

# WORKING PAPERS

**Democratization and  
Globalization:  
The Case  
of Russia**

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Democracy and  
Rule of Law Project

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## FOREWORD

The past ten years have been a period of intense international change. Many aspects of international life have experienced rapid transformation, but one central trend stands out: the increasingly intense interchange of people, ideas, goods, information, and money across national and regional borders. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as globalization and a number of commentators have christened the contemporary period as “the era of globalization.” While globalization is often discussed as a predominantly economic phenomenon, in reality it has many other facets, including the global trend toward democracy and the revolution in information and communications technology. All of these issues are highlighted in the work of the Global Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Globalization remains a somewhat disquieting phenomenon for all countries, including the United States, creating fears that states will lose their sovereignty and that many of the regulatory institutions that are in place now will become ineffective and obsolete before new ones have been developed. One aspect of globalization, however, has been welcomed unconditionally by the United States and other industrial democracies: the global democratic trend.

The last ten years have seen a dramatic change in the number of countries developing democratic political systems. A wave of democratization? the third such wave historically? that started slowly in the late 1970s with the transitions in Spain and Portugal and extended to many Latin American countries in the 1980s gathered momentum in the 1990s, engulfing Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and parts of Africa and Asia. As a result of this change, the United States and other established democracies made democracy promotion one of the goals of their foreign policies. They also started funding extensive programs of support for democratic change. Democracy is thus no longer the political system of a few western industrialized countries. It has become a global trend and countries all over the world are experiencing considerable pressure to conform to it.

But democracy remains a controversial and even threatening idea in many countries. Resistance to it comes not only from dictators afraid of losing their power, but also from ordinary citizens, who welcome the increase in personal freedom but also fear that the change will have negative repercussions on their culture, their identities, and even on their standard of living. International aid efforts designed to support democratization sometimes unwittingly contribute to these fears, because pressures on a country to democratize go hand in hand with pressures for it to open its markets and become part of the global economy.

In this working paper on Russian views of democratization, the distinguished Russian political scientist Yuri Fedorov explores many of these issues. The paper was written as part of a project that brought together at the Carnegie Moscow Center a group of senior associates of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Russian analysts to exchange views about different aspects of globalization.

Several points emerge clearly from Fedorov’s paper. The first is that Russians believe that choosing democracy implies much more than adopting a political system that allows greater personal freedom and guarantees greater government accountability; it also involves opening up their culture to different ideas and their economy to market forces and foreign competition. Ordinary citizens, although not necessarily all members of the more ideologically motivated elite, welcome greater freedom. But ordinary citizens and elites alike appear leery of the consequences

of globalization, of which democracy is part. Their fear of globalization is heightened by the perception that the process is not driven by the impersonal forces of the information revolution and the market, but controlled by the United States as part of a hegemonic project.

There are many lessons in this paper for democracy promoters. We highlight two here. First, many democratization projects are based on the assumption that the process hinges on the building of appropriate governmental institutions and civil society organizations; Fedorov, on the contrary, stresses the importance of cultural attitudes? what he calls the Russian psyche. This is delicate ground for democracy promoters to tread. Second, the slow progress of democracy in many countries is often attributed to the weakness of civil society and the poor articulation of interests in the political process. Fedorov shows, however, that in the case of Russia the opposite is true. Some interests are very well articulated, and this is what slows down democratization: many important groups believe their interests would be threatened if Russia joined the community of democracies and, with it, the global economy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The large-volume international flows of goods, technologies, capital and labor, the emergence of mighty transnational economic agents, and the build-up of global information and communications networks are creating an increasingly interdependent and integrated world economy. While these processes hold out the promise of progress and development, they also generate alarm because of the widening gap between the increasing interdependence and the existing institutions' ability to control and regulate this new economically and politically interdependent world.

Yet globalization is not only an economic phenomenon. Being closely associated with the proliferation and establishment of post-industrial models in economy and society, globalization also brings with it a wavelike surge of democracy. It is now appropriate to talk about a widening "community of democracy," paraphrasing Carl Deutch's well-known expression "security community."

