Foreword

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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

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 underutilizes 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 decidedly negative attitude toward globalization. Political Islam, notes Malashenko, 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 radicalism, from his point of view, is the key to understanding the problem of terrorism, which is an "asymmetrical response" to the defeat of Muslims 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 democracy 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 population 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 Topychkanov bases his point of view on many examples from the country's practical 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 Europe 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 attaining 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-Russian 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 situation 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-

tween 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.