decimation of the forest subsequently took part in the Day of Anger, Strategy-31, and other protest actions as the movement itself collected over 20,000 signatures and gained the support of many organizations, including Moscow’s Department of Natural Use, factions of the CPRF in the Moscow City Duma, the political parties Yabloko and Solidarnost, Anarchists, the National Bolsheviks, Red Youth Avantgarde, Greenpeace, the Moscow State University’s Squad for Nature Conservation, the European Green Party, and the World Wildlife Fund. In Kadashi, the Arkhnadzor movement, the parishioners of the Church of the Resurrection, and several Russian Orthodox social organizations (Narodny Sobor and Svyataya Rus) joined forces with the defenders of architectural history, as have the youth organizations of the A Just Russia party and the Left Front. Solidarnost, the prohibited National Democratic Alliance, the Movement to Protect Khimki Forest, and other social organizations have taken part in Strategy-31 actions. Defenders of human rights, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, and a number of bloggers have joined their voices in support of Yegor Bychkov.

Authorities are most willing to consider the views of protestors when the demonstrations are large and the protestors are persistent. It also helps when the issues resonate within society. The government is much more likely to consider the demands of demonstrators for bread than for the abstract concepts of rights or dignity, and to tolerate economic or ecological rather than political slogans.

A clear example of effective all-out protest, though it did not lead to victory, was the campaign to protect the Khimki Forest. Over several months in spring and summer 2010, protesters had a letter published in Novaya
Gazeta, set up tent camps on the site, sent hundreds of letters and petitions to commercial companies and organizations that had been engaged for the planned construction or could exert influence over it (including the Vinci paving contractor, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Green Party), arranged for meetings with authorized officials and held numerous demonstrations, brought suits to court, established special websites, and posted video messages on the Internet.

In blocking such demonstrations, the authorities risk provoking a backlash that could lead to increased radicalization. There have been indications of such radicalization taking place: the attacks on police representatives by the so-called Vladivostok Partisans, young men who attacked police representatives in the Far East and who gained much support across the country (especially in the Far East Region and Moscow); the attack on the City Administration building in Khimki; the brawl at the Tornado Rock Festival in Miass on August 29, 2010; the actions of the Voyna group, during which police vehicles were overturned in St. Petersburg in early September 2010; and, finally, the previously mentioned mass violent protests provoked by the murder of Yegor Sviridov.

The social networks are increasingly a forum for activity and confrontation. The Internet was used to collect signatures on a demand to free Svetlana Bakhmina, former YUKOS lawyer and mother of two, which eventually led to her release. In the spring of 2010, bloggers organized an online investigation that revealed that attackers of vehicles in the Urals were connected with local United Russia activists. Automobile drivers turned to the Internet to appeal to others to join the opposition to the use of flashing lights by official cars by attaching blue buckets to the roofs of their own automobiles. In the Far East in the summer of 2010, social networks were used to expose a murder case. That same summer, social networks were the ones to name the policeman who had insulted and beaten participants in the protest action in St. Petersburg: he was identified from a video taken on a mobile phone and published in a blog. In September 2010, in the Moscow area, the Internet was successfully used to mobilize
hundreds of volunteers to search for Maria Fomkina, who had disappeared with her five-year-old niece Liza. Their bodies were later found in the woods by police and volunteers.

During last year’s wildfires, users posting to Live Journal asked for help for the victims, and the responses dramatically exceeded expectations. It was bloggers who drew attention to the fact that a clip made by activists of the pro-government youth movement Molodaya Gvardia (Young Guard) of their fire-fighting activity had been staged, leading to the dismissal of the leader of the movement and his deputy. Alexey Sidorenko, formerly a coordinator with the Carnegie Moscow Center and now a graduate student in Poland, started a website in Warsaw called the Help Map, containing information on the areas affected by fires and listing people who needed help. The Ushahidi platform used to create the website, which had been used after the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, allowed information to be collected and compiled from blogs and social networks. The same software is being used now to create a website for consolidation of information from blogs and social networks on human rights violations throughout Russia.

Civil society is frequently thought of as a collection of NGOs, which is inaccurate. In themselves, NGOs are not quite civil society, but still they enhance the coordination of action by interested citizens and reinforce the nascent beginnings of a civil society. The 2005 law on NGOs adopted by the government, fearful of the “color revolutions,” has led to a sharp decline in the number of such organizations. A new procedure was introduced for registering them based on obtaining permission rather than simply notifying, which significantly increased the volume of paperwork. At present, however, their numbers are once again in the six digits. The amendments to the NGO law that were adopted in 2008 were intended to ease the burden of state control, but affected only smaller NGOs with budgets of up to one million rubles, which were freed from the requirement of submitting annual reports.

The government views NGOs with caution and suspicion, and in the best case as ancillary structures that should operate under the gov-
ernment’s policies and its strict supervision. At the same time, citizens at large remain uninformed about the volume and scale of their work. This is the result of the lack of historical experience, as well as the control exercised over television broadcasting by the authorities, who have continually and consciously pursued campaigns to discredit NGOs. As shown by public opinion surveys, NGOs are in last place when measuring the trust placed in the various structures, and come after the police, the trade unions, and political parties. A Levada Center survey conducted in December 2009 indicated that only 12 percent of Russians consider the activities of NGOs to be useful, while 27 percent believe they bring both benefit and harm.

International and foreign NGOs, as well as those Russian NGOs that operate under foreign grants, are the object of particular governmental suspicion. In September 2010, a number of NGOs that had obtained foreign financing were subjected to a review by the prosecutor’s office, which required them to submit a large number of documents on their activities within a short period. In many cases the review involved the confiscation of documents. Aside from affecting legal rights organizations (Transparency International, Moscow Helsinki Group), this review affected other organizations that had received foreign financing, such as the Institute for Urban Economics, the Center for Fiscal Policy, Junior Achievement, and Sustainable Development. Many experts see this campaign as a way of putting pressure on NGOs, since it coincided with the beginning of preparations for the local and presidential elections.

The government has made other attempts to grab the initiative in the sphere of NGOs: it set up the Public Chamber (as the “place for discussion”) and public councils within various agencies, and it has created and financed the pro-Kremlin youth organizations Nashi, Molodaya Gvardia, and Stal. Every year, the authorities hold a youth camp at Seliger Lake and allocate funds to NGOs for the “development of democracy.” By order of the president, 1.2 billion rubles were allocated in 2009 to create Public Chamber grants for this purpose. However, the procedure for awarding
the grants is totally non-transparent, with money being allocated by so-called operators, which are also NGOs, but which are appointed by the president rather than selected on a competitive basis. Application to be considered for a grant requires the submission of a huge number of documents and entails a significant investment of time, which is not always possible for many smaller NGOs. In March 2010, amendments to the NGO law provided support to NGOs that pursue social activity directed at resolving social problems and working for the development of civil society in the Russian Federation. The Law on Endowments was adopted, intended to free NGOs from their dependence on individual contributions. So far about 50 endowments have been set up, some with significant amounts of capital; Russian endowments, however, remain for now oriented primarily at pursuing government programs and projects. Characteristically, the first endowments registered in Russia were the Fund for Development of the Moscow Institute of International Relations, the Support Fund of the Moscow Skolkovo School of Management, and the fund of the Graduate School of Management at St. Petersburg State University.

Ever broader segments of the population are becoming active in the civil arena: from liberal defenders of human rights to those people whose rights have been infringed upon, as well as citizens who simply are not indifferent. New political leaders may come from the ranks of these movements. In themselves, the NGOs do not equate to civil society; they are not a synonym for democratic progress, but they do encourage people to develop the habit of independent action and constructive civil activity.

After their dash toward liberty in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the citizens of Russia, as in the other post-Soviet states, lacked a clear picture of the way development should proceed, or of democracy as a goal. The authorities followed their own concepts of how the country should develop, which, beginning in the early 2000s, led to the curtailment of reform and the establishment of a unitary system to the detriment of democratic procedures, true federalism, and political competition. Unless,
however, democratic institutions are restored, no modernization can succeed. It is not the people who are the obstacle to democratic progress, but the government itself, as was accurately pointed out in the report “Russia in the 21st Century: Image of the Desired Tomorrow,” published by the Institute of Contemporary Development, whose chair of the Board of Trustees is Dmitry Medvedev.

The huge potential of the people, now being used to overcome bureaucratic barriers and simply to survive, could be activated to serve the goals of development. Only mass-scale citizen participation with fundamental democratic institutions functioning properly can make it possible to pursue a consistent program of development for the country, to establish normal living standards, and to ensure the competitiveness and attractiveness of its positions in the international arena.

The options for national development need to be carefully thought through in order to have a clear idea of what is possible and advisable for the future (rather than repeating the situation of the late 1980s). There will continue to be a place for education as the spread of knowledge and information in contemporary society significantly expands and changes. The de-Stalinization of civic consciousness continues to be of great importance.

In spite of authoritarian tendencies, a great deal of internal work is nevertheless being accomplished in society beneath the surface. Realization is growing of the increasing need for new political parties. The concepts of citizens’ rights and dignity are spreading. Civic activity has been increasing. Many people now try to defend their rights by appealing to the law. In the absence of other channels of interaction with the government, citizens have been taking to the streets in protest more and more often, as a way of being heard and to express their dissatisfaction. Their protests are usually directed not so much against the government as to the government. If, however, the government should ignore the opinion of citizens or try to play the dissatisfaction of some groups against others, it risks provoking an unpredictable upturn in radicalism.
The activities of NGOs, the Internet, mobile telephones, and the virtual social networks have expanded the sphere of public politics. The government has tried to play a leading role in all these areas, and its presence on the world-wide web over the recent period has grown sharply. But as the modern means of communication spread, it will become harder and harder to subject them to federal control.

Russia’s engagement in the international process and its participation in resolving key international challenges will contribute to its social and political modernization. As a member of the Council of Europe and the Helsinki Accords, Russia has taken up the responsibility of following general democratic principles. One current opinion holds that democrats in the West should develop their cooperation with Russia only if its leadership begins to follow certain established rules, and that all future agreements with Russia should be dependent on concessions moving the country towards liberalization. However, democracy cannot be implemented under pressure from outside; it can only be built by Russian citizens themselves. An inflexible policy toward Russia will, on the contrary, play into the hands of those who insist upon the old antagonism with the West. At the same time, the most important factor in enhancing the position of democracy around the world will be for Western countries to work to perfect their own democracies and to implement the consistent domestic policies needed to accomplish this goal.

Notes


Separate confinement for first and repeat offenders was introduced, as was the requirement for certification and psychological testing of prison personnel, and the administrative staff of the regional departments was to a significant extent replaced.

According to the results of expert conclusions of the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information, the extent of openness of Russian courts even after the law came into effect is somewhat more than 41 percent (calculated using the methodology based upon Article 14 of the Law, which describes in detail the kind of information to be presented on the court’s website).


E. Vinogradov, “The Road to the Strasbourg Court will be Blazed by the Going,” http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/o,,5045698,00.html.


L. Gudkov, “Report on Discussions.”

http://cpj.org/killed/europe/russia.

Yandex's share of the domestic market is 59 percent (1.2 percent of the global market). The search system created in the 1990s from nothing by private entrepreneurs occupies position nine in the world rating based upon volume of processed requests, with an annual growth of users of 40-50 percent. (Google has 20 percent of the requests, Mail.ru 9.9, and Rambler 7.4.) Based on 2009 results, Google has earned 4.2 times less in Russia (processed 2.9 times fewer requests).


Ibid., P. 24.

In fact, there is no law in Great Britain on meetings, but current practice and the corresponding precedents involve coordination of the parameters of the demonstrations with the police and avoidance of disruption of public calm by the participants.

*Rossia XXI veka: Obraz zhelaemogo zavtra* (Moscow: B-ka In-ta sovrem. razvitia, 2010), P. 7.
The very name of one of the programs implemented by the Carnegie Moscow Center, “Religion, Society and Security,” symbolizes the strange and contradictory nature of the processes taking place in the world. The West was stunned by the sudden awakening of Islam at the end of the last century. At the start of the new century, religion (not only Islam, but also Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism) has become a legitimate factor in political activity, thus reminding us that it is more than simply another component of the landscape of civilization on which history has taken place.

Recalling the Middle Ages, religion has become a part of worldly affairs more than ever today. The secular approach is no longer seen as the one and only road to follow. Stable channels of communication have taken shape between religion and political and public events. Religion intervenes in foreign policy. “Faith-based diplomacy can be a useful tool of foreign policy,” former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said. “The resurgence of religious feeling will continue to influence world events.”

Religion is present in civil society, and almost every country declares its loyalty to religion. Whether in the Muslim East or the Russian Federation, it plays an important part in ensuring stability and also in giving the authorities their legitimacy. The Russian Orthodox Church is an unofficial but influential player on the Russian and broader Eurasian political stage. From time to time the Russian Orthodox Church practically performs specific tasks for the secular authorities (although the church officials would never admit this).
Over the last two decades, mankind has been undergoing the “test of globalization,” which many see as a threat to individual ethnic cultural and religious identities. Cultural differences have become blurred and the information tidal wave and computerization have contributed to mutual cultural penetration. Globalization implies the development of a universal system of values and views.

It appears, at first glance, as though all religions would take a wholly negative view of globalization with its universalist thinking that is the antithesis of individual religious tradition. The one exception is Protestantism (particularly, its American variant), which encourages globalization. However, in reality the situation is more complex. Catholicism, Buddhism, and Hinduism all have their own mechanisms for joining and cautiously mingling with the globalization current. These religions are not unambiguously negative in their response to the universalist challenge. Such is not the case of Islam and Orthodoxy, which intrinsically reject globalization, seeing it above all as political and cultural expansion by the West, which they think pursues the strategic aim of subjugating the Muslim world and Russia and therefore needs to first distort and then destroy their religious identities.

Muslim ideologues have responded with their own globalization vision based on Islamic tradition, which in their view will sooner or later become global as all the peoples of the world come to embrace Islam, in accordance with Islamic teaching.

The challenges of globalization and the responses offered by the different religions are becoming an axis of humanity’s political and cultural existence. Elements of the notorious “conflict of civilizations” are evident here, but more than anything else what has emerged is the complex and contradictory interaction of traditions, in which each individual religion is forced to adapt to globalization, while at the same time adapting globalization to its own vision.

Protection of human rights is one of the pillars of globalization, which is inconceivable without the priority of the individual. The Muslim world, confronted with this issue, too, responded by coming up with its own Islam-
based solution, proclaimed in 1990 in Cairo. The ideologues of Orthodox Christianity are also looking for their own version of human rights.

Religion often becomes a means for expressing social and political protest. This takes its most acute and consistent form in the Muslim world. In practically every Muslim country or region where Muslims live, there is a religious opposition covering the whole spectrum from moderate to extremist. Political Islam offers an alternative for organizing the state and society and engages millions of Muslims in its fight. This alternative has various national and regional variations, but they all share the ultimate goal of establishing a system based on the principles of the Koran and the Sharia law.

Political Islam is primarily radical and its followers are always ready to enter into conflict with the governments in power, which in their eyes have betrayed the tenets of Islam. Islam has become one of the most powerful and effective tools for social mobilization, as we have seen in numerous cases over the last thirty years, from Iran to Russia’s North Caucasus and from China’s Xinjiang province to Europe, where the number of Muslims now approaches 30 million.

Relations between Muslims and the West have become more complicated. Muslims’ relations with Russia and China are also far from simple. At the epicenter of the contradictions are the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. A tense situation has prevailed in the North Caucasus for almost twenty years now, and the situation in Central Asia is also complex. Zbigniew Brzezinski once drew a “crescent of instability” on the geopolitical map of the world. Today’s pattern of instability has long since spread beyond the crescent and taken on a much larger form. Understanding the complexities of these various crisis situations is impossible without an adequate dialectical understanding of the religious factor.