The community of democracy, based on common liberal anthropocentric values and on shared or largely overlapping strategic interests, emerges as an increasingly complicated entity in which problems and contradictions are being resolved primarily by way of compromise mediated by international organizations. The latter are becoming an important tool for ensuring economic and political stability as well as security, for imposing moral and legal imperatives, and for enforcing standards, including those related to human rights. Conversely, the nation-state has been losing some of its autonomy, and national sovereignty is no longer seen as absolute. At the same time, individuals can choose from a much broader spectrum of identities and social roles. The community of democracy is characterized by economic well-being and progress, as measured not just by per capita GNP, but also and perhaps first of all by capacity for scientific, technological and economic innovation.

The community of democracy does not embrace the entire world. There remain large regions occupied by authoritarian states, most of them Muslim, and also several totalitarian states, specifically mainland China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba. There is also a growing category of countries that have been referred to as "illiberal democracies." They are characterized by a combination of some democratic processes, mostly elected governments, and illiberal, often traditional values.<sup>1</sup> The nature of such illiberal democratic regimes and their evolution are still poorly understood: they may constitute a stage in the evolution of authoritarianism, but they may also represent a different form of it.

Increasing globalization is forcing Russia to make some very serious choices about her political and economic systems and her national identity. Russia may seek to "participate in globalization" and gradually associate herself with the community of democracy. This, apart from anything else, will allow Russia to use effectively her still-strong scientific assets, technological achievements and high educational potential with a view to building a modern post-industrial economy and society. Such a choice would require Russia to reject her traditional suspiciousness (which sometimes borders on paranoia) toward the outside world and accept democratic standards, values, political practices and institutions, thus establishing true (liberal) democracy. In that case Russia will face a real, although long-term, prospect of economic rebirth on a new structural and institutional basis.

But Russia may also look for some other, special way, including (as absurd as it may seem today) a return to some form of totalitarianism, be it Communist or national-patriotic and essentially fascist. In the economic realm, such a "special Russian way" would most likely involve

transition to a so-called mobilization economy, built on a centralized and semi-autarkic model. In the foreign policy area a likely trend would be cooperation with undemocratic regimes, including totalitarian ones, on the basis of opposition to mature democracies. Should Russia choose this path, her prospects are difficult to predict.

Immediately after the collapse of the Communist regime Russia seemed committed to democratizing its political system, associating with the leading Western nations in world politics and moving toward a market economy. By the mid-1990s, however, conflicting trends had emerged. The collision of traditional and liberal cultures and values threw the Russian national identity into flux. Many intellectual and political figures started rejecting the idea that Russia needed to be “included in globalization,” calling instead for a “multi-polar world”? essentially, an alternative to globalization, and implicitly, a liberal democracy.

The paper will not seek to evaluate whether the present Russian regime is democratic, something others have done without reaching a consensus. It will instead address three questions:

- What is the attitude of ordinary Russian citizens toward democracy? Also, and most importantly, are average Russians prepared to accept liberal values?
- To what extent are the Russian elites inclined to accept genuine democratic institutions, procedures and standards in their political behavior?
- How are the Russian elites’ attitudes toward democracy correlated with their vital interests, including economic ones? In other words, to what extent does the cautious if not negative attitude of a considerable part of the Russian ruling elite to democracy and liberalism derive from the intellectual and emotional legacy of the past, and to what extent is it the result of its vested interests?

Answering these questions, the paper will also throw light on prospects of Russia’s participation in globalization, because in order to open up to the outside world Russia needs to build up democratic institutions.

## HOW RUSSIANS VIEW DEMOCRACY

The easiest way to find an answer to the questions “What is the attitude of ordinary Russian citizens toward democracy?, and “Are they prepared to embrace liberal values?” is to analyze the results of public opinion surveys. The shortcomings of such surveys are well-known: their results are not always strictly comparable and they are often contradictory, in part because different surveys use different methodologies, in part because public opinion itself is unstable and volatile. Most importantly, survey results lend themselves to different interpretations, particularly when they deal with controversial issues that create conflicting views. Despite such shortcomings, surveys can yield useful information.

In interpreting the survey data concerning Russians’ present-day attitudes toward democracy, it is important to keep in mind the influence of the residues of the traditional thinking rooted in country’s pre-communist history as well as the legacy of the totalitarian mentality grounded in the Soviet period. The traditional political culture is characterized by a paternalistic model of the relationship between the individual and the state, by communalism (*sobornost*), by the prevailing of the spiritual values of the Orthodox church over material ambitions, and by the tendency to give greater weight to state interests than to the private interests of individuals. The totalitarian ideology had added to these traits a Manichean view of the world as a stage where forces of “good” and “evil” (in fact, Communism and Imperialism) were fighting with each other in a deadly struggle: an idea that personal well-being and even life were unimportant when compared

the victory of “good” (that is, Communism), and the perception that the highest moral duty of an individual is obedience to the “party-state” and to its leaders who know the final and absolute truth. Any profound analysis of Russians’ attitudes toward democracy should also examine their perceptions of the political values and stereotypes typical of the traditional and totalitarian mentalities.

Research conducted in the 1990s by a leading Russian public opinion center, ROMIR, provides essential information about the Russian mentality in general and the public’s attitude to democracy in particular.<sup>ii</sup>

The opinion polls of the 1990s confirmed that by the end of the decade the Russian public was less supportive of democratic values than it was at the beginning of it. They also showed that the majority of Russians had difficulty with abstract notions like democracy, and that somewhat illogically? most Russians often said they favored incompatible political ideas and preferences. In the early 1990s, most Russians? somewhere around 70 to 75 percent of the population? spoke highly of democracy and supported transition to a “Western political system.” But a 1995 survey by ROMIR indicated that fewer than 60 percent of the respondents had a positive view of democracy as a political system, while almost half agreed that Russia would do well with a strong leader not hampered or restricted either by a parliament or by elections. Nevertheless, Russians remained strongly opposed to the use of force for achieving political ends and rejected military rule overwhelmingly. (Tables 1 and 2)

During the late 1990s Russians’ perceptions and evaluations of democracy become even more controversial. In a 1998 poll, when asked what political system suited Russia best, over half of the respondents chose a totalitarian system, either in the traditional Soviet form or in the weaker form characteristic of the late Gorbachev period. On the other hand, only 25 percent of the respondents favored some form of democratic system, assuming that the Russian public views the current Russian regime as a democracy. (Table 3) The fact that fewer than 20 percent of Russians in 1998 preferred “Western type democracy” was in stark contrast to poll results of the early 1990s, which indicated that more than 70 percent spoke in favor of such a democracy. At the same time, however, in the poll conducted in December 1999, more than 65 percent of the respondents agreed that Russia should be a democratic country, while only 10 percent opposed this option. (Table 4)

Another example of the inconsistency of Russians’ views and perceptions of democracy is that while over than a half of the respondents to the December 1999 poll preferred a Soviet-type political system (Table 3), only a quarter indicated that Russia should go back to its Communist past? a past that offered security but left the individual completely dependent on the authorities. At the same time, however, about 45 percent of the respondents accepted a limitation of individual freedom if necessary to restore the economy and suppress crime. (Table 5)

While there is much additional evidence that Russians today are not able to form a consistent and mature vision of democracy, there is no complete or commonly accepted explanation of this inconsistency as of yet. A number of researchers advance the hypothesis that it results from the intellectual and psychological legacy of the imperial and Soviet past, while some other believe that Russia’s political culture is inherently incompatible with Western liberal social models and values, including democratic institutions and practice.

**Table 1: Russians' assessment of the democratic political system (1995, %)**

	While democracy has problems, it is better than any other form of government	Use of force for achieving political ends is never justified
Completely agree	9.8	44.2
Agree	49.1	37.3
Disagree	35.4	15.1
Completely disagree	5.7	3.4

**Table 2: Russians' assessment of authoritarian system and military regime (1995, %)**

	A strong leader who is not limited by parliament or elections	Rule by the military
Very good	16.8	4.3
More good than bad	33.6	16.7
More bad than good	35.2	45.4
Very bad	14.4	33.6

**Table 3: What political system suits Russia best? (1998, %)**

Soviet political system of the pre-perestroika era	41.0
Perestroika-era political system	12.9
Western-type democracy	18.2
Current political system in Russia	7.5
Difficulty answering	20.3

**Table 4: Should Russia be a democratic country? (1999, %)**

Completely agree	45.2
Agree	21.8
Partly agree, partly not	12.7
Disagree	6.5
Completely disagree	3.8
Difficulty answering	10.1