Of course, the confrontations taking place in and around the Muslim world do not arise from religion alone. The conflicts in Southern Asia, the Middle East, and the countries of the former Soviet Union all have their own causes, but religion is an important tool for the different politi-
cal forces involved, and its use inevitably spreads these conflicts further and makes them more serious.

There are various interpretations of the ongoing conflicts in the Muslim world. Many Muslims place the blame for all conflicts and tension in their lands on the West, the Soviet Union, and then Russia (for provoking the wars in Chechnya). In reality, however, the causes of these various conflicts go much deeper and are rooted not just in external intervention, but also in internal factors – the political and socio-economic situations in Muslim countries and societies.

The internal crisis in Islam became much more acute at the turn of the century. Rival interpretations of Islam and the struggles between the various Islamic ideologues have aggravated the situation in the Muslim community. These debates are taking place everywhere. In Russia, they are extremely acute and painful in the North Caucasus. The internal crisis in Islam cannot be dissociated from Islam’s relations with the West: supporters of modernization are labeled hypocrites – munafiq – (an accusation that has been around since the times of the Prophet Mohammed) and are condemned for deforming “true Islam” and abandoning the faith’s dogmas.

Each conflict has its own specific nature, but we can ascertain the existence of a single conflict-related field, which can be compared to a system of connecting vessels. The internal conflict in Afghanistan, for example, is one of the links in a long chain. The conflict in Afghanistan in turn creates tension in the southern region of Central Asia. The Taliban movement is now threatening Pakistan. The rise of radical Islam in Pakistan worsens that country’s relations with India. The crisis over Iran heightens tension in the Middle East, and the situation in Iraq has a negative impact on relations between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. Those are only some of the examples.

It is not possible to come up with a single strategy to resolve all of these different conflicts, but it is possible to formulate a general strategic vision of the situation in the Muslim world and, in particular, to understand the nature of Islamic radicalism, which is the ferment actively
flowing through the connecting vessels, in order to determine the extent to which it is an objectively inevitable phenomenon, and to identify the circumstances in which it is being used as a tool.

Understanding Islamic radicalism is the key to understanding the nature of terrorism and finding effective solutions that will prevent it. I deliberately italicize this word because the fight against terrorism as such can only have limited success.

Despite the widespread belief, September 11, 2001, did not fundamentally change the situation in the world. The main thing the terrorist attack did was to suddenly wake people up to the fact that the world had changed. However, the world began changing long before tragedy struck New York. Its historical and cultural roots go back a long way. The seeds of imminent transformation were sown in the 1970s, when, one after another, Muslim countries faced the failure of economic reforms drawn up by foreign consultants and advisers, and it became clear that simply imitating foreign models was not going to work. The changes could be said to have begun with the Islamic revolution in 1978-1979 in Iran. Many at that time saw the fall of the seemingly stable and successful regime led by the Iranian shah and the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini as a break with the established pattern of African and Asian countries’ development. The same goes for the Islamicization of the Palestinian resistance movement, which culminated in the election victory in 2005. The Hamas Islamic freedom movement, periodic flare-ups of activity by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the 1990-1991 civil war in Algeria, and the Taliban victory in Afghanistan in 1996 – all were accompanied by the excesses of terrorism, which gradually became a familiar weapon in the political struggle.

Comparisons of today’s terrorism with past examples – Irish or Basque terrorists, or the terrorism of Russian revolutionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – are possible but inaccurate. Today’s international terrorism is a new phenomenon. This terrorism pursues geopolitical goals, and its ideology is built on the most radical interpretations of religion. International terrorist organizations have taken shape, and there is a “terror-
ist environment” united by a common international religion, which some specialists think now embraces hundreds of thousands or even millions of people. Terrorists – the ideologues and the executors – see themselves beyond the framework of politics, the laws of war, and morals, because they are convinced that they are responsible before God alone, who authorizes them to carry out even the cruelest acts. This feeling of sacred responsibility gives them a special status in their own eyes, but it also demands their readiness to sacrifice themselves, and this in turn produces the phenomenon of suicide terrorists. Those who try to depict these people solely as “thugs and drug addicts” fail to understand the real problem of terrorism and are therefore unable to develop efficient strategies for fighting it.

Is this terrorism a temporary and transitory phenomenon, or will it soon become a familiar, “routine” form of political action? This is a critically important question. Given the protracted and seemingly endless nature of the conflicts and crises connected to the situation in the Muslim world and the rapid increase of Muslim penetration into non-Muslim environments, we can suppose that, unfortunately, terrorism still has considerable reserves on which to draw. Fears are growing that terrorists could use weapons of mass destruction. This is all the more dangerous as “countries had not been able to adapt quickly to the new challenges that were being brought about due to the accelerating pace of globalization, such as rapidly developing cross-border trade and the availability of nuclear materials, technology, information, and expertise, as well as the increasing prominence of non-governmental entities, including corrupt groups, organized crime, and terrorist organizations.”

One of these entities is international terrorism, which today is at the very least already able to threaten the use of weapons of mass destruction and tomorrow might turn words into action.

We could describe what we are witnessing today as a sort of an “asymmetrical response” by Muslims to their failures in the economic and political competition with America, Europe, and to some extent Russia. Islamic radicalism offers compensation for the Muslim community’s disadvantages in world affairs. Finally, it is becoming a means of self-affirmation for the
Muslim immigrants who are penetrating ever deeper into Europe. It is not by chance that some radical Islamic ideologues think that the new Islamic inspiration, the “Islamic call,” will reach the Muslim world from Europe.

A greater religious awareness and a growing level of political activity under religious slogans manifest themselves in crisis situations. Some Eurasian countries, including the countries of the former Soviet Union, are going through a process of the demodernization of society, the economy, and the education system. Relations in society are increasingly regulated by traditions, both ethno-cultural and religious. This is the case in the Central Asian countries and in the Russian North Caucasus. Religion offers people a way out of their difficulties. It is noteworthy that secular governments are also turning now to religion and trying to use it for their own purposes. In Russia and the CIS this is most noticeable in Chechnya and Tajikistan. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon both display elements of religious charisma in their behavior.

Along Russia’s southern borders a new Muslim enclave is gradually forming, in which social relations are increasingly shaped by traditional ethno-religious norms. The clergy, loyal to the authorities, and the Islamic opposition both support the same goal of establishing Sharia law in society and do so increasingly openly. Some prominent secular politicians speak up in favor of the observance of Islamic laws and codes of behavior. The topic most often discussed in this respect is polygamy, which is a widespread practice among well-off Muslims.

The current crisis is likely to lead to a strengthening of the Russian Orthodox Church’s influence in Russia. The public trusts the church as an institution far more than they trust the State Duma or the ruling United Russia party. The Orthodox Church makes no secret of its desire to influence society and the state, proposing its own blueprint for the country’s organization and defending the idea that Russia has its own path (reminiscent of the “Islamic alternative”). Clearly, if social tension increases, and the authorities have a reason to fear this, the church could absorb the discontent and act as a mediator between the ruling establishment and society.
Furthermore, the state authorities can benefit from interaction with the Russian Orthodox Church, unofficially gaining additional legitimacy from it. However, at the same time, such closeness is unlikely to increase respect for the church, which could come to be seen as the ally of the very administrators and bureaucrats in whom the public have lost faith.

In this context, one cannot help but notice the level of activity of Patriarch Kirill, who, following the example of President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, spends much time travelling around the country and abroad, speaking with various groups of the population, senior government officials, and military bosses, effectively breaking down the barrier between social and political activity and religious service. The patriarch is becoming the symbol of the church’s politicization, though he publicly denies this.

The Russian Orthodox Church’s close relations with the state cause hidden (and sometimes open) irritation among Russia’s Muslims, who feel that the country is not observing the principles of separation of church and state, and equality of the different religions.

At the turn of the century, people became increasingly aware of their ties to particular religious traditions and cultures. Islam sparked this return to religion, to a large extent triggering the religious revivals underway in Europe and America. The West had lost much of its religious identity, but when faced with the threat of a different religious force, that of Islam, it responded to the challenge by attempting in an almost instinctive way to revive its own religious identity. It is interesting in this respect that many Muslims do not see the conflict with Europeans and Americans as a conflict of civilizations, but consider it a conflict between Islam and the “Godless” West, or between Islam and kufr (non-belief). They have made well-known calls for Europeans to return to their own religion.

The religious revival in the countries of the former Soviet Union was a response to Soviet atheism. It was very active at first, but by the start of this decade had lost some of its energy. However, the last few years have seen religion once again growing stronger, but now this is
not so much a religious revival as a “religious expansion” – religion’s encroachment into all areas of life, and this is a process that could go significantly farther.

Notes


2 A. Arbatov and V. Dvorkin, eds., Carnegie Moscow Center At the Nuclear Threshold (Moscow, 2007), P. 69.

3 See: M. Emerson, ed., Ethno-Religious Conflict in Europe: Typologies of Radicalisation in Europe’s Muslim Communities (Brussels: CEPS, 2009).
Minorities in a New World

Peter Topychkanov

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 symbolizes not so much the end of a bipolar world but more a transition of the world into a new state of being. One can argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the corresponding developments began a new era in which we have lived for the past two decades, or one can also say that these years have been a protracted period of transition to a new era. However, the difference in approaches does not change the peculiarities of the modern world: the extremely unstable international situation and the many conflicts that exist within states and between them. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s,¹ the return or revival of religion, regaining a second wind in the post-Cold War world, exacerbated a whole range problems: personal and collective identities, the relationship between religious communities, the relations between the state and religions, etc. All of this has clearly manifested itself in conflicts associated with religious majority and minority communities.

Since the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, extremism and terrorism have become increasingly noticeable in these conflicts. This complicates the already difficult relations between religious communities, one of which is usually a Muslim community as either the majority or minority. Despite all the dangers of the proliferation of ideological extremism and terrorism, it is not worth giving these dangers too much “landmark” significance when describing the post-Cold War world, because they do not determine its scope. In the world, there is no state living in full accord with these ideologies. The influence of leading terrorist and extremist organizations cannot be compared with that of international organizations, great
powers, or even transnational companies. This is why terrorist and extremist organizations choose the weapons of the weak: explosions in crowded places, armed attacks on unguarded civilian targets, and suicide bombers.

What determines the frames of the modern world? Twenty years ago, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that there had emerged an unprecedented consensus on the legitimacy of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy, he argued, was becoming the final form of government, since there were no fundamental, intrinsic contradictions within it. Later, it turned out that this framework was neither universal nor standard. Attempts to describe the diversity of the existing forms of government create such definitions as illiberal democracy and liberal authoritarianism, not to mention sovereign democracy.

Positive Discrimination

In addition, there are inherent contradictions within a democratic form of government, including positive discrimination, which implies certain steps to increase minority representation in political and economic spheres. The idea of the existence of minority groups, to whom it is necessary to grant preference due to their religious, ethnic, or linguistic affiliations, appears as both an achievement of Western political culture and, at the same time, as a “headache” for any democracy (or regime that aspires to be called “democratic”). It is an achievement, because it is a tool for restoring social justice, and a headache, because it retains inequality in society. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, members of British India’s colonial government wrote about the negative influence of positive discrimination on the status of minority groups: “A minority which is given special representation owing to its weak and backward state is positively encouraged to settle down into a feeling of satisfied security: it is under no inducement to educate and qualify itself to make good the ground which it has lost compared with the stronger majority.”

Although
almost a century has passed since these words were written, they have not become less relevant. This is demonstrated by the example of India, “the world’s biggest democracy,” and one which Fareed Zakaria is inclined to describe as a non-liberal democracy (like the United States).

In India, the question of the need to protect the rights of minorities and of the instruments for the protection of group rights (the reservation of seats for religious communities in state bodies and the curial electoral system⁵) arose back at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries under the colonial government of British India.⁶ The latter started introducing these measures in the 1880s. The first decision in this domain was Viceroy Lord Rippon’s 1882 resolution on local government that foresaw the institution of elected advisory bodies composed of representatives of religious groups. Subsequently, the religious principle of forming legislative assemblies was introduced by the Indian Councils Acts of 1892 and 1909 and the Government of India Act of 1935. There was also an attempt to distribute seats in the legislatures among the religious communities on the basis of the Communal Award of 1932.⁷ The first of these laws intended to expand the membership of the advisory bodies under the viceroy and governors. It was supposed to shift the center of political life from the “self-constituted associations and a small group of politicians and journalists” to the “responsible classes,”⁸ namely, the professional, business and land-owning groups.⁹ In accordance with the Act of 1909, seats in the imperial and provincial legislative assemblies were to be reserved for such religious and ethno-confessional groups as Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, and Sikhs, and according to the Act of 1935, for Muslims, Europeans, Scheduled Castes, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, and Indian Christians.

At this stage, the majority among the Indian elites supported the system of reservation. Later, the party leadership of the Indian National Congress, the leading political force at that time, realized the disadvantages of a curial system. As a result, on the eve of the decolonization of South Asia, one of the leaders of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, wrote that the curial system could perhaps for a short time bring some benefit, but that,
undoubtedly, the harm it had caused in all areas of life in India was huge.\textsuperscript{10} According to him, the drawbacks of the curial system had 1) weakened the group, which was in a backward state (meaning primarily the Muslims); 2) encouraged separatist tendencies taken up by new groups “of the most reactionary type;” 3) violated the democratic processes; and 4) diverted the attention of the colony’s population from economic problems that could only be solved by joint efforts.

However, after India gained independence in 1947, representatives of religious minorities in the Constituent Assembly, when called to produce a constitution, refused to consider the reservation and curial system as a necessary form for the protection of minorities. Following debates, the creators of the constitution reached a decision, according to which the reservation of seats was limited to a period of ten years, which, however, has extended to the present time, and to the following categories: castes and tribes, those included in the lists, and the Anglo-Indians (Articles 330-342).

The reservation of seats for the listed categories was a compromise formed by members of the Constituent Assembly in reaction to the Hindu-Muslim riots in Bengal, Punjab, and other regions, as well as the riots in the state of Andhra Pradesh with participation of the Dalits (in Hindi, “the Suppressed” – the name that the Untouchables\textsuperscript{11} call themselves). However, even such a limited reservation did not remove the problem of the representation of religious communities in state bodies. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, issued on August 10, 1950, explains the meaning of the term “Scheduled Castes”: “no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu [the Sikh or the Buddhist] religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.”\textsuperscript{12}

Thus, the Constituent Assembly preserved the religious basis for the reservation of seats, which the representatives of Christian and Muslim minorities had tried to prevent. The presence of Hinduism on the list can be explained by the theory according to which the institute of caste had allegedly originated in the Hindu religion.\textsuperscript{13} At the same time, representatives of Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam formally have equal
right to be considered members of the Scheduled Castes. None of these religious communities recognize caste distinctions, but there are cases when they also produce caste structures, similar to those that exist in Hindu communities.\textsuperscript{14}

The system of the reservation of seats has also been retained in several states. If at the national level this system is being used by members of the religious minority, belonging only to their own religions – Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism – in some states the system is being used by “other” religions – Islam and Christianity. For example, in government institutions in the state of Kerala, seats are reserved for the following categories: 14 percent for Ezhavas, 12 percent for Muslims, 4 percent for Roman Catholics, 2 percent for the Nadar caste, 1 percent for Christians from the Scheduled Castes, 1 percent for the Dhivara caste, 10 percent for those from the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and 3 percent for other backward communities. (Of all seats in government institutions, 47 percent are reserved for these categories.) In this case, even though the government, formed in 1957 in Kerala by the Communist Party of India, has always condemned religious community politics, it retained a high quota of seats reserved for religious communities. Of all the places in government institutions, 14 percent were reserved for the Ezhavas, 10 percent for the Muslims, 5 percent for the Roman Catholics, 1 percent for backward Christians (proselytes of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes), and 10 percent for the other remaining classes.\textsuperscript{15}

The problem of the acquisition and deprivation of rights to hold government office for converts from Christianity, Islam, and other confessions into faiths included in the Order, and vice versa, was passed down from colonial to independent India through the continued reservation of parliamentary seats based on religion. Accordingly, the basis for the political assessment of the transition from one religion to another was retained. As Nehru wrote on the eve of India’s independence, each convert is supposed to be a gain to the communal group, leading ultimately to greater representation and more political power.\textsuperscript{16}
The contemporary illustration of how a change of religion could lead to a change in employment opportunities in public service is seen in the case, “S. Swvigaradoss versus Zonal Manager” that was heard in court in 1996. In this case, the plaintiff demanded from local authorities the right to a place at a government institution. Prior to the birth of S. Swvigaradoss, his parents, who belonged to the Scheduled Caste Adi-Dravida, adopted Christianity and thus were deprived of this given right. At the age of fourteen, he converted back to Hinduism, but the Supreme Court refused to recognize him as a member of a Scheduled Caste because he was born to Christians, who were not members of this caste. The Court ruled that someone who converted back to Hinduism may be considered a member of a Scheduled Caste only if he had been born into the corresponding Hindu (Sikh or Buddhist) caste. If the parents (or if only the father) professes a religion not mentioned in the Order, the adoption of Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism does not allow their child to be considered a member of a Scheduled Caste.\textsuperscript{17}

Besides the reverse conversion to one of the religions that give the right to a reserved place, there also exists the practice of changing one’s name, so that no one will realize whether one is a Christian, Muslim, etc.\textsuperscript{18} These examples show that positive discrimination, on the basis of religion, may influence Indians’ decisions regarding the change of religious identities.