**Table 5: Individual freedom, law and order, return to the Communist past (1998, %)**

Russia should return to the Communist past, which offered order, discipline, and strong government although people were completely dependent on the authorities	25.7
Russia should protect individual freedoms even if this hinders fighting crime and restoration of the economy	16.1
Russia should limit individual freedoms if it is necessary for the restoration of the economy and suppression of crime	45.6
Difficulty answering	12.6



**Table 6: Assessment of certain political principles of democracy (1998, %)**

	Positive	Not important	Negative	Difficulty answering
Freedom to elect national leaders	62.4	24.5	5.5	7.6
Freedom of being in political opposition	43.6	23.9	16.2	16.3
Freedom to criticize the authorities in the media	62.4	21.7	8.7	7.2
Freedom to elect parliament	48.9	27.8	7.4	15.9
Freedom to travel abroad	69.4	17.3	7.2	6.2
No need to prove one's loyalty to authorities	37.8	30.7	8.6	22.9
The right to strike	55.9	21.4	13.5	9.2
Possibility of resolving conflicts with authorities in a court of law	54.1	26.8	6.2	13.8

**Table 7: Who should appoint and remove members of government? (1998, %)**

President should appoint and remove the Prime-Minister (PM) and the other Ministers independently, without having to coordinate such decisions with the Parliament	15.4
President should appoint and remove the PM upon agreement with the Parliament, but no approval of the Parliament should be required for other Ministers	11.4
Appointment and removal of all members of the Government, including the PM, should be subject to approval the Parliament	46.8
Parliament should appoint and remove all members of the Government, including the PM, without coordinating with the President	8.8
Difficulty answering	17.6

**Table 8: Human rights and the rule of law (1999–2000, %)**

	Maintenance of human rights is principally important for Russia	Both authority and citizens are to follow laws strictly
Completely agree	66.5	81.4
Agree	24.1	14.9
Partly agree, partly not	4.5	2.3
Disagree	0	0.4
Difficulty answering	3.7	0.9

**Table 9: Is it correct to say that individuals should be guided by the interests of society, state, work collectives, whereas the interests of the individual and his/her family should come second? (1998, %)**

Correct	7.2
More correct than incorrect	13.7
More incorrect than correct	25.4
Incorrect	43.9
Difficulty answering	9.8

Of course, the legacy of the past is a factor, perhaps a strong one, in shaping Russians' views of democracy. However, it is important to keep in mind some other circumstances that may be of even greater significance. For Russians, democracy is something new and basically unknown, both as a social ideal and as a political system. In the Soviet period, democracy was far removed from the everyday life of all the population and associated with "the West," about which the Soviet people had little knowledge, and much of which was distorted. Furthermore, since the end of the 1980s, political struggle in the former Soviet Union and then in Russia has been explained by the mass media as a confrontation between "democrats" and "communists"; as a result, many may perceive democracy not as political value or social ideal, but as the platform of a political faction. One part of the public also identifies democracy with the Yeltsin regime with all its shortcomings and flaws? above all, with corruption. As a result, the decline in living standards, the economic crisis, and the rise in crime are sometimes seen as results of democracy. That is why researchers can hardly know how their questions about democracy are perceived by respondents and what the true meaning of the responses really is; do people speak about the current regime, about an abstract political system, about the Western political system, or about something else? This may explain, albeit not completely, serious differences in the public's assessments of democracy, including those presented in the previous tables. (Tables 1–5)

Despite these caveats, the results of the just-mentioned polls indicate that about half of the Russian populace has a more positive than negative attitude toward democracy. The high value placed on individual political rights and freedoms, on elected government and the right to criticize the authorities confirm that. The highest-valued freedom (as indicated by approximately 70 percent of the respondents) was the right to freely travel abroad, although for the majority of Russians that right still remains an abstract notion. (Table 6)

These results also demonstrate that a substantial part of Russian society has serious difficulty adjusting to the new political realities and concepts. Between 15 and 23 percent of respondents were not able to make up their mind as to whether it is a good thing not to have to prove one's loyalty to the authorities, to elect a parliament, to resolve conflicts with the authorities in a court of law, or to form political opposition.

Conflicting views are characteristic of the Russian public's attitudes toward the different branches of government. On the one hand, approximately half the respondents would like Russia to have a "strong leader whose authority is not limited by Parliament or elections," as noted in Table 2. On the other hand, in the spring of 1998 over half the people polled by ROMIR spoke in favor of a considerable role for the parliament in appointing and removing the prime minister and other members of the cabinet, while only 15 percent supported the authoritarian practice whereby the president makes such decisions independently, without consulting with the legislators. (Table 7)

The Russian public, on the other hand, shows no ambivalence toward the idea that democracy is inseparable from the protection of human rights and from the rule of law. ROMIR polls conducted in December 1999 and January 2000 show that Russians overwhelmingly support both of these fundamental principles of democracy. (Table 8)

Assessing the prospects for democracy in Russia, it is also necessary to estimate the role and place of traditional and totalitarian values and stereotypes in Russia's public mind. Do Russians really perceive their private interests to be less important than those of society and state? Do they still lean toward messianic ideological concepts? Do they see the restoration of the USSR and its

military might to be a primary aim? Are they ready to sacrifice their own personal well-being and freedom in favor of country's rebirth as a superpower?

Most Russians place a high value on their private interests. The results of a September 1998 ROMIR poll, for example, indicate that almost 70 percent of the respondents were against the subordination of their individual, private interests to those of state, society or groups. (Table 9)

Even more revealing are the answers given in the same survey to the question "Is the current economic crisis the result of the state's policy of protecting private interests, or of its policy of giving priority to its own interests at the expense of the individual's?" (Table 10)

About three-quarters of the respondents view the state as a hostile force that ignores their interests and is incapable of solving their problems. Only 15 to 20 percent of the population accepts the typical totalitarian view of the world? one that puts state interests ahead of all others? and is prepared to tighten its belt in the name of the nation's prosperity. Almost all respondents want the authorities to protect private interests, seeing this as an essential condition for the country to pull out of the current crisis. Such public perceptions are an important element of the movement toward the acceptance of liberal values, the recognition of the priority of individual interests over those of the state, and the view of the state as a defender of the individual's interests.

The key characteristic of the totalitarian mindset is its reliance on ideological values. In this light, the importance Russians are attaching to such highly ideological values as boosting Russia's international prestige, and restoring the USSR and its military might be the indicator of their bent for a totalitarian type of political culture.

ROMIR's research shows that Russians are concerned above all with the difficulties brought about by the current economic situation, such as delays in the payment of salaries and pensions, crime, the threat of unemployment, declining standards of living, and decreased industrial output. Such issues were given top priority by 30 to 45 percent of the respondents, who worry little about the weakening of Russia's international standing, the deterioration of its defense capability, the difficulties experienced by the military-industrial complex, or the country's shrinking research capacity. In spite of intense propaganda campaigns, such issues as the unification with Belarus, restoration of the USSR, and the threat of NATO expansion rank very low on the respondents' list of priorities. This stands in sharp contrast with the views of the majority of the Russian political and military elites, which are concerned about the declining international status of Russia. (Table 11)

In a similar vein, when questioned about possible ways of overcoming economic difficulties, most respondents did not offer ideological prescriptions. The majority rejected extreme anti-crisis policies (reducing government control over the economy or restoring the Soviet way of government) and attached little importance to the level of defense spending. At the same time, respondents displayed a certain moral-ethical approach to economic issues; the solutions they proposed, consciously or unconsciously, called for the establishment of justice. The respondents supported demands for restoring law and order, suppressing crime, ensuring the equality of citizens before the law, increasing the tax burden on the financially comfortable part of the population, etc. But the polls also confirm that the public holds individual leaders and their mistakes responsible for the economic crisis, hence the popularity of the idea that changing the government is a condition for overcoming the crisis. (Table 12)

**Table 10: Relationship between the economic crisis, state interests and individual interests (1998, %)**

	Russia's economic plight is the result of the state's longtime negligence of the interests of the individual	If Russia is to recover from the crisis Russians should sacrifice their interests and 'tighten their belts' in the name of the country's interests
Completely agree	41.6	5.7
Partly agree	36.8	14.9
Partly disagree	10.0	31.2
Completely disagree	3.2	40.0
Difficulty answering	8.3	8.1

**Table 11: Most pressing issues faced by Russia (1998, %, multiple answers allowed)**

Crime control	44.3
Timely payment of salaries, wages and pensions	42.8
100% employment	41.9
Increases in salaries, wages and pensions	35.4
Increase in industrial output	29.2
Improved public health system	16.5
More effective law-enforcement at all levels	14.7
Improvements in the education system	5.5
Ensuring property equality for Russians	5.2
Restoration of the USSR	5.3
Strengthening Russia's international positions	3.8
Restoring Russia's research and scientific potential	2.7
Building up national defenses, restoring the military-industrial complex	2.5
Prevention of NATO expansion	1.7
Unification with Belarus	1.3