Who Are the Minorities?

The Indian example demonstrates the contradictions of positive discrimination, which, despite its positive nature, is still discrimination.

However, there is yet another contradiction. It concerns the notion of minorities. After all, this concept has no universally recognized definition, fixed in international law.\textsuperscript{19} The UN has offered only recommendations on possible options for the interpretation of this notion. Thus, according to a report by the UN high commissioner for human rights made on February
28, 2002, the term “religious minorities” includes groups that meet one of the two following criteria: either their religion differs from that of the majority’s in their country, or their members interpret religious texts differently than how the principal part of the followers of the same religion interprets them.\textsuperscript{20} This definition is based on religious differences and the numerical characteristics of the community, signifying that the minority represents the group whose number is less than half of the general population of the country. Another important characteristic of the minority, which was first mentioned in 1979 in a special report to the UN by Francisco Capotorti, advocate-general of the European Court from 1976 to 1982, is the desire of the group to preserve its religion, language, culture, and other characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of the population.\textsuperscript{21}

Since there are no clearer criteria for classifying groups of religious minorities other than by their “differences,” “number,” and “desire to preserve” group characteristics, people often use the ostensive principle. This means that the designation of minority groups is not based on specific criteria but on special lists, compiled by government agencies.\textsuperscript{22} In India, membership in minority groups continues to be defined precisely on the basis of the lists compiled by government. This results in the politicization of the problem of the status of religious minorities and the lack of a unified government approach toward minority communities. Some of these communities are included on the list against their will, while others are denied the status of minorities, despite their small number and desire to preserve their identity.

As a result, Indian democracy implies the preservation of religious differentiation as a phenomenon of social and political life, and secularism involves public authorities not only in the life of religious communities, but also, in particular for minorities, in its regulation. Religious life in India remains largely within the scope of responsibility of the state, whose policies are a major factor in the process of forming the status of religious minorities and one of the most important conditions for the religious differentiation of communities in India. This means that the state preserves
the contradiction between the process of the formation of a national identity and the institutionalization of religious differences that may influence the inequality of the statuses of the majority and minority communities.

Majority Rule and the Minorities

The Indian situation can be characterized as a dead end: working to improve the status of minorities, the state itself prevents their growth. As far as the short-term interests of the bureaucracy and the minority leaders are concerned, this situation is advantageous, because the minority enjoys special preferences, and the opportunities of a mutually beneficial relationship between the bureaucracy and minority leaders are preserved. This is mutually beneficial because the bureaucracy controls the minority with the help of its leaders, without delving into their internal problems, while the minority leaders receive power over the minority guaranteed by state, as well as the opportunity to integrate into the nation’s elite.

From the standpoint of the long-term interests of society, such a policy is destructive, because it supports, and in some cases even exacerbates, the differentiation of society. The minority, after finding itself in a special position for a long time, can one day feel that it is no longer a part of society or of the state. The movement for the rights of minorities can, if it becomes a separatist movement, lead to the disintegration of the state, or if the majority does not want to allow such a development at any cost, to the violent repression of the movement.

The solution to this given contradiction does not seem impossible to reach, even though it requires a serious revision of current political practices. First, it is necessary to shift the usual emphasis in government policy toward minorities. One of the major problems is the issue of status. Different groups in society may have traditionally held different statuses, but the constitution of any democratic state proclaims the equality of all citizens before the law and their right to equal opportunities. Accordingly,
government policies should focus not on pulling up the status of minorities to the level of the majority’s, but on achieving general equality.

Second, it should be recognized that in most cases, positive discrimination is an interim measure, and when turned into a perpetual practice, it can negatively impact both a specific group, freezing its development, and society as a whole. Both the state and society must constantly evaluate the effectiveness of positive discrimination in each specific case. If the use of this measure has achieved the main objectives that were set for its application, or, conversely, if it has proved to be ineffective, one must be prepared to abandon it or to replace it with more effective measures, including targeted support, preferential lending to small businesses owned by representatives of the minority, etc.

It should be remembered that the persecution of any minority, as well as its promotion, is an anti-democratic action (the latter is acceptable only as a temporary solution.) Moreover, if we take a step back, we might even say a democratic nation does not have minorities: everyone belongs to the majority. There are no minorities because in the ideal democratic state, it does not matter to which gender, religion, ethnicity, or language group a citizen belongs. These attributes are not a matter of principle in either a political, legal, or economic respect. Of course, this is an idealistic picture. It is far from reality, particularly in states with specific democracies. However, this ideal is written in the constitution of any democratic state, and the desire for it is the duty of every citizen.

Notes


4 Report On Indian Constitutional Reforms (Calcutta: 1918), P. 149.

According to the curial system, lists of candidates in the legislative assembly can be compiled based on a number of principles (social, religious, etc.) Voters can only vote for those candidates who belong to the same group as they do.


6 N. N. Sircar, Bengal Under Communal Award and Poona Pact (Calcutta, 1933), PP. 5-8.

7 B. B. Majumdar, “Public Dispatches from India № 67, Nov. 6, 1888,” Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislature (1818-1917) (Calcutta, 1965), P. 345.

8 M. V. Pylee, Constitutional History of India, 1600-1950 (Bombay, 1972), P. 41.

9 J. Nehru, The Discovery of India, trans. V.V. Isakovich, et. al (Moscow, 1955), P. 382.

10 E. S. Yurlova, India from the Untouchables to the Dalits: Essays on History, Ideology and Politics (Moscow, 2003), PP. 300-301.


13 There are numerous examples of this phenomenon in the Imperial Gazetteer of India. Therefore, in the Punjabi district of Ambala, eighteen parallel castes emerged, among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs: Jats, Chamars, Rajputs, Brahmins, Gudzhary, Signy, Dzhhinvary, Chukhrai (this caste is not a Muslim one but a Jains caste), Arayny (no Sikhs), Tarkhany, Dzhulaha, Teli (no Sikhs), Lohary, Kumbhary, Nighy kambohi, Khatri, Sonar, Gadara (only Hindus). Imperial Gazetteer of India, ed. W. W. Hunter, vol. 1, (London, 1885), P. 257.


15 J. Nehru, Discovery of India, P. 280.


19 Today, the major international legal instruments dealing with minority issues include The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1992; the concept of minority is not interpreted. 42/135, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, http://www.un.org/russian/documents/gadocs/convres/r47-135.pdf.


The history of modern Russian foreign policy is usually traced from the Belovezhskaya Pushcha Accords on the dissolution of the USSR, and from a formal perspective this is correct. Nevertheless, to understand the logic of this political evolution, one must step back a few years earlier. Soviet foreign policy left “Stalin’s overcoat” in all aspects beginning in the late 1980s, which allows us to regard this final period of Soviet history as essentially anti-Soviet and treat it as a direct transition towards post-Soviet Russia.

If we are to look for a symbolic watershed in Soviet foreign policy, then we will probably have to turn to the speech of Mikhail Gorbachev – who at the time was still “just” the Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee – at the UN on December 7, 1988. Unlike all his predecessors, Gorbachev decided to take unilateral, real steps to reduce armaments. His freshly declared “new political thinking,” with its principles of reasonable defense sufficiency, was transformed into real action.

By March 15, 1989, the Soviet Union had completely withdrawn from Afghanistan and was rapidly reducing its presence in the “third world.” In June of the same year, in a speech before the Council of Europe, Gorbachev spoke of the shared values uniting the West and the USSR, which he was reforming. Moscow had rejected an essential postulate of its entire

* This chapter is based on updated text published earlier in the book *The History of New Russia: Essays. Interviews*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg: Norma, 2011).
postwar foreign policy: its unconditional dominance in Eastern Europe. It did not oppose the rise to power of a non-communist prime minister in Poland, or the wave of “velvet” anti-communist revolutions in formally allied countries everywhere (except in Romania, where the regime was violently overthrown). The culmination of the “Autumn of Communism” in Europe was the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989.

The abandonment of the German Democratic Republic and, accordingly, of the military and political foothold in the heart of Europe, was crucial. Gorbachev’s unwillingness to support Erich Honecker’s regime, which was reeling as a result of the mass exodus of East Germans to the West, together with Gorbachev’s famous phrase that “life punishes late-comers” and the order to Soviet troops in East Germany to remain neutral during the mass anti-government demonstrations, all determined the fate of the “first state of workers and peasants on German soil.” Almost simultaneously, Europe saw the end both of the Cold War and of “really existing socialism.”

Gorbachev’s meeting with U.S. President George H. W. Bush in Malta in late November-early December 1989 put an end to a whole era, which had begun in 1945 in Yalta. The division of Europe had been overcome, but on the condition that Moscow would abandon claims to hegemony on the east of the continent. Newly united were Berlin (under a united Germany), Germany (under the leadership of the FRG and within NATO), and Europe (in the future, within the frameworks of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions). The fate of the Soviet Union itself, and its place and role in the world, remained unclear – though not for long.

Gorbachev and his supporters had hoped that they would manage to keep the Soviet Union on the path of reform, to transform the essentially unitary state into a modern federation, and in some way, with the West’s help, to overcome its “economic difficulties” and take a position in the world comparable to that of the United States – but unlike during the Cold War, not in opposition to Washington, but in cooperation, and even in “friendly condominium” with it. These hopes were completely unfounded,
and the policy pursued by Gorbachev and his followers was increasingly less adequate for addressing the growing complexity of the reality of the domestic and international situation.

Russia and the West: from Attempts at Integration to Competition With the Elements of Cooperation

The Russian Federation, having declared itself the chief successor to the collapsed Soviet Union, continued the foreign policy of the “late” Gorbachev era but in a highly radicalized form. President Boris Yeltsin and his minister of foreign affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, publicly renounced communism, which had in fact already been completely eviscerated by Gorbachev. They announced the accession of Russia to the community of democracies, confirmed the rejection of hegemony in Eastern (now renamed Central) Europe, as well as from the position of “big brother” to the former Soviet republics, which had suddenly become independent states.

Moreover, considering the national interests of the new Russia to be virtually identical to the international interests of the United States and Western Europe, Yeltsin and Kozyrev set the goal of formal integration with the countries and structures of NATO and of concluding a treaty of alliance with the United States. The European Economic Community (EEC) occupied them less at that time. Russia’s economy transitioned into a market economy based primarily on advice from the IMF and from American experts who had been invited in as advisers by the Russian government.

The Kremlin quickly met with disappointment. Brussels simply failed to heed Moscow’s readiness to immediately join NATO. In the spring of 1992, the U.S. Congress gave Yeltsin a standing ovation, but Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft considered the conclusion of the agreement of alliance with Russia moot, given the end of the Cold War and the absence of a comparable challenge from a third country. Europe was quickly becoming the “common home” about
which Gorbachev had spoken in Strasbourg – but that home did not include Russia. Finally, criticism of the pro-Western foreign policy intensified within Russia itself. Communist, nationalist, and, to some degree, liberal opponents all began calling for the “defense of Russian national interests.”

Initially, the Kremlin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to manage the situation. Retaining the general orientation of their foreign policy and fiercely defending against their “red-brown” opponents, they made a claim for Moscow’s leading role in the CIS. From 1992 to 1994, Russia used military force to stop the bloodshed in Moldova, intervened in the conflicts in Georgia and the civil war in Tajikistan, and facilitated the ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh. The West did not prevent Russia from “restoring order” along the former imperial borderland, but it also did not support its claims, officially formulated in 1993, to the role of regional security guarantor. At this time, America and Western Europe were concerned primarily with the military and political aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union: the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops from East Germany, Central Europe, and especially the Baltic states.

The fissure in Russian-Western relations occurred as early as 1993, when Bill Clinton’s administration supported the declaration by the leaders of the “Visegrad Countries” (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) stating their desire to join NATO. This step led to the first serious crisis of confidence between Moscow and the Western capitals. The departure of the USSR from Eastern Europe at the turn of the 1990s was a forced step, but it was not critical from the perspective of the traditionally understood national security interests of the country: a broad zone of neutral states formed between the Soviet Union, which was living its final days, and the NATO countries. By the end of the USSR’s existence, its leaders had virtually embraced the concept of the “Finlandization” of Eastern Europe (the so-called Kvitsinski doctrine) as a more effective and less costly means of ensuring security and stability in the Western strategic direction. However, they were too late.
By the autumn of 1993, the leaders of the new Russia, having attempted to solve the problem in a more radical fashion – by means of integration into the Western structures – had to admit their failure. Russia had not become, as they had expected, a new member of the Alliance in the informal capacity of its “vice president.” The Kremlin reached the conclusion that the Western countries – first and foremost, the U.S. – were engaged in promoting their own interests and were not inclined to view Russia as a full, not to mention equal, partner. There was a suspicion, which then grew into a conviction, that there was little belief in Western capitals that Russia’s democratic transition would succeed and that they were hedging against the possibility of the nationalists or communists coming to power.

The Clinton administration, having resolutely bet on Yeltsin and supported his use of force against the Supreme Soviet of Russia on October 3-4, 1993, was then forced to consider the increasing weakness of the reformist forces and, conversely, the growing strength of the nationalists and communists, evidenced by the parliamentary elections of December 12, 1993. In the public circles of the Old and New Worlds, the image of “Weimar” Russia standing on the brink of chaos and nationalist-communist revanche, was widespread.

In a very unpleasant surprise for Yeltsin and then for the public at large, the U.S., Germany, Britain, and France were seen to renege on their commitment, given to Gorbachev verbally, to not expand NATO in the wake of German reunification. Evidence to this effect produced a strong impression on the Russian elites and acted as confirmation of the selfishness and “treachery” of the West, which only “uses” Russia for its own purposes.

Analysis of relevant documents, however, leads to a different conclusion. The assurances of Secretary of State Baker, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and French President Francois Mitterrand were made in 1990 in the context of German reunification. The countries of Eastern Europe that were part of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (which ceased to exist only in 1991) under the Soviet Union
were not and could not have been part of the discussion. No one – neither those speaking with Gorbachev, nor Gorbachev himself – could have foreseen the fate of the USSR and its allies. Of course, the leaders of the USSR, the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany could not make commitments on behalf of the Eastern European states. Finally, the refusal to expand NATO could have become legally binding only with the consent of all members of NATO, and probably with the approval of such a decision by the corresponding parliaments, including the U.S. Senate.