**Table 12: Opinions on the ways of overcoming economic problems (1998, %, multiple answers allowed)**

Eradicate crime and establish law and order	42.2
Ensure equality of all before the law	37.1
Replace the authorities	36.8
Increase government involvement in the economy	28.7
Increase tax rates for the rich	26.1
Restore the USSR	21.0
Restore previous ways and lifestyle in Russia	19.2
Create an environment favoring free enterprise	17.8
Provide more resources and delegate more powers to local authorities	11.4
Increase defense expenses	7.9
Reduce defense expenses	3.4
Cut back on government control over the economy	2.2

**Table 13: The authorities should reinstate Russia as a military superpower by sacrificing the opportunity to improve the population's living standards (1998, %)**

Agree	18.9
Disagree	69.4
Difficulty answering	11.7

**Table 14: Attitude to protectionism (1998, %)**

In order to improve the situation of domestic producers it is necessary to drastically reduce imports of consumer goods	36.1
There should be no restrictions on imports; domestic producers should be forced to improve	56.4

product quality and reduce prices in a competitive environment	
Difficulty answering	7.5

**Table 15: Preserving the military-industrial complex (1998, %)**

Entire defense industry is to be supported even if it lowers the living standards	15.3
Only defense enterprises that are vital to national security should be preserved	73.7
No need for defense industry because there are no threats to Russia	3.5
Difficulty answering	7.5

**Table 16: Assessment of the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union (1998, %)**

Mistakes made by Gorbachev and those close to him	47.2
Authorities of the Soviet republics sought to shake off Moscow's control	13.9
Communist experiment was flawed to begin with	11.4
Foreign conspiracy	9.9
Other	5.2
Difficulty answering	12.5

**Table 17: Russians' perceptions of the reasons behind the crisis of August 1998 (1998, %, multiple answers)**

President handling job in an incompetent manner	77.1
Chernomyrdin' government pursued wrong policies	41.0
State Duma failed to take necessary action	35.6
The West imposed a policy on Russia that was harmful to it	32.4
Objective difficulties	16.7
Kiriyenko' government made serious mistakes	15.0
State Duma forced wrong policies	11.2
Crisis resulted from longtime rule by the Communists	7.6
Difficulty answering	6.0

The answers to the above question also debunk a view frequently been set forth by experts, namely that the public does not view today's Russia as a new actor on the international political arena, but as the core of a former empire which it wants, consciously or unconsciously, to see restored. Leftists, and even some calling themselves democrats, have been trying to capitalize on the public's supposed nostalgia for the vanished superpower, calling for the restoration of the Soviet Union and the rebirth of its military might. The survey, however, indicates that most of the population is unwilling to carry the burden of restoring Russia to superpower status. (Table 13)

The public's attitude to two key economic issues confirms that ideology does not play a significant role in shaping public opinion. The first issue is protectionism. The left-wing opposition in particular is campaigning for tough protectionist measures and for a reduction in imports, justifying such measures by the need to support domestic producers, although their goods are usually inferior in quality to imports. Opponents warn against such measures, arguing that they will most certainly bring about even deeper stagnation because, without competition, domestic producers will have no incentives to improve quality and reduce prices. The majority of the public is opposed to protectionism. (Table 14)

The public's view of the future of the military-industrial complex also confirms Russians' reluctance to accept policies based on ideology. In the USSR, defense-related research institutes

and the defense industry enjoyed a highly privileged status. They were seen as the source of the might that enabled the nation to hold its own against the rest of the world and to project power in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian military-industrial complex found itself without a *raison-d'être*, with a vast arsenal of advanced technologies that required huge investments to be converted to civilian use. Fully backed by the left-wing forces, the leaders of the Russian military-industrial complex have mounted an intense propaganda campaign in order to keep the defense industry operating at the maximum possible capacity, whatever the costs. Survey data show that the public is taking a cautious position on this issue and offers a realistic assessment of the situation. (Table 15)