Nevertheless, although the theory of the “treachery” of the Western allies does not hold water, the “insensitivity” of the policy of the Western powers led by the U.S. is obvious. Refusing to consider Russia’s accession to NATO in 1991, and dismissing the request for an alliance between Russia and the U.S. in 1992 and again in 1993, Washington decided to “open” NATO to Central European countries, thereby moving the boundary of NATO right up to the former border of the Soviet Union. In doing this, the U.S. and its allies did not violate any obligations (especially since the Soviet Union no longer existed), but they destroyed the faith in the friendly unselfishness of the West and reinforced the suspicion of the steadfast anti-Russian orientation of Western policy. Political writer Nikolay Daniilevsky’s “Russia and Europe,” originally published in the 19th century, was reprinted in 1995 and was an immediate best-seller.

The wars in the Balkans set the emotional background to the changing climate of Russian-Western relations. Moscow considered the nationalist leaders (Serbian Slobodan Milosevic, Croatian Franjo Tudjman, and Bosnian Muslim Alija Izetbegovic) to be players in the same game and of the same “quality,” so it was surprising for the Russians to learn that public sympathies in their country on the one hand and in the U.S. and Europe on the other accrued to the opposing sides of the conflict. Moreover, if the Muslims and Croats, supported by the Americans and Europeans, displayed a tendency towards cooperation, then the Serbs, having become heroes to Russian nationalists and communists, remained the enemy of the two communities and became the main culprits of the war in the eyes of the West.
Through the mechanisms of the Contact Group on the Former Yugoslavia, Russia sought to ensure a balanced approach towards all the belligerent forces but failed to achieve this. It could only feebly protest when, in 1995, NATO aircraft struck at Serbian positions and Croatian forces “cleansed” Serbian Krajina. At the same time, Moscow did not have serious influence in Belgrade, could not stop the Bosnian Serbs from committing crimes such as the Srebrenica massacre, and could act only as a supernumerary at the peace talks in Dayton and Paris. At the end of 1995, Russian peacekeepers joined the NATO operation in Bosnia (IFOR, later SFOR), but under U.S. command. Despite all the praise from its Western partners, the experience of partnership was in the end recognized as unacceptable in Moscow: in the future, the Russian military would not stand under an American commander.

The conflict in the Balkans unfolded in parallel with the war in Chechnya, which had begun in 1994. This thoughtlessly started, ineptly executed, and cruel military campaign contributed to the disillusionment with the new Russia among the public and then within the governments of the West. The image of a recent superpower crushing the pursuit of independence of freedom-loving mountaineers – and furthermore, violating human rights and freedoms – was superimposed on the picture of chaotic politics and criminal privatization, “piratization”, social degradation, and poverty. The popularity of Yeltsin and his inner circle within the country dropped to the single digits, and a communist revanche in the presidential elections during the summer of 1996 seemed not only likely, but practically inevitable.

While the Western (and many Russian) media criticized the Kremlin’s Chechen campaign, the Kremlin itself ever more harshly criticized the “plan to expand NATO eastward.” The January 1996 replacement of Andrey Kozyrev with Yevgeny Primakov as the minister of foreign affairs signaled a tougher policy. The new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated two important goals of Russian foreign policy: the consolidation of the CIS countries around Moscow, and the prevention of NATO
expansion eastward. Despite the high degree of Moscow’s dependence on loans provided by the IMF, Russia’s objectives not only broke away from Western objectives, but entered into direct conflict with them.

The emerging clash was only deferred as a result of Yeltsin’s re-election (and the prevention, thereby, of a “communist revanche”), Russia’s defeat in the first Chechen campaign, Russia’s accession to the Council of Europe, and the achievement of a compromise on the military and strategic parameters of NATO expansion. In 1997, when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were invited to join NATO, Russia was admitted to the club of leading industrialized nations, which then became the “Group of Eight” (G8). The possibility remained, though, that the Russian “oligarchs” who organized Yeltsin’s re-election and had strong interests in the West, would be able to prevent a sharp deterioration in relations.

The collapse of the Russian financial system in 1998, which led to a severe economic crisis, had serious political consequences, including repercussions on foreign policy. The main objective of the Kremlin became not to continue and intensify the reforms, which had been discredited by public opinion, but rather to stabilize the situation and to organize the transfer of power within the established regime. The decoupling of Russia from the West occurred amid the mutual frustration of both parties. The U.S. gave up on Russia, considering it “hopeless,” and the IMF ceased to issue loans to the Kremlin after the default. Yeltsin dismissed the young reformers, reluctantly appointed Primakov as prime minister, and began looking for a successor.

The Kosovo crisis – the final episode of the Balkan wars at the end of the 20th century – entered its acute phase at the exact moment when the Russian authorities were fully absorbed with the problem of resolving the first economic crisis in the country’s post-communist history. Moscow could only watch from the sidelines as the U.S. attempted to force President Slobodan Milosevic to stop the violent suppression of the separatist Kosovar Albanians. Nevertheless, the emotional tension in Russia was very strong. When, in March 1999, the Clinton administration decided to
use force against Yugoslavia — and in doing so, to circumvent the UN Security Council and use the armed forces of NATO for this purpose — Moscow viewed it as a sign that Russia had truly lost its great-power status. Russia’s international influence collapsed in the spring of 1999 as dramatically as the Russian ruble had in 1998. Moreover, many in Moscow saw NATO’s humanitarian intervention as a threat to Russia itself. The parallels between the goals and actions of the Serbs in Kosovo and the Russians in Chechnya were too obvious. The only thing that Russia could still trust in these circumstances was its nuclear arsenal.

The famous “Primakov loop” (when the Russian prime minister ordered a plane with an official delegation headed for the U.S. to turn around over the Atlantic when he learned of the U.S. decision to bomb Yugoslavia) became a symbol of the reversal of Russian foreign policy — a rejection now already not only of integration with the West, but even of more or less close cooperation. It was not by chance that Yeltsin, just before leaving the Kremlin in November 1999, warned Clinton not to forget “for one minute, for one second,” that Russia has nuclear weapons. Amid the extremely tense atmosphere of mass protests against U.S. and NATO policies, of Russian paratroopers’ “Pristina dash” that nearly caused an armed confrontation with American troops, and the renewal of the war in the Caucasus in August 1999, Yeltsin, “Russia’s first democrat,” remained practically the sole guarantor against the revival of hostility between Russia and the West. Thus, amid not only a financial, but also a political default, ended the first decade of the “new” relationship between Moscow and the West, which had begun in an atmosphere of fantastic hopes.

Vladimir Putin, having accepted the presidency from Yeltsin on December 31, 1999, attempted to rectify the relationship with the West. His first major independent step, which he took against the advice of part of his inner circle and his military advisers, concerned the resumption of relations with NATO that had been ruptured as a result of the Kosovo crisis. In early 2000, Moscow was visited by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson, and the relationship was restored. The emphasis on NATO was
central for “early Putin.” In contrast to his predecessor, Putin did not count on full integration “into the West,” but rather aimed at achieving integration “with the West” by forming a lasting military and political alliance between Russia, North America, and Western Europe.

This course was apparent even before the attacks on September 11, 2001. Putin ordered the closure of Russia’s intelligence center at Lourdes in Cuba and of a naval facility in Cam Ranh in Vietnam. He carefully prepared for his first meeting with the U.S. president in Slovenia in the summer of 2001, and in the course of this meeting was able to win over George W. Bush. Finally, he seized the moment and called Bush on the “hotline” on September 11, expressing Russia’s support for the U.S. It seemed like the new circumstances could not be more favorable for the formation of a global anti-terrorist coalition led by the U.S., with a very significant role for Russia.

From 2000 to 2002, Putin generally sought to build bridges with America and Europe to overcome the accumulated distrust that was based, in his opinion, on the West’s lack of understanding of Russia’s foreign policy objectives. He was ready to make significant concessions to his partners. Primakov’s emphasis on multipolarity had been dropped. Not only India, but also China remained on the periphery of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. Pragmatism came into fashion. Putin was ready to accept the leading role of the United States in the world; he sought not only to avoid undermining the U.S. position abroad, but also to stand back as Washington pursued its global objectives. He decisively helped the U.S. overrun the Taliban in Afghanistan, decided not to respond to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty, sanctioned the “temporary” deployment of U.S. forces in Central Asia (for the period of operations in Afghanistan), and did not protest against the U.S. training program for Georgian troops.

In return, Putin put forward a list of requests, including economic, financial, and political issues – but the main item on the list was for the U.S. to agree with the position and role of Russia as the leading force in the CIS. Moscow declared that it had no intention of annexing, controlling, or even somewhat oppressing the former Soviet republics. It only wanted to
be free from external interference in the region, from the encouragement of anti-Russian forces there, and from the deployment of foreign troops in the region; finally, it wanted a guarantee that no new members would be accepted into military alliances without Russia’s consent. Putin himself privately turned to NATO leadership with a request for Russia’s accession to the alliance. He publicly spoke of this, especially, in a televised interview on the BBC, when he asked, “And why not?”

Taking up a new round of reforms amid a severe post-crisis economic situation, Putin saw the modernization of Russia in the context of its “European choice.” This idea permeated the Russian president’s speech to the German Bundestag in October 2001. Behind the economic reforms and social transformation, Putin saw a strong Russia, similar, in all the most important ways, to countries such as Germany and France. Putin was not a “democrat,” but he was not antidemocratic either. He reasoned in more practical terms. Collaboration with the European Union would help Russia get through the transformation process more quickly and with fewer losses.

The end of 2001 through the first half of 2002 was a period of new hopes in Moscow, which soon gave way, once again, to disappointment. The American-Russian dialogue that had run high died out when it was clear that the U.S. was going to attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq. Washington refused in any way to sanction a “special role” for Russia in the post-Soviet space. Russian aid in the fight against international terrorism was determined to be a debt that did not require compensation. In Washington, the White House quietly laughed at the Kremlin’s “price lists” – the reciprocal requests and demands on the United States from Russia.

President Putin had undertaken a rapprochement with the U.S. largely against the advice of his inner circle, and even against his own instincts. He sought to capitalize on the situation in order to form a “special relationship” with the leading world power and expected to get from the U.S. what other U.S. allies had received before – the recognition and consideration of Russian national interests in Washington. In hindsight, such a view seems idealistic and even naïve, but in 2001-2002, it had many
influential followers in Russia as well as certain support in the U.S. This support, however, turned out to be clearly insufficient.

Putin’s inability to get meaningful concessions from the U.S. – and most importantly, his lack of foreign policy strategy in general and in particular with regard to the U.S. – weakened the Russian president’s position. In early 2003, he gave in to the entreaties of those in Russia and Europe (first and foremost of French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder), who insisted that Russia distance itself from Washington’s policy toward Iraq. Moscow, together with Berlin and Paris, comprised the opposition to Washington – in the words of then Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, a kind of new Entente emerged, designed to deter the American friends from reckless behavior.

This deterrence was not successful, but American-Russian relations had been seriously damaged. The relationship, in contrast to the American-German and American-French relationships, had neither much strength, nor a reserve of mutual trust. The Khodorkovsky trial, which had developed in parallel with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, undermined the positive trend that had emerged after September 11. The Russian authorities’ actions against Mikhail Khodorkovsky buried the leading American oil companies’ hopes of entering the Russian market by buying Yukos. Suddenly, the extent of the difference between Moscow’s and Washington’s positions on their triumphantly proclaimed energy dialogue became clear: in the end, the Kremlin was thinking not about the transfer of the strategic oil industry to the Americans, but about gaining access to the U.S. oil distribution market!

The American and European media coverage of the Khodorkovsky trial unequivocally branded Russia as a state ruled by an authoritarian government and Putin as an autocrat. The December 2003 Duma elections culminated with the ousting of the liberal and democratic forces from the parliament, and the 2004 presidential elections were essentially non-competitive. Russian domestic policy had in practice become the central factor for determining the American attitude toward Moscow. In vain, Putin and his sup-
porters attempted to draw the Americans’ and Europeans’ attention to the virtual routing of the Russian Communist Party as a serious contender for power in the country. Russian liberals, who started by supporting Yeltsin against Gorbachev, then came under Yeltsin and who – with reservations – tried to see a modernizer in Putin, turned away from the Kremlin and subjected the nascent authoritarian tendencies to merciless criticism.

For his part, Putin became more and more “closed.” Increasingly, those who are known as the siloviki comprised his inner circle. The hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Street theater in October 2002 and the Russian special forces’ storming of the building – which, due to officials’ lack of coordination, led to the deaths of more than 100 hostages – led Putin to be suspicious of the activities of political refugees, including Boris Beresovsky, Akhmed Zakayev, and others, as well as the governments of their adoptive countries. When the next terrorist attack occurred in September 2004 in the form of the Beslan school siege, which ended with a raid on the building leaving 300 dead, many of them children, the Russian president was forced to make serious choices.

Speaking on September 4, 2004, immediately after the Beslan tragedy, Putin placed responsibility for the attack not only on Islamist terrorists, but also on the West, which was thought to use them in a calculated attempt to weaken Russia, break away important territories, etc. Simultaneously, Putin proposed a plan for political reform, repealing, in particular, the election of governors, which the West immediately estimated would draw Russia still farther from the democratic path of development. For the public in America and Europe, there remained no doubt that “Putin’s Russia was heading in the wrong direction.”

In the autumn of that year, Russia and the United States found themselves on opposite sides during the presidential elections in Ukraine. The Rose Revolution in late 2003 in Tbilisi and the student demonstrations that led to Milosevic’s resignation in 2000, having developed along similar lines, did not cause particular concern in Moscow. Neither Milosevic nor Shevardnadze were considered pro-Russian politicians. Milosevic irritat-
ed Moscow, and furthermore, Serbia was of only peripheral significance to Moscow (Russian peacekeepers were withdrawn from the Balkans in 2003), while with Georgia there was a hope that it would be easier to negotiate with the new, outwardly pragmatic leaders, than with the “old fox” Shevardnadze. Ukraine, however, was an entirely different matter.

From the very beginning, Moscow saw Victor Yushchenko as a “Western Ukrainian nationalist,” a successor to anti-Soviet partisans Stepan Bandera and Victor Konovalets, who sought to separate Ukraine from Russia. In the eyes of the Kremlin, Yushchenko’s rise to power signaled the real possibility of Ukraine’s accession to NATO, the deployment of American bases on Ukrainian territory, and a fundamental break with Russia at all levels. To prevent this, Putin and his inner circle, including then Presidential Chief of Staff Dmitry Medvedev, wholly and entirely “invested themselves” in the Ukrainian election campaign and in the elections themselves. And here they suffered the most serious foreign policy defeat in all eight years of Putin’s presidency.

As political strategist Gleb Pavlovsky eloquently admitted, Putin and his team had “guaranteed” that Kremlin candidate Viktor Yanukovych would win the elections, but then a revolution broke out in Ukraine that the Russian spin doctors did not have the resources to prevent, much less suppress. The triumph of the Orange Revolution was celebrated in the U.S. and Poland and widely welcomed in Europe and Canada as Ukraine’s attainment of real independence from Russia. In contrast, the mood of the Russian government, and that of Putin personally, was subdued.

The Kremlin preferred to focus not on an analysis of the causes of the revolution, but on revealing American underhanded plotting and the interception of its future plans. At a minimum, it was thought that the Orange Revolution would mean Washington’s acquisition of a major geopolitical foothold in the post-Soviet space, with which it could further reduce Russia’s influence in the CIS countries; in the future, perhaps, they would install a military base. At a maximum, the Kremlin believed, Ukraine was only a rehearsal, a “warm up” for the use of new techniques for effecting
regime change. In Moscow it was feared that now the Americans, based in Kiev, would prepare to seize the Kremlin politically and install a pro-American government.

For all the fantasy of such a scenario, it seems to have been taken seriously in the Kremlin. However, the situation soon changed. The Russian leadership started 2005 in a state of agitation, but ended the year in high spirits. The “color revolutions,” bright at their outset, faded rapidly. In Ukraine, the arrival of the “Orange” politicians marked the beginning of a permanent political crisis; in Kyrgyzstan, the Tulip Revolution of spring 2005 led to the resignation of President Askar Akayev, but not to a re-orientation of Bishkek from Russia towards the U.S. In Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, having had a fallout with Moscow in the summer of 2004, failed to regain control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. More importantly, the U.S. began experiencing increasing difficulties in Iraq. Finally, the sharp rise in the price of oil in 2004 began beating one record after another. The Russian authorities’ conservative financial policy allowed them to begin creating “safety cushions.”

The year 2006 was to bring Russia’s presidency of the G8, seen originally as recognition of Russia not only by the West, but also as a part of the West. However, on the very eve of the new year, the gas conflict between Gazprom and Ukraine’s Naftogaz culminated. Having failed to make progress during 2005 negotiations, and not having clarified its position publicly, Gazprom was forced to carry out its threat: in the absence of a supply contract, it shut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Russian monopoly continued to send gas through Ukrainian territory to European consumers. Assuming that Ukraine would be forced to siphon off gas from the export pipe to meet domestic needs, the Russians may have hoped that by doing so, they would gain allies in Europe and tighten their grip on Kiev. However, the exact opposite happened.

The United States and a united Europe began talking about Russia’s use of “energy as a weapon” not only against Ukraine, but also against European countries. Russia’s reputation as a reliable energy supplier – con-
firmed, despite all the difficulties, in 1991 – was dramatically jeopardized. The theme of energy security, introduced by the Kremlin at the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, was reconceptualized in the Western political consciousness as energy security from Russia. Kiev, despite its inability to pay its bills and all its own machinations with gas, came to be regarded as a victim of pressure from Moscow, which was taking revenge on the Ukrainians for their choice in favor of democracy.

The end of 2006 was overshadowed first by the murder of the opposition journalist Anna Politkovskaya in Moscow, and then by the death of Berezovsky’s bodyguard Alexander Litvinenko by polonium poisoning in London. Both killings, widely covered and commented on in the world press, were interpreted as the Kremlin’s revenge on its enemies and as a means of intimidating the opposition. Russia’s public image in the West sank practically to a level comparable to that of the USSR in the fall of 1983, when a Soviet fighter plane shot down a Korean passenger jet, and the Soviet leadership initially denied any involvement in the incident.

Clearly experiencing personal frustration with the continually deteriorating relations with the West, Vladimir Putin decided to publicly and decisively have it out with the U.S. His speech at a conference on international security in Munich in February 2007 contained not only exceptionally harsh criticism of Washington’s policy, but also the conditions under which Moscow would be willing to cooperate with America. These included the recognition of the existing political realities in Russia and non-interference in its internal affairs, the equal nature of the relationship, and mutual interests as the basis for interaction. Moscow took several concrete steps to develop this line, from the suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe of 1990, to the renewal, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, of the air patrols near the borders of the U.S. and NATO countries, all with the apparent goal of “forcing the West into partnership.”

This policy did not work. In August 2008, Georgian troops attacked the South Ossetian city of Tskhinval, triggering a counteroffensive by Rus-
sian forces. Despite the nonstop provocations from both sides and the “Caucasus” military exercises that were conducted shortly before the attack, the Russian leadership, apparently, did not expect such a large-scale attack. Comparisons with September 11 emerged, only this time with the client and quasi-ally of the United States playing the role of “Al-Qaeda.” In Moscow, there was practically no doubt that the U.S., if it had not encouraged Saakashvili to attack, had at least done nothing to stop him, and then had simply “washed its hands.” Perhaps the most dangerous moment was when the Russian Black Sea Fleet ships were off the coast of Abkhazia, and the flagship of the Sixth American Fleet sailed toward the Georgian coast. American-Russian relations were approaching confrontation at an alarming speed.

From Westpolitik to Weltpolitik

In the period between 2003 and 2005, there was a reversal in Russian foreign policy. After the failure of the attempts to integrate into the West (Gorbachev-Yeltsin) and to establish a mechanism of real partnership with the West (Putin), Moscow embarked on a path of open competition with those whom it continued to call partners. The global financial crisis that hit in 2008, having eased the conflict between Russia and the U.S. over Georgia, was also seen by many in Russia as a factor that could accelerate changes in the balance of power and the distribution of roles in the world – and not in favor of the West. It was believed that future changes could improve Russia’s position.

In 2003, the investment bank Goldman Sachs predicted sustained economic growth and a steady increase in the political influence of non-Western countries. Bank analysts proposed the acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) as the symbol of those forces that are capable of squeezing the U.S., Europe, and Japan out of their privileged position in the modern world.
In Moscow, the report’s conclusions were met with enthusiasm. If “integrating” Russia into the West had not been successful and an equal partnership with the West had turned out to be a bluff, then Moscow needed to put a serious bet on multipolarity, even more so because the thesis of a multipolar world, which Moscow picked up from Beijing in the second half of the 1990s, had received such authoritative and vivid confirmation. At international forums and venues, Russia is increasingly positioning itself as the spokesperson and even the intellectual leader of the “new (non-Western) wave.” The construction of Russia as one of the world’s centers of power envisages zones of attraction and influence around Russia and the gradual bringing down of the U.S. to the position of a “normal great power” – one of the half-dozen global “oligarchs.” Russian Westpolitik was transformed into Weltpolitik.

The transformation has a rich history. In 1989, Moscow finished not one, but two Cold Wars. Over the course of thirty years, relations between the Soviet Union and China were hostile, and at times – for example, in 1969 – the probability of a war between them was higher than between the USSR and NATO. During Gorbachev’s Beijing visit and his meetings with Deng Xiaoping and other leaders of the PRC in May 1989, an agreement was reached regarding the normalization of bilateral relations.

Despite the fact that Yeltsin and Kozyrev actively demonstrated their anti-communist attitudes and their commitment to Western democratic values, relations with China were much too important to allow them to deteriorate again. Moreover, both sides felt a need for each other. After the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4, 1989, China was placed under international sanctions that prohibited it from acquiring weapons in the West and so turned to Russia to buy arms and equipment. For its part, Russia, finding itself in an extremely difficult economic situation after the fall of the Soviet economic model, was forced to turn to China as a source of food and cheap consumer goods, especially for the Siberian and Far Eastern regions. Since 1992, the Russian-Chinese arms trade, officially called “military and technical cooperation,” has represented billions of dollars
in annual trade volume. These funds partially helped the Russian defense industry survive its most difficult years, and, of course, the military capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army of China grew stronger.

From the mid-1990s, Russian-Chinese relations strengthened to such a degree that their official interpretation began including the prospect of a strategic partnership. The parallel waning of Russia’s relations with the West as a result of NATO expansion prompted some Russian commentators to speak of China as a possible partner to Russia in a dispute with the United States and its allies.

The new quality of the relationship allowed Russia to resolve, step by step, its most important geopolitical problem in the east: the issue of its border with China. The first agreement to this effect was concluded back in 1991 by the Soviet Union, and the border was finally formally established in its entirety (more than 4300 km) in 2004. At the final stage, the Russian side made a few minor territorial concessions to its neighbor. The border was not only formally established, demarcated, and delimited, but also, to a significant extent, demilitarized. In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan – all former Soviet republics sharing a border with China – signed an agreement in Shanghai on confidence-building measures, according to which military presence and activities were to be limited within a 100-kilometer strip on either side of the border. Moreover, the five countries established a common forum for the discussion of security and development issues, initially called the Shanghai Five, and, since 2001, known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

In reality, the SCO might as well have been called “China in Central Asia.” Beijing, which was first and foremost concerned about securing its western territories – primarily the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with its Turkic-Muslim population – sought to win the sympathy of the new states of the region. Additionally, China was interested in the energy resources of the Caspian and in the markets of the Caspian countries. However, unlike the NATO countries, China was promoting its political and economic position in the post-Soviet space in agreement
with Russia. For the anti-Western forces in Moscow, close collaboration, and even an alliance with China, seemed the only way to resist American domination. In the eyes of these forces, the SCO began to be perceived as a counterweight to NATO. Of far greater importance, however, was the fact that Beijing did not see the SCO as the prototype for a military bloc and did not see Russia as an ally. China preferred to act independently, using Russia when possible but not limiting its own freedom to act. Nonetheless, in the second half of the 2000s, the SCO became an attractive platform for dialogue among Asian countries. Uzbekistan joined as its sixth member, and India, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Mongolia gained observer status.

The development of Russian-Chinese relations was not without its problems. Almost immediately after the fall of the USSR, fears concerning “demographic aggression” by China began to spread within Russia. Fantastical numbers about the scale of Chinese immigration into Russia – especially in Siberia and the Far East – were published, sometimes citing public officials. Russian-Chinese military and technical cooperation gave way to fears of another type: while the Chinese air force was buying dozens of Russian MiG and Su aircraft, as well as licenses for the production of hundreds of combat vehicles, the Russian air force did not have the means to update its own aircraft fleet for a decade and a half.

While Russia’s relations with China after normalization at the turn of the 1990s were steadily evolving and generally successful, its relations with Japan were developing unevenly and were often strained. The Japanese government came “to believe in perestroika” much later than the governments of the U.S. and the NATO countries did. When this finally happened, there was no longer enough time to address the long-standing territorial dispute over the South Kuril Islands. Gorbachev’s visit to Japan in 1991 was too late to lead to a settlement: criticism of the Kremlin’s geopolitical acquiescence within Russia was becoming increasingly stronger, and moreover, the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic’s leadership, having declared Russia’s sovereignty, refused in advance to recognize the
legitimacy of any territorial changes that were not coordinated with the leadership of the Russian Republic.

After the collapse of the USSR, Yeltsin’s attempts to resolve the Kuril issue and conclude a peace treaty with Japan did not yield any tangible results. In the Tokyo Declaration of 1993, the Russian Federation and Japan for the first time recognized the existence of disputed territories and even designated them, but then neither the solemn promise by the leaders of both countries to conclude a peace treaty by 2000, nor the establishment of a “Committee of Wise Persons,” which was supposed to find ways to normalize relations, led to a breakthrough. As a result, in 2005 Vladimir Putin offered to resolve the issue on the basis of the Moscow Declaration of 1956, which envisaged the transfer of only Habomai and Shikotan islands to Japan, which together constitute just 7 percent of the territory that Japan still officially claims.

The formally unresolved territorial issue and the absence of a peace treaty between Russia and Japan, however, did not prevent the development of trade and economic relations. In the 2000s, Japanese investment in the Russian economy increased substantially.

In the early 1990s, South Korea appeared to some Russians as one of the most promising countries in North-East Asia. Unlike Japan, it had not made claims on Russia, and unlike China, it had a developed, progressive, and technologically advanced economy. Relations with the Republic of Korea were established by Gorbachev, who visited the country in 1991 (he became the first Russian leader to make such a trip.) Yeltsin abruptly changed Moscow’s policy priorities in the Korean peninsula. If during the Cold War Pyongyang was an ally and client of the USSR and Seoul was effectively an enemy and an “American puppet,” with the end of the confrontation South Korea came to be regarded as a desirable partner, while North Korea was viewed as “a sanctuary of Stalinism.”

However, while minimizing its contacts with North Korea, Russia failed to present itself as sufficiently attractive to South Korea. South Koreans’ attempts to do business in post-Soviet Russia were often unsuccess-
ful and led to losses. Moscow managed to “return” to the Korean peninsula only in 2003, when the six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear issue started – despite the initial decision in 1994 not to invite Russia to participate in the KEDO nuclear energy project. However, Moscow’s attempts to play the role of the mediator between Pyongyang and the international community ended in failure. Neither Kim Jong Il’s trip to Moscow, nor Putin’s visit to Pyongyang (in 2000) yielded meaningful results. It was Beijing that assumed the role of mediator between the U.S. and North Korea. Russia remained a loyal participant in the negotiations, seeking to reach an agreement restricting the North Korean regime’s nuclear ambitions, but at the same time avoiding excessive pressure on Pyongyang so as not to “drive them into a corner.”

With the exception of its closest neighbors – China, Japan, and Korea – Russia’s “profile” in the Asia-Pacific region is barely noticeable. In 1999, Moscow gained membership of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Organization, and in 2012, it will host the organization’s summit in Vladivostok. However, Moscow’s role in APEC beyond summit meetings remains very limited. Since the mid-2000s there has been a modest growth of economic relations with Vietnam, and Russia sells small quantities of weapons and military equipment to the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) (Indonesia, Malaysia) and is seeking to promote cooperation with Myanmar (Burma) in the area of nuclear energy. Russian diplomats participate in ASEAN security forums, but perhaps Russian tourists in Thailand, Vietnam, Bali, and elsewhere may have a higher profile.

During the Cold War, from the mid-1950s, Moscow’s most important political ally outside the “socialist commonwealth” was India. Since 1971, the relationship between the two countries was governed by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance. India was a major importer of Soviet weapons. Large industrial enterprises were built on its territory with the help of the Soviet Union. Delhi was among the few governments in the world that did not condemn the Soviet invasion
of Afghanistan in 1979. In the second half of the 1980s, Gorbachev and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi jointly attempted to offer the world a new vision of international relations.

In the early 1990s, relations with India lost their former foundation and did not acquire a new one. Moscow ceded part of its former authority when, in 1993, it succumbed to U.S. pressure and reneged on its commitment to supply India with cryogenic rocket engines. Relations picked up at the end of the 1990s. In 1998, Prime Minister Primakov spoke publicly about the Russia-China-India triangle as one of the pillars of the future multipolar world. Since 2000, meetings between the upper leadership of Russia and India have become an annual event, but no significant breakthrough has occurred in the development of the two countries’ relations.

RIC and BRIC

Moscow’s relationship with Pakistan, hostile since the Cold War and even more burdened by the support that Islamabad provided to the Afghan mujahedeen during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1979-1989), remained cold after the collapse of the USSR. Pakistani security forces became the initiators and organizers of the Taliban movement, which, after the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, came to be regarded in Moscow as a direct threat to the security and stability of Central Asia and Russia’s entire southern flank. The creation of nuclear weapons in Pakistan caused more concern in Moscow than perhaps the Iranian nuclear program, due to the radical Islamist influence in Pakistan and the general sense of growing political instability in the country. Only in 2002 did a Pakistani leader once again visit Moscow – thirty years after the previous state visit.

The completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in March 1989 did not mean the end of Soviet involvement in Afghan affairs. A group of Soviet military advisers remained in Kabul and, more importantly, the Najibullah government continued to receive Soviet mili-
tary and economic aid. After the collapse of the USSR, Moscow, prejudiced by ten years spent fighting a difficult war, effectively lost interest in Afghanistan. Aid to Kabul was halted in 1992, which inevitably led to the fall of Najibullah and the rise to power of a coalition of mujahedeen, who had fought against the Soviet troops. Interest, however, was soon reawakened, at first as a side effect of the civil war in Tajikistan, when the Islamists, crushed with the help of Russian forces, began to use Afghan territory for operations against the Tajik government troops and Russian border guards, and then in the mid-1990s, in response to the Taliban’s successes.

In 1996, the Taliban seized Kabul and forced the mujahedeen to the Tajik and Uzbek borders. Russia was forced to come together with its recent opponents, who had become a buffer between the radical Islamists and the CIS countries that had not yet gained strength. There was a fear that if the Taliban was not stopped, it would “reach the Volga.” Indeed, the Taliban was not limited to Afghanistan. It supported Uzbekistan’s Islamic Movement, as well as the Chechens who fought against federal forces. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, recognized by practically no one in the world, recognized the authorities of Ichkeria and allowed the creation of Chechen combat training camps on Afghan territory. In 2000, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov threatened to attack the camps, but Russia had no real ability to carry out the threat at the time.