The totalitarian mentality is prone to attribute failures, difficulties and generally negative moments in a society's development to enemy intrigues. The spectrum of Russian public opinion does include such conspiratorial interpretation of the difficulties experienced by the nation, but it is not dominated by it. For instance, only 10 percent of the respondents blamed the collapse of the USSR on foreign conspiracy, while almost half of the respondents explain the disintegration of the USSR in terms of the mistakes made by Gorbachev and his entourage. (Table 16)

The persistence of the conspiratorial mentality was, however, more evident in the public's perceptions of the cause of the August 1998 crisis. In a survey using multiple-choice questions, approximately one-third of the respondents chose the answer indicating that the crisis was caused by the activities of outside hostile forces operating "in the West." Apparently, those respondents are supporters of the leftist and nationalist opposition, or at any rate people who subscribe to the opposition's less sophisticated views. But the overwhelming majority of the interviewees attribute the August crisis to the unsatisfactory performance and mistakes made by the president or by the government, including inadequate actions by the State Duma and other government entities. (Table 17)

This is one of fundamental characteristics of Russian political thinking today, namely, explaining the zigzags of societal development not by intrigues of "demonic" forces, but rather by "correct" or "incorrect" actions by authorities, above all, by the highest officials. This is typical of the traditional rather than the totalitarian mindset. Throughout many centuries of Russian history, successful and failed reforms, victories and defeats, achievements and difficulties have been attributed to the activities of an extremely narrow group of individuals, such as the monarch and his/her entourage, or the almighty Politburo. Deeply entrenched in the national psyche, this paradigm largely determines the public perceptions of today's realities and hinders democratic transformation, because it promotes public passivity and perpetuates a special dominant role for high government officials and top bureaucrats.

Nostalgia also plays part in shaping the Russian mentality today. Such nostalgia is engendered by difficulties in adjusting to new social and economic conditions, including the dramatic rise of tough competition many Russians encounter in new and unexpected areas, and the emergence of new criteria of personal success and failure based mainly on having money. Given the high rate and large scale of these changes, it is natural that some people are turning to the past, including to the former USSR, seeing it as an alternative to the current material and psychological difficulties and frustrations; in so doing, they often ascribe to the past characteristics that were never a reality.

To conclude, the survey data presented above shows that on a number of important parameters Russians approach the anthropocentric liberal views. On the whole, they value highly the rights and freedoms of the individual, while rejecting collectivist or communal values and the

domination of the interests of the state over those of the individual; they also dismiss messianic aspirations. The responses show that Russians are pragmatic and concerned with everyday difficulties and expectations, and that they reject ideological approaches that threaten to reduce their already low standard of living. Such characteristics apply to the majority of the population, with only about one-quarter or one-third taking the opposite viewpoints. This is the same percentage that voted for the Communist Party and its allies on the basis of ideological predisposition.

On other parameters, however, Russians have not fully embraced liberal views. Many explain the difficulties experienced by their country as the result of mistakes made by high government officials, and they look to the rise of a leader capable of implementing “correct” policies as the condition for overcoming such difficulties. Close to 90 percent of Russians are confident that “the most important thing today is to elect a president who is capable of solving the nation’s problems.” Therein lies the weakness of Russian society: instead of seeing themselves as active social agents that determine the conditions of their own existence and take responsibility for it, Russians see themselves as objects of manipulation by the country’s rulers. The latter are viewed as the active element of the historical process, while society becomes a passive subject to various experiments and reforms, some successful, others not. These peculiarities of the Russian mentality hinder the institutionalization of democracy. Indeed, a vibrant democracy will be impossible as long as the government ceases to be seen as omnipotent and unless citizens begin to see themselves, rather than institutions and leaders, as the subjects of social action, responsible for both successes and failures.

The perception of high officials and leaders as the demiurges of social reality reduces the roles of ideologies and parties, limiting the prospects for the restoration of communism: the population gives priority not to political and economic programs, principles, strategies and models but rather to the personal characteristics and talents of a leader. Because of this, a totalitarian system that is heavy on ideology, whether Communist, nationalist “Eurasian” or a combination thereof, is unlikely to win mass support. Mobilization of resources to achieve ideological goals requires the subordination of individual interests to the appropriate supreme values and is impossible without considerable limitations on individual consumption and personal freedoms. At the same time, the susceptibility of the Russians to look for a leader who will “save” the country and solve their problems rather than take responsibility for their own destiny provides fertile soil for authoritarian leadership.