The situation changed dramatically after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Moscow used its influence to ensure that the Northern Alliance, which it had armed and supported, stood on the U.S. side in the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Russia also helped the United States with intelligence information. After the Taliban’s defeat, Russia refused to send its troops to Afghanistan and to compete politically with the U.S. on Afghan soil. Moscow supported the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan’s political structure and established contact with Hamid Karzai. At the same time, Russia watched the sharp increase in the flow of drugs from Afghanistan with growing concern.
Recognizing Iran’s growing capabilities and influence, Moscow has tried to build a pragmatic relationship with Tehran and to use the mutual estrangement between Iran and the U.S., as well as Iran’s semi-isolation from the European Union, to its advantage. Nevertheless, Russian-Iranian relations have not developed smoothly. In the early 1990s, Moscow feared the export of the Islamic revolution to the CIS countries. The first public report of the Foreign Intelligence Service, published in 1993, sounded the alarm about the development of missile and nuclear technologies in a number of countries, including Iran. The theocratic system of government itself, of course, could not elicit Russian sympathy for Iran. At the same time, Moscow discovered that Iran could be a rational and even pragmatic actor. In 1997, the internal conflict in Tajikistan was resolved as a result of the cooperation between Iran and Russia – the only such experience in all the years since the disintegration of the USSR. Tehran took a neutral but effectively pro-Armenian stance on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, Iran refused to condemn Moscow for its actions in Chechnya, and moreover, supported Russia in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Against this backdrop, since the mid-1990s, cooperation between Russia and Iran has developed in a number of sensitive areas, such as nuclear power and military and technical cooperation. The intersection of the two countries’ natural gas interests is also clear.

Regarding the Iranian nuclear program, by the end of the 2000s Russian leaders were apparently working from several assumptions. First, if a state with the resources of modern Iran views itself as a power with a twenty-five-hundred-year history, finds itself in a corresponding geopolitical and geo-strategic position, and then sets a goal of building up its nuclear capability – it will certainly achieve its goal. Second, the only way to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons is the conclusion of an agreement between Iran and the international community based on reconciliation between Tehran and Washington. Third, the contents of such an agreement should emphasize the international community’s respect for Iran’s most important interests: freedom from outside interference in its
affairs (including the abandonment of the idea of “regime change”), and recognition of Iran’s role as a regional power. In fact, security and status have historically been the most important goals of all countries – after the U.S. – seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

In Russia, some of the elites would welcome an open conflict between the U.S. and Iran, but the most influential circles still continue to strive for an agreement that would account for the aforementioned parameters. Moscow is not Tehran’s ally, but it also does not under any circumstances seek to become Tehran’s enemy. During the years of the George W. Bush administration, Russia did not support the American policy of sanctions against Iran, believing that such sanctions in the absence of a flexible strategy could only lead to war and even serve as a justification for such a war 

ex post facto. When Barack Obama arrived in the White House announcing a policy aimed at engaging Iran in a dialogue with the United States, the Russian approach became more nuanced. Moscow is aware that for the U.S., the Iranian nuclear issue is a crucial factor in U.S.-Russian relations.

In what is traditionally considered the Middle East (the Arab world plus Israel), Russian policy has undergone a serious transformation. Gone are the ideological, geopolitical, and military/strategic components that defined Moscow’s Middle East policy during the Soviet period. The economic factor, on the contrary, has become very significant. Russian policy toward Iraq under Saddam Hussein was to a significant degree based on a desire to develop Iraq’s oil fields and recover a seven billion dollar debt pending from Soviet times. In other cases (Algeria, Libya, Syria), Soviet debts were almost entirely written off by Moscow in exchange for new contracts with those countries. Using the old ties with former Soviet clients, Russia significantly expanded the geographic reach of its economic activity in the region. Entering the markets of the rich Gulf monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia, as well as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and others, has become an important goal for Russia. Relations with Egypt have also been consolidated.
Without a doubt, Israel has become emotionally the closest country for Russia in the Middle East, and a significant number of the former Soviet Jews have emigrated, now making up almost 20 percent of Israel’s population. Diplomatic relations with Israel, severed by the Soviet Union after the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War in 1967, were restored only in the autumn of 1991. Since then, however, they have been actively developing, especially against the backdrop of the war in Chechnya and the rise of radicalism in the Islamic world. Israeli politicians of all persuasions have become frequent visitors to Moscow, and since 2008 a visa-free policy has been in effect between the two countries. At the same time, in order to maintain the goodwill of the Arab countries, Russia occasionally condemns Israel for the “disproportionate use of force,” although it is subject to analogous condemnation from the West for its actions in the Caucasus; moreover, Moscow takes a very conservative stance toward Iran, Israel’s number one enemy, as well as toward Hamas and Hezbollah, which are regarded by Israel, the U.S., and the EU as terrorist organizations. At the same time, relations between Moscow and the Palestinian authorities, which during Soviet times were very close, have lost their “special” character. Russia takes pride in its participation (since 1991) in the Quartet on the Middle East (along with the U.S., EU, and UN) and its role as an impartial mediator who “magnanimously” ceded the leading role (and the burden of peacekeeping) to Washington.

The current, “almost familial” relationship between Russia and Israel is the polar opposite of the situation during the last quarter-century of the Soviet Union, when Israel and “international Zionism” were regarded as political, ideological, and military adversaries. An almost identical metamorphosis occurred in the relationship between Moscow and Ankara. Since the 1940s, after Stalin’s failed attempt to secure Soviet control of the Mediterranean straits, the USSR regarded Turkey as a hostile force. The alliance between Turkey and the U.S., Turkey’s membership in NATO (since 1952), and its command of a large army all created an image of an enemy that was easily superimposed on the history of the numerous Russian-Turkish wars of the 17th-20th centuries.
The situation changed in the early 1990s when Turkey became one of the main centers of so-called shuttle trading by small entrepreneurs, which enabled the quick saturation of the Russian market with inexpensive consumer goods. Turkish construction firms have been prominent in Russia since the mid-1990s, and since the second half of that decade Turkey has become the main destination for Russians to book relatively inexpensive vacations. Circumstances have changed, and for the Russians the Mediterranean resort Antalya has replaced Yalta, which is now in independent Ukraine. At the turn of the millennium, Russian-Turkish relations acquired a strong energy dimension. A decade later, Turkey is aspiring to become a major energy hub connecting the countries of the Caspian, Russia, and the Middle East with the European Union.

Throughout the 1990s, Moscow was frequently concerned about the revival of the pan-Turkic ideology and the strengthening of Turkey’s role in the Turkish-speaking countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, along with suspicions about Ankara’s support of Chechen separatism, but this gradually weakened. Since the mid-2000s, Moscow has regarded Ankara as a key partner in the region. Russia is impressed by the pragmatism of Turkish leaders and their emphatic independence from Washington, particularly evident during the U.S. preparations for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Russia’s geopolitical retreat after the collapse of the Soviet Union was reflected in the temporary “deglobalization” of Moscow’s foreign policy. Its interests became largely confined to the adjacent European and Asian periphery, and its center of gravity shifted to the CIS region. As for Africa and Latin America – the main fields of rivalry during the Cold War – they practically disappeared from the Russian foreign policy radar screen in the 1990s.

Some revival along these fronts came about in the next decade. Since 2000, when President Putin visited Cuba, ties with Havana have been restored, although there can be no comparison to the strength of the earlier relationship. The Russian leadership was interested more in
economic opportunities than geopolitical footholds. Nonetheless, geopolitics remained, but in a somewhat caricatured form. Since the mid-2000s, Russia began actively developing its relationship with oil-rich Venezuela, whose president, Hugo Chavez, elicited a severe allergic reaction within the U.S. with his extravagant anti-American remarks and escapades. At a time when the Bush administration was actively supporting and arming Georgian President Saakashvili, who caused an equally allergic reaction in Moscow, the demonstration of cooperation with Chavez, including sending strategic bombers and a fleet of warships to Venezuela in 2008, was Moscow’s response to Washington’s activity near the Russian border. The countries of the so-called Bolivarian Initiative (Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador, supported by subsidies from Venezuela) also enjoyed Moscow’s special attention. In return for its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Nicaragua received substantial economic assistance from Russia.

Despite these geopolitical storylines, Moscow’s main interest in Latin America remains economic. In 2008, the first ever tour of a Russian leader on the continent focused mainly on promoting projects for economic cooperation. However, the overall extent of Russian-Latin American relations remains insignificant.

In 2009, President Medvedev made a similar tour of African countries. Industrialized South Africa, as well as resource-rich Nigeria, Angola, and Namibia, are regarded as the most promising Russian partners in sub-Saharan Africa. Russia, having endured in the 1990s a most severe period of its own transformation, took a disinterested attitude toward the bloody civil war in Rwanda and the internal conflicts in the Congo, Liberia, and other countries. In the 2000s, Moscow did not support the Western countries’ calls in the UN Security Council to exert pressure on Sudanese authorities to put an end to the conflict in Darfur, considering this to be unacceptable interference in Sudan’s internal affairs. Russia held an analogous position in 2007-2008 during the acute internal standoff in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, in the late 2000s Moscow demonstrated solidarity with Western countries and the international community as a whole in protect-
ing civilian ships from pirates off the coast of Somalia, and Russia sent its warships into the Indian Ocean.

Such actions underscore Moscow’s desire to participate actively in global governance. In Russia, the most important instrument of global governance has been, and continues to be, the United Nations. Immediately after the end of the Cold War, Moscow attempted to turn the UN into what it was designed to be in accordance with the organization’s 1945 Charter. In 1992 on a Russian initiative, the first ever summit-level UN Security Council meeting was held. Clearly, Moscow’s special inclination towards the UN was determined by Russia’s position in the UN system, which Russia inherited from the Soviet Union – with the West’s consent. The structure of the Security Council reflected two essential principles for Moscow: the sovereign equality of the five great powers, set above the rest of the world, and the veto power of each of these countries over the Council’s decisions.

In the early 1990s, Russia actively proposed the UN model for Europe, where the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was convened back in the mid-1970s, was transformed into the organization of the same name (OSCE, since 1994) with its own security concept (Istanbul, 1999). Moscow sought to ensure that a Security Council of Europe would be formed at the center of the OSCE, and that Russia would become a permanent member of the Council with veto power. As the main regional organization of the Old World, the “enhanced” OSCE would coordinate the activities of all the other European organizations: the EU, NATO, the CIS, etc.

However, to the disappointment of Moscow’s idealists, even the UN, freed from the burden of confrontation, proved unable to fulfill the role of a world government, and the OSCE, despite its name, evolved into an even less coherent structure than the CSCE. At the global level, U.S. influence increased tremendously. It was the “sole superpower in a unipolar world,” while in Europe, the central organizations were the “deepened and broadened” European Union (which was reformed in 1993 on
the basis of the European Economic Community, and which adopted a single currency, the euro, in 1999) and NATO, whose membership rose from sixteen in 1991 to 28 in 2009. Russia, it turned out, remained outside the framework of both unions.

As a “consolation prize,” as was discussed earlier, Moscow was invited into the group of leading industrialized nations, which, with Russia’s accession in 1998, was named the “Group of Eight” or G8. However, in the realm of finance, Russia was not admitted, and the group is still referred to as the G7. This discrimination humiliated Russia, which in the 2000s had risen on the swell of oil revenues and which welcomed the establishment of a broader union, the G20, in 2008, to deal with the global economic crisis. The combination of the G8 and the financially and economically oriented G20 suited Moscow better than the double standards of the G7/G8.

During the financial crisis, Russia slowed down the process of its institutional integration into the global economy. In 2009, negotiations on its accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which had begun back in 1993, were reformatted. Russia announced a preference for creating a Customs Union with Belarus and Kazakhstan, making the prospect of accession to the WTO even more uncertain. In principle, Russia is seeking to become a member of the WTO and then enter the world economy’s elite – the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – but thus far has looked at WTO membership from the perspective of terms of trade and not as an instrument of economic modernization.

Proceeding from the concept of a multipolar world, the Russian leadership seeks to establish relationships with all the “poles,” while retaining its freedom to maneuver. Since the mid-2000s, Moscow has promoted the idea of coordinating the efforts of the “rising” great powers: Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC). In 2009, the first BRIC summit was hosted in Yekaterinburg. Simultaneously, the RIC (Russia, India, and China) project is being implemented. These structures are aimed more at public relations
than anything else, designed not so much to bring concrete results as to constantly underscore the thesis that the five-hundred years of Western domination in international relations have come to an end, and to simultaneously present the new leaders of global development.

From Empire to Great Power

Russia, however, is by no means a new leader. It is the successor to a state that emerged more than a thousand years ago in Novgorod and Kiev; her own statehood was formed in the 14th-15th centuries in Moscow; and it was designated a kingdom beginning in the 16th century, an empire from the 18th century onward, and finally, the Soviet state during the “short” 20th century. In 1989-1991, Russia abandoned its global sphere of influence and its buffer and base in Eastern Europe, and finally, it dismantled its historic empire, the USSR. The withdrawal from the empire happened in a flash: less than eight months had passed from the moment the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan to the fall of the Berlin Wall; 25 months later, the Soviet Union was no more. The disintegration of the Eurasian empire was also relatively bloodless in terms of the number of victims – though, of course, only in comparison with the massacre during the partition of India and the wars in Palestine, Indochina, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, etc. The two hundred thousand people killed in Chechnya, in Tajikistan, during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, and in other “hot spots” of the crumbling Soviet Union is, of course, a horrible figure. Yet the fall of a nuclear power could have led to a catastrophe of an entirely different magnitude.

The main reason this did not occur was the Russian elite’s conscious refusal to embrace an imperial role, which was perceived as a burden, coupled with the rejection of nationalist policies, such as those carried out at the time by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. For Yeltsin, Prime Minister Gaidar, and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, the most important thing was Russia’s return to Europe and its inclusion in the “civilized world.”
Moreover, Russian politicians were well aware of the significance of the nuclear factor. Moscow’s consent to its most painful territorial loss – the recognition of Crimea as a part of Ukraine – was predicated upon Kiev’s agreement to give up the part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal that was deployed in Ukraine.

Although the Russian authorities have repeatedly pointed out that, as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union, approximately 25 million ethnic Russians suddenly found themselves on the other side of the Russian border, Moscow has not taken any steps to unite the “divided nation” and has not supported separatist movements in the population centers of Russian minorities in the CIS countries and the Baltic states. In 1993-1994, the Kremlin unambiguously renounced territorial claims on Sevastopol and did not support separatist-minded leaders of the Crimean Autonomy. Neither did Russia support the separatists of northern Kazakhstan, who called their region southern Siberia. There was no talk of any claims on the Estonian border city of Narva, populated predominately by Russians.

The CIS, declared on December 8, 1991, at a meeting between the leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, was not an institution of new integration as some at the time had hoped, but rather a mechanism for “civilized divorce,” in the words of the first president of independent Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk. By the summer of 1992, the division of the former Soviet Union’s armed forces was completed; in mid-1993, a unified ruble zone ceased to exist; and by 1994, every country of the CIS had set up its own passports to replace the invalidated Soviet passports. On the other hand, attempts to create a common security space, to agree on the joint protection of the “external borders of the CIS,” and to allow dual citizenship in Russia and the former Soviet republics, as Moscow insisted, proved unsuccessful. For each of the newly formed states, independence first and foremost meant independence from Russia.

For Russia, the appearance of new neighbors primarily raised issues of status and security. Yes, Russia had abandoned its empire, but not so that the states, which Moscow had begun calling the “near abroad,” would
turn into bleeding wounds of interethnic conflicts unleashed by “aggressive nationalism” or would fall under the influence of neighboring states that were historically Russia’s geopolitical rivals. As early as 1992, Russian forces intervened in the armed conflicts in Transnistria, Tajikistan, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. In some cases they stopped the bloodshed and established a truce, of which Russia became the guarantor, while in other cases Russia supported one side of the conflict and helped it achieve its goals. In 1993, Yeltsin and Kozyrev suggested that the UN recognize the leading role of the Russian Federation in ensuring security throughout the former Soviet Union. The UN refused, because for many countries, especially in the West, Russian military peacekeeping looked like an attempt to restore the empire.