## **RUSSIA’S ELITE: DEMOCRACY WITHOUT LIBERALISM**

Views on and attitudes toward democracy officially professed by various segments of the Russian political elite have been set forth in documents published by parties and public movements and in major official government documents. These documents show a great diversity of attitudes and opinions among the members of the political elite.

Elites that see themselves at the liberal end of the political spectrum or at its center have more or less faithfully reproduced in their programs the standard concepts of liberal democracy and of the accompanying government institutions, standards and principles.

The major documents endorsed by the Russian authorities, too, proclaim the creation of a democratic regime as one of the key goals of the state. In his June 13, 1996 address on national security to the Federal Assembly, President Boris Yeltsin declared:

The process of democratization accompanied by profound socioeconomic changes opens up a way of harmonizing the interests of the individual, society and the state in Russia. ...The vital interests of the state comprise: accelerating the building of a stable foundation for a law-based, democratic, federative state ...<sup>iii</sup>

The new Russian president, Vladimir Putin, also has expressed a positive view of democracy in several of his political statements. For instance, answering the question “Will we look for a special way for Russia once again?” he said:

One should not look for anything. Everything has been found already; that is the way of democratic development. Of course, Russia has a lot of faces, but we are a part of the European culture.<sup>iv</sup>

Statements and pronouncements by influential official figures reveal that they do not completely accept democracy, however. A frequently heard argument is that democratic institutions are premature for Russia and are not congruent with the Russian mentality or with existing socioeconomic conditions. A statement by General Alexander Lebed is typical of this point of view. Asked whether he agreed that Russia was not ripe for democracy and whether there was a need for a dictatorship, the General gave an unequivocal answer:

A stupid thing was done on August 22, 1991. Construction of democracy was declared in the absence of real prerequisites. It was announced that “Democracy is here. Everybody shall rejoice from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a lunch break. Expect market economy, it will come just like Santa Claus.” This was delirious.<sup>v</sup>

Such sentiments are typical of members of the officers’ corps and of employees of special services and other government agencies which have lost the clout and status they enjoyed under the Communist regime. Also, Russian military and nationalist politicians often insist that the centuries-old necessity to defend country from foreign aggression has produced a specific mentality that rejects democracy and puts the armed forces in a special, privileged position. Mentioning such supposed specifics of Russian history and arguing that democracy is historically unacceptable for Russians, General Andrey Nikolayev, the Chairman of the Defense Committee of the Duma elected in December 1999, writes:

The governing of a fortress under siege, which was the rule rather than an exception in Russian history, required that freedom, the achievements of democracy, and the traditional popular assemblies, as well as the opportunities for independent development offered by the city-states be sacrificed in favor of the state.<sup>vi</sup>

Being rather popular in the military milieu and in nationalist circles, this rhetoric has, in fact, nothing in common with real Russian history. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the time of Peter the Great, almost all wars Russia waged were the result of her territorial and, in the Soviet days, ideological expansion. The only exceptions were two Patriotic Wars? in 1812 and 1941–1945.

As for the Russian political parties, the Fascist and extremist Communist groups have openly rejected democracy. For instance, the program adopted by the Stalinist bloc “Communists–Workers’ Russia–For the Soviet Union” on the eve of the 1995 parliamentary elections stated:

Let us not hide that it will take strong measures to pull this country out of the “black hole” into which it has been driven. Yes, it will take a dictatorship! But then we will no longer have war and the extinction of this nation. We are not afraid of anybody screaming and accusing us of preparing a dictatorship. We are saying: Yes, it will be a dictatorship. But it will be a



dictatorship by the working majority over those who are building their personal well-being by impoverishing the people, and this applies to the so-called popularly elected representatives.<sup>vii</sup>

The policy statements by the left-wing and nationalist parties that claim respectability and have been defined by a number of Russian experts as “systemic opposition” are not as unambiguous. The program of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, for example, provides a concise but fairly accurate presentation of the principles of liberal democracy, although numerous statements by the party’s leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, clearly reveal his authoritarian aspirations.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation and its closest ally the Agrarian Party have avoided providing a detailed statement on democracy. The voluminous program of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, adopted by its Third Congress in January of 1995, is virtually silent about democracy as well as about the political and social system the Party