Thereafter, the “frozen conflicts” became an important instrument of Moscow’s foreign policy in the post-Soviet space. Positioning even small contingents of troops on the Dniester, the Inguri, and in the Tskhinval region allowed Moscow to influence the policies of Moldova and Georgia, not allowing them to drift too far from Russia. The conflict in Tajikistan, settled in 1997, secured the existence of a Russian military base in the country, which was regarded as the only barrier keeping Afghan extremists from Central Asia and the borders of Russia itself.

Meanwhile, Russia’s military presence in other CIS countries was gradually being phased out. In 1993 (at the same time that they left Lithuania, but before Latvia, Estonia, or even Germany), Russian troops left Azerbaijan. By the second half of the 1990s, the “Joint Russian-Turkmen Group” was transformed into the armed forces of Turkmenistan without any fanfare, while joint responsibility for security along the borders of Georgia and Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and China, and Tajikistan and Afghanistan passed over to the new states themselves. By 2008, Russian troops had left Georgian territory including Ajaria, but excluding the conflict zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The Tashkent Collective Security Treaty, signed back in 1992 by Russia and most of the CIS countries, essentially did not function. In order to
enhance political and military cooperation, Russia insisted on the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 1999. Cooperation improved somewhat after this, but the CSTO cannot be compared with NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Not only Uzbekistan – which first left the organization, then returned to it, and then distanced itself from the organization’s decisions – but also Belarus, which has expressed reservations about its participation in the CSTO’s activities, view the CSTO as an à la carte organization. The fact that so far none of Russia’s official allies has joined Russia in recognizing the independence of the former Georgian autonomous regions indicates an unwillingness by each of the CSTO countries to be deemed a client – much less a “satellite” – of Moscow.

In addition to Tajikistan and Armenia, where Russian combat troops are positioned, and Belarus and Kazakhstan, where the Russian Ministry of Defense leases several military facilities, Russia, in accordance with the treaty signed with Ukraine in 1997, has the right to a military presence in Crimea, where the main base of its Black Sea Fleet is positioned in Sevastopol. The term of the Russian lease, originally set to expire in 2017, was recently extended by twenty-five years, with the possibility of a further extension.

Russia’s recognition of Ukraine’s independence, which actually occurred over the course of two years from 1997 to 1999 (with the signature of the Big Treaty between Moscow and Kiev and its ratification), is crucial. The Baltic states had always been a foreign body, a kind of “internal abroad” within the empire and then the Soviet Union, while the Caucasus and Central Asia with Kazakhstan were perceived as a colony, Moldova as a buffer zone, and Belarus as a natural continuation of Russia proper. Ukraine was simultaneously both “us,” almost indistinguishable from Russia (in the east and south), and “not us” (in the west). The abandonment of Ukraine as a part of “greater Russia” testified to the final – including the psychological – departure from the position of empire.

By the end of the 2000s, it was possible to conclude that Ukraine had achieved recognition in Russia as a separate state, but not as a foreign
state. In 2005, Gazprom’s decision to stop subsidizing the CIS countries and transition these relationships into trade driven by world gas prices effectively signaled the end of the system of imperial preferences. The “near abroad” had become simply the “abroad.” This decision, of course, took into account the revolutionary rise to power of the pro-Western Orange Coalition in Kiev in 2004, which the Kremlin tried by all means to prevent. Nevertheless, Gazprom’s move had a broader and more fundamental meaning. Everyone had lost the subsidies: both the western-oriented Ukraine with Georgia and Moldova, and the quite loyal Armenia and Belarus. In those places where the subsidies were partially preserved, the countries had to “pay the difference” in non-monetary form (for example, by giving Gazprom control over their gas transportation infrastructure). More importantly, thereafter, Gazprom (that is to say, Russia) required only one thing from its partners: the full and timely payment for purchased goods. Independence, as they say, begins the moment people begin to pay for themselves. The same holds true for states.

The transition to a new basis for relations turned out to be difficult. In early 2006 and 2009, major gas crises broke out during which Gazprom stopped the gas supply to Ukraine. Consumers in the European Union suffered as well. The gas stoppage struck a painful blow to Russia’s formerly impeccable reputation as a reliable energy supplier and forced Europeans to search for alternative sources and fuels. Ukraine, the main cause of the problems with the gas transit, suffered much less in all respects. For its part, Gazprom and the Russian government had since 2005 been actively promoting projects to create gas pipelines circumventing Ukraine: the Nord Stream pipeline along the bottom of the Baltic Sea and the South Stream pipeline across the Black Sea and the Balkans.

Moscow’s attempts to include Ukraine in the Single Economic Space with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (2004) proved futile. Nevertheless, the idea of integration among the other three countries has not been abandoned. Being part of a wider union – the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC, which also includes Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; Uz-
bekistan’s position, as usual, is ambivalent) – Moscow, Minsk, and Astana have decided to form a Customs Union. If such an alliance is created, it will be the first real integrative union of post-Soviet states since the fall of the Soviet Union.

However, back in 1996, Russia and Belarus signed an agreement to form a Community consisting of the two countries, which was transformed in 1999 into a union state – the Union State of Russia and Belarus. Nevertheless, despite a number of steps toward integration (the absence of customs borders, the free movement of citizens, the equalization of rights within the territories of both countries, etc.), the Union was stillborn. The point of the Union, right up to the end of 1999, from the Belarusian perspective, was to create an opportunity for the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, to succeed Yeltsin as the president of a united state, and then for several years, to have Moscow effectively subsidize the Belarusian economy. The result was unexpected: the “most Soviet” president of any of the CIS countries and an outspoken opponent of the Belarusian nationalists, who were trying to build a modern state on the historical foundation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, effectively became the father of Belarusian statehood. By the end of the 2000s there was no doubt in anyone’s mind: the Belarusian state had been established.

The primary direction of Russian foreign economic activity in the CIS was not towards integration, but rather towards the economic expansion of Russian companies – first and foremost the energy companies, including the state-run Gazprom and Rosneft, but also private companies (Lukoil). In the eyes of some observers, the intensity of the Russian gas activity in Central Asia in the early 2000s created the image of a Russian “gas caliphate” on the shores of the Caspian. In reality, the process of independence or “sovereignization” of the CIS countries at some stage affected the energy sector, as well. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, not to mention Azerbaijan, are all deliberately pursuing multi-vector policies, both in the energy sector, and more broadly.
The most important benefit of the CIS from the point of view of the citizens of its member states is the possibility of visa-free travel. Amid a chronic demographic crisis and the economic ascent of 2000-2008, Russia had become an attractive country for millions of immigrants from the former Soviet republics. Russian laws, however, were not particularly favorable for migrant workers and those who wished to acquire Russian citizenship. Many workers remained illegally and were subject to substantial exploitation and extortion. On the other hand, some illegal immigrants were implicated in criminal activities, including drug trafficking. The problems with immigration from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and also (for political reasons) from Georgia were most acute.

The Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 was the culmination of fifteen years of strained relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. The fact that the first anti-Soviet demonstration, on April 9, 1989, was dispersed by Soviet troops and led to bloodshed had not been forgotten in either capital. The federal and republican communist leadership had refused to take responsibility and made the military their scapegoats. In the eyes of the Soviet military, it was Eduard Shevardnadze (minister of foreign affairs of the USSR from 1986 to 1990), who was responsible for the agreement on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, as a result of which soldiers and their families frequently ended up in places entirely unfit for life. The first president of Georgia (May 1991-January 1992), Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was an outspoken nationalist and xenophobe. His policies forced the Abkhaz and Ossetians out of the Georgian state. When Gamsakhurdia was overthrown and Shevardnadze returned to Tbilisi as the head of state, Russian distaste for him was extended to the Georgian state. Georgian forces’ reckless campaign in Abkhazia in August 1992 attracted sympathy for the Abkhaz, not only from the militia of the North Caucasus, but also from all those who were not sympathetic to Shevardnadze. In circumstances where Moscow’s real policy towards Georgia was determined not by the Kremlin but by narrow special interest groups, relations continued to deteriorate. In 1995, Shevardnadze escaped an assassination attempt and Tbilisi ac-
cused a man who had fled to Russia. In the meantime, Abkhazia, which had been “cleansed” of Georgians, became a foothold for mid-level Russian siloviki, and they were able to significantly influence Russian policy towards Georgia. When the Russian government attempted to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict (through the work of Minister of Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov in 1997), these efforts came up against the intransigence of the Abkhaz leadership. A vicious cycle had been created.

The war in Chechnya played an important role. In 2002, Moscow accused Tbilisi of tacitly allowing and even aiding the actions of Chechen separatists and terrorists who had created a base in the Pankisi Gorge along the Chechen border. Russia introduced a visa regime for Georgian citizens. This was an unprecedented step in relations with a CIS country. Shevardnadze’s somewhat forced rapprochement with the West, especially with the U.S., only magnified Moscow’s suspicion and hostility.

Shevardnadze’s exhaustion led to the gradual decline of his regime. The result was the Rose Revolution in November 2003, bringing the overthrow of Shevardnadze by a group of young politicians, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, whom he had fostered. Initially, the relationship between the new leadership and Moscow was positive and productive. In the spring of 2004, Russian leaders allowed Tbilisi to establish control over Ajaria, which was ruled by a clan that relied on Russian support and troops. Saakashvili, however, crossed the red line in 2004 when he launched a police operation against South Ossetian smugglers in order to regain control over the province. As a result, Saakashvili entirely lost Moscow’s confidence.

The long slide into war likely began in September 2006, when Russian military personnel accused of espionage against Georgia were arrested in Tbilisi and brought to trial. In response, Moscow broke off air and postal links with Georgia, announced the expulsion of illegal immigrants from Georgia, and conducted an operation against businesses held by Georgians, which were allegedly suspected of having connections with criminal elements. Under the pretext of poor quality, Russia imposed an embargo on imports of Georgian wine and mineral water.
The next stage was the decision of the Bucharest NATO session in April 2008 on the issue of granting Georgia and Ukraine a Membership Action Plan (MAP) towards NATO accession. As a result of a compromise between the U.S. position (to grant the MAP) and the position of a number of European countries (Germany, France, etc.), it was decided that NATO would not grant the MAP, but would declare that in the future, Georgia and Ukraine would become NATO members. This decision led to further escalation of incidents in the conflict zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Georgians, by provoking the Russians, sought to prove (mainly to the U.S.) that Russia was the direct heir to and continuation of the Soviet Union. Russia and its allies, by baiting the Georgians into provocations, sought to demonstrate (primarily to the countries of Western Europe) that Georgia, with its unpredictable and unstable leadership, could under no circumstances be accepted into NATO. On August 7, 2008, at Saakashvili’s orders Georgian troops began a massive shelling of Tskhinval. Russian peacekeepers were killed. What followed is well known.

The war in the Caucasus confirmed that further NATO expansion eastward is dangerous. The five-day military operations in Georgia remained an isolated incident, yet upsetting the situation in Ukraine and causing conflict in Crimea or on the Black Sea between the Russian and Ukrainian fleets would threaten to produce a clash on a European scale. The process of NATO expansion was halted – and the “Eastern Neighborhood” projects of the European Union came to the forefront.

A Content Analysis of Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy

Thus, in two decades, Moscow’s foreign policy has traveled a difficult road. According to the country’s leaders, Russia has learned from its own misconceptions and errors. These lessons in the Kremlin’s interpretation can be summarized as follows:
The world is primarily a field of struggle, of rivalry of all against all, and of fierce competition for resources and markets. Cooperation is not the result of politicians’ emotions or goodwill, but rather is the product of competition among players, the point of which is to determine the conditions for future cooperation.

In world politics, economics are paramount. Business and money are simultaneously the driving forces and the prize. In business as in war, those means that lead to victory are good, and there is no room for emotions. As is often said in modern Russia, “it’s nothing personal, just business.”

The values that are so much talked about in the West are no more than a cover for a harsh reality that is fundamentally no different than what exists in Russia (money is king everywhere, the difference is only in the amount.) The promotion of democracy is a tool for promoting Western – primarily American – influence.

Russia is strategically alone, and only Russia needs itself. The major powers are its rivals in the struggle for influence, while the smaller countries are the object and purpose of this struggle.

Russia’s most important competitive advantages in the foreseeable future are its natural resources, primarily oil and gas. Its nuclear weapons remain its most important guarantor of security.

Based on this analysis, the Russian leadership draws the following practical conclusions:

- *Realpolitik* is the only reliable policy. You need only adapt it to the circumstances of a global world.

- To survive and thrive, Russia is obliged to be a great power (internally cohesive, independent in the international arena, and extending its influence in the immediate environment). Otherwise, Russia will be torn apart.

- All partners are competitors, and every competitor can become a partner under certain conditions. It is more correct to call them “counterparts” in both cases. In a relationship with any counterpart, one cannot take anything on faith, and one cannot take
anyone at their word. Legally binding contracts are necessary – otherwise, Russia’s counterparts will certainly try to deceive it.

- Foreign policy is to be guided by national interest, which is to be understood (while the nation has not yet been fully formed in Russia) as the interests of the ruling corporation.
- Interests, rather than illusory values and immobilizing ideology, constitute the substance of foreign policy. This approach to foreign policy action consists of the pragmatic management of differing interests.
- Patriotism – an analogue to ideology – is important, both as a means of domestic mobilization and the creation of a solid base for a pragmatic foreign policy.
- Public opinion within countries and at the international level is the result of manipulation by interested parties. The concept of reputation is outdated – replaced by an image that is created and destroyed on demand.
- In the modern world it is necessary to maintain relationships – at various levels, either openly or secretly – with all relevant parties, without ideological or value-motivated exceptions.
- The aim of Russian foreign policy is the formation of a Russian center of power as one of the elements of the emerging world order – the global oligarchy of five or six top players. As part of this multipolar world, the U.S. must descend to the position of one of the great powers. When the American world hegemony becomes part of history – as did the Soviet Union and its empire – then America and Russia will finally become real partners, for example, in preventing a new hegemony of a third party.
A Critical Understanding of the Russian International Experience

Presented here in an outlined and somewhat pointed form is a guide to action that is startling in its cynicism. At the same time, it must be noted that this cynicism is not unsubstantiated, but rather acquired through Russia’s painful experience. In any event, some of those who shape and form current Russian foreign policy were in their time inspired by the fresh wind of Gorbachev’s new political thinking that dispelled the leaden atmosphere of traditional Soviet foreign policy, and they hoped along with Yeltsin that Russia would integrate into the Western world under the terms worthy of a great power, etc. The cynicism of Putin’s Kremlin is the fruit not of ideology, but of experience rationalized in a particular way.

A definite advantage of this new political thinking is the clear break with imperial tradition. The center of power, the zone of privileged interests, etc., do not imply a restoration of the imperial state, the Russian empire, or the Soviet Union. There is no talk of reunification, consolidation, or even control over neighbors. The goal is the expansion of influence, the model of which is provided by the foreign policies of Russia’s main “rivals” in the post-Soviet space – the U.S. and the European Union. In an altered world, Russia’s business is Russia itself.

Another distinctive feature of contemporary Russian policy and practice is its “economism.” “Russia, Inc.” is geared towards making profit. It is, to a high degree, opportunistic. When making decisions, the cost issue is a decisive factor. The most important element making Russian domestic and foreign policy more understandable and somewhat predictable is that Russia is ruled by those who own it. Hence, Russia’s policy echoes the well-known formula of U.S. President Calvin Coolidge that “the business of America is business.”

Also apparent is the weakening role of traditional militarism in foreign policy. At first glance this contradicts the theory that the Putin administration is dominated by siloviki, who mostly retained their positions
with the advent of the Putin-Medvedev tandem. However, it should be borne in mind that the siloviki under consideration mainly hail from the special services and are characterized by a completely different ethos than the officers of the armed forces. Moreover – and this is essential – the siloviki act not as elements of the “system” (a kind of super-department), but as the members of groups that are often competing in the struggle for “purely concrete” benefits: influence and possessions. Putin and Medvedev willingly demonstrate the strategic power inherited from the Soviet Union and pay attention to the development of strategic nuclear forces, but the state of Russia’s conventional armed forces has been deplorable for twenty years now and Minister Anatoly Serdyukov’s military reform is only just getting started.

In assessing the evolution of Russian foreign policy, we should not forget about the tremendous shock that Russia experienced in the transition from Soviet communism to the current authoritarian capitalism. Among its consequences are the Soviet inertia and nostalgia for what was lost; the persistence of imperial traditions and craving for revanche in some form; the country feeling hurt; the real grudge against the U.S., who “wrongly appropriated victory in the Cold War;” the rise of nationalism amid the wreckage of the imperial state; the unformed nation and absence of opposition amid the decline of the intelligentsia; and the re-evaluation of the role of the West, from “the foreigners will help us,” to “our allies are scum.”

If one were to build a bridge from Medvedev back to Gorbachev, it is easy to conclude that in two decades, Moscow has gone from one extreme to the other. Naïve and often mindless optimism has been exchanged for narrow, pointed, and deliberately down-to-earth pessimism. Despite the complexity of technology (financial flows, etc.), a tremendous simplification of the world occurred in the minds of the leadership. Material factors were cast as absolute, while values were discounted. The outright, but at the same time narrow-minded, self-interest of Russian leaders was capable neither of overcoming the alienation between the rulers and the
ruled within the country, nor of contributing to the growth of respect for Russia abroad. The often mentioned pragmatism, having beaten out all other approaches, had won, but had lost direction. Its failure not only to answer the question “why?,” but also to ask it in the first place, has led to the inability to develop a strategy focused on long-term goals and based on the fundamental values truly shared by society (including by the elites).

The lack of a country’s own strategy inevitably leads to “reactivity” in foreign policy. For several years now, Moscow has acted “in response,” perceiving Washington’s actions on the international stage as directed mainly against Russia, and organizing a “rebuff” to counter them. During these years, the obsession with America has turned into a serious pathology that will be difficult to treat. Moscow effectively does not have a positive agenda – only a negative one. Setting aside all the nonsense, the entire content of Russia’s proposed “new European security architecture” boils down to a few positions: (1) no NATO expansion into the CIS: neither Ukraine, nor Georgia can be brought into the Alliance; (2) no American bases in the CIS and no American military facilities near Russian borders – including those like the missile defense system in Central Europe; (3) no military aid to Russian enemies, in particular to the Saakashvili regime in Georgia. All the items listed here are major Russian concerns, and they not only deserve, but need to be discussed. All the issues mentioned must be resolved in some way or another in order to guarantee Europe’s security. Nonetheless, Moscow’s proposals do not amount to an “architecture,” and the calculation that only “legally binding agreements” can become the building blocks of global and regional security is naïve.

Paradoxically, despite the multiplicity of real interests and the presence of formal institutions safely controlled by the ruling corporation, Russian foreign policy is even more highly centralized than the Soviet policy was a quarter of a century ago. The basis for making key decisions is extremely narrow. Except for the president, the prime minister, and several less visible individuals, the remaining high level officials speak only
in the capacity of performers or promoters. The lack of transparency in the process, the lack of public discussion of possible decisions, the reliance almost exclusively on government sources of information and analysis, and the insistence on bringing the most powerful media outlets down to the level of megaphones for propaganda, all force the designers of Russia’s foreign policy to stew in their own juices and hear their own reasoning echoed back to them from their subordinates.

Twenty years after dismantling the Iron Curtain between Russia and the West, the lack of communication and problems with understanding one another have once again emerged. This problem is of an entirely different nature than the issues of Soviet times. Officials of any rank frequently and readily travel to Europe and America. Based on their standard of living and the capital they control, the Russian “higher-ups” belong to the global “upper class,” while the officials who serve them belong to the “upper middle class.” These people are simply unable not to look down on their Western counterparts, who are living off their salary and who are rotated on a regular basis. A small part of the elite is fluent in English and has acquired useful contacts abroad. But those who speak no language other than Russian are also convinced that they know everything, know the price of everything, and that for them, the world contains no more secrets and no “hidden rooms.” The problem, however, lies precisely in this conviction. Official Russia has become withdrawn and has ceased to learn.

The lack of communication concerns it less than the lack of recognition. Hence the demands for equality and equity addressed to the West. Having evolved in an environment of abundant resources, the Russian nouveaux riches can buy castles and palaces, but they suffer from a lack of invitations into the “best homes.” This is a problem familiar even from Russia’s history, and it is, of course, solvable – but the price for solving it amounts to the rejection, by those seeking recognition, of the lifestyle to which they have become accustomed. Typically, this becomes possible after a change of generations. In our case, the question is not about age-related changes.
Russia must overcome both its inferiority complex and its superiority complex. With regard to stronger powers (the U.S.), it needs to learn to become self-sufficient. It need not run willy-nilly after Washington, repeating, in its own way, the mistakes of other administrations. It must respect the principles that it has declared. One cannot simultaneously act as the defender of international law and practice legal nihilism at home. Having condemned (from a position of principles) the violation of law on the issue of Kosovo, there is no point in performing the same actions in the Caucasus in the name of political expediency.

In relation to the “lesser brethren” of the international community, Russia must abandon its arrogance, often boorishly expressed, and show them the respect that Russia itself is seeking in its relations with the still-larger international actors. It needs to abandon the caricatured view of the world wherein there are a small number of “sovereigns,” each of which is surrounded by its satellites. It must reconsider not so much its perspective on the history of international relations, but its approach to it. To do this, it should not spar with those who want to interpret the past in their own way, but should open its archives to everyone.

It needs to abandon its extreme self-evaluations. Russia is not the conscience of humankind (although some of its thinkers undoubtedly were); it is not the torch of thought (to pragmatists this is altogether alien); and it is not an intellectual leader (this will require modernizing the whole system of education and scholarly research) – but it is also not a country whose entire contribution to world history consists of being an eternal warning to the rest of humanity.

One could continue this list of serious, but specific issues, yet one thing must be made clear: Russia will be able to obtain recognition from the most developed part of the world and be accepted into its ranks no sooner than its system of power, its government, and its public institutions are of the same sort as (though not necessarily identical to) the systems and institutions of Europe, North America, Japan, India, Australia, and a number of other countries. Theories of “sovereign democracy” are of no use here.
Prospects for the Future

What can be of help? Of the external circumstances, as paradoxical as it may seem – the world financial crisis that began in 2008. The financial crisis has already saved Russia from moving forward into a confrontation with the U.S., while the fall in hydrocarbon prices will help eliminate distortions in the country’s economy. The crisis imposes stringent requirements on the quality of public administration, as well as on the government’s economic and social policies.

Other major external factors include the economic development of China, India, and other countries that in the past were even more backward than Russia but that have now surpassed it. Of paramount importance in the long term is the geographical and cultural proximity of a united Europe with its undoubtedly attractive social and political models. It is especially worth highlighting the factor of the modernizing countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. If Ukraine, in its subsequent progress, achieves success not only in democratization but also in institutional development, then the projection of this success onto Russia will have an effect incomparable to anything else.

Of the internal factors, the most important is modernization, to which there is absolutely no alternative in a world of global competition. Russian authorities have recently been forced to admit that mobilization is a clear path into the abyss. Today, the language of economics is the only one that brings the Russian elite closer to the outside world.

However, the modernization of Russia in the 21st century, in contrast to the 18th and 20th centuries, cannot be limited only to the military and economic, or military and administrative spheres. It includes, as an essential component of the project, the gradual building of modern social and economic structures, and this, in turn, will require the formation of democratic institutions and the development of citizens’ democratic participation in governance.
Russia is not at all “fated” to modernize. Moreover, the transition to a real modernization agenda is made more difficult by the resistance of influential interest groups. On the contrary, the coalition in support of modernization looks weak and internally non-cohesive, and it seems not to command enough support from a largely passive population. The modernization project could also be hampered by external factors, such as the conflict with the U.S. over Ukrainian membership in NATO, which is still a possibility. In the event of a sharp deterioration of Russian-Western relations in general, Russian leaders might succumb to the temptation of making a “tactical maneuver” and withdrawing to an alliance (in reality, as a “junior partner”) with Beijing, but a strategic orientation towards China is unlikely.

If the commitment to modernization somehow continues, one can assume that Moscow’s current “solo voyage” will come to an end sooner or later. Future Russian governments representing the coalition for modernization will find the current isolation too costly, inefficient, and unsafe. They will see Europe as the most important external resource. In their view, Russia itself will look not like a Eurasian country, but a Euro-Pacific one. The common market of Russia and its closest partners – Kazakhstan, Belarus, and others – will form a single economic space with the EU. Romano Prodi’s well-known formula of sharing “everything except institutions” will turn from a slogan into a reality.

A self-sufficient and self-respecting Russia can afford a broad view of the world. On this basis, it will be possible to build a 21st century foreign policy. This policy will be guided by the realities of the global community: an interdependent economy and financial system, a common information space on the Internet, indivisible security, etc. Under these new circumstances, global governance will turn from a wish into a necessity. Participation in it will depend on a country’s ability and willingness to contribute to the common cause and assume responsibility. The leaders will not be those with the greatest ability to destroy, but rather those who can offer something positive to the other players. In other words, a country’s appeal – and not its deadly potential – will have a defining significance.
Russia has a certain potential and a rich historical experience for realizing its ambitions by means of “soft power,” but realizing this potential depends on its progress in forming a Russian nation, which currently does not exist: the idea of a nation is the idea of freedom. Forming a nation is closely linked with the process of forming a modern political class and a modern political culture. Political, social, and economic factors – both internal and external – are closely intertwined. The processes in question are fundamental and time-consuming. Crises, however, have the ability to “compress” historical time. Russia’s transformation and the evolution of its policies continue.
Conclusion

Natalia Bubnova

The demolition of the Berlin Wall has remained in our collective memory as a symbol of the progressive breakthrough to positive transformation – in Europe, in the world, and in the movement toward greater human freedom. The tremendous social and political change that followed the events of twenty years ago has opened up prospects for a new, united Europe and put an end to the Cold War and the U.S.-Russian nuclear standoff. However, alongside the successes of a number of Eastern and Central European states, many countries in the region have since suffered from the dismantling of democratic reforms and an expansion of authoritarian tendencies. These latter states, like others throughout the world, are experiencing the growth of nationalism and ethnic conflict, the politicization and radicalization of religious movements, and the spread of terrorism. Having passed into the new millennium from the last century, these problems unfortunately appear likely to last longer than the Berlin Wall.

In the early 1990s, Russia made a breakthrough toward universal values and a market economy. Citizens now enjoy freedoms that they had never possessed throughout Russian history. The very establishment and successful operation of the Carnegie Moscow Center over the last fifteen years was made possible by the tectonic shifts that occurred in the world and in the country two decades ago. But despite the fact that Russia’s role in the peaceful break from totalitarianism was substantial, its path over the past two decades has not been straightforward, and since the end of the 1990s, policies have been implemented that have led to the curtail-
ment of civil liberties within the country and the evisceration of basic democratic institutions.

The authorities have much to say about modernization, but it will be successful only if it means democratization together with the renewal of the technological base of the entire country. Then comes the task of rebuilding institutions, creating a real separation of powers, ensuring the independence of the judiciary and of the press, and expelling the cynicism and distrust brought about by the dominance of the imitation processes and structures – such as parliament-not-for-discussion, rigged elections, fake parties, state-controlled broadcasting, government-sponsored youth movements, etc. This is also in our history: to rebuild anew that which was destroyed. The destruction of the Berlin Wall is not a guarantee of success; yet democratic reform is a necessary precondition for credible domestic and foreign policies in a modern state, and for the well-being of citizens. For this, Russia has at its disposal extremely diverse resources, talented, educated people, a rich cultural heritage, and a tradition of enduring and overcoming.

The development of Eastern and Central Europe is facilitated by its increasing integration into Europe at large. For Russia and its neighbors, involvement in global processes and mutually beneficial cooperation with the advanced countries of the West and East should also be important resources for modernization.

The extension of freedom and dignity has taken place over the course of many centuries. This process encompasses ever more diverse population groups: ethnic and religious minorities, women, children, people of different skin colors, of different sexual orientations, and those with disabilities. Andrew Carnegie, when creating the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace one hundred years ago, proceeded from an expectation that international relations would also become increasingly humanized. If mankind succeeds in overcoming the threats to its existence, then in the future the world will become ever more removed from the politics of force and rule of the strongest and draw closer to a con-
consideration of the needs of all countries large and small and to a policy of decision-making under international law. The establishment and functioning of the United Nations and the European Union are evidence that the development of common norms is no utopia. The Carnegie Endowment is implementing the Euro-Atlantic Initiative with the goal of developing a conceptual framework for a unified security system – military, political, economic, and climatic – which along with the countries of the European Union and the U.S. would include Russia and its neighbors. Assuming that the “clash of civilizations” is not fatal in nature, that a growing gap does not further divide various ethnic groups and religious denominations, and that mutual understanding is in principle possible between groups, then all efforts should be made to move towards the development of a more equitable and effective system of relationships, both within states and on the international stage – such is the fundamental lesson from the destruction of the Berlin Wall.
About the Carnegie Endowment

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with headquarters in Washington D.C. The Endowment was created in 1910 by prominent entrepreneur and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie to provide independent analysis on a wide array of public policy issues.

More than fifteen years ago, the Endowment launched the Carnegie Moscow Center to help develop a tradition of public policy analysis in the states of the former Soviet Union and improve relations between Russia and the United States. It thereby pioneered the idea that in today’s world a think tank whose mission is to contribute to global security, stability and prosperity requires a permanent international presence and a multinational outlook at the core of its operations.

In 2007, the Carnegie Endowment announced its New Vision as the first multinational and ultimately global think tank, adding operations in Beijing, Beirut and Brussels to its existing offices in Moscow and Washington. As in Moscow and Washington in the past, the defining characteristics of the global Carnegie institution will continue to be political independence, first rate scholarship combined with high level experience in government and other sectors, sustained, first hand, expert collaboration across borders, and unrelenting focus on constructively affecting real world outcomes. There is a clear demand for such an organization in today’s world, with its ever increasing interdependence and the interlinked nature of global issues.
Through research, publishing and discussions, the Endowment associates – in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Beirut and Brussels – shape fresh policy approaches. Their interests span geographic regions and the relations among governments, business, international organizations and civil society, focusing on the economic, political and technological forces driving global change. The Endowment uses its experience of research and discussion at the Carnegie Moscow Center as a model to develop its transformation into the first international research network.

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Enormous societal and political shifts twenty years ago opened prospects for a new, united Europe and put an end to the Cold War and the nuclear standoff. Despite Russia’s enormous role in this peaceful departure from totalitarianism, the country’s course in the subsequent two decades has not been so straightforward. The book focuses on the outcome of transformation in Russia and other post-communist nations, comparing Russia’s experience with that of the Central and Eastern European states.

The book’s authors, including leading Carnegie Moscow Center experts, pose the question: what was the reason behind Russia’s stalled reforms? They argue that a policy that leads to the dismantling of civil liberties in the country and uses strong-arm tactics externally is a dead-end. While the demolition of the Berlin Wall is no guarantee of success, democratic transformations are a necessary precondition for the country’s modernization and strong, modern international profile, as well as for citizens’ welfare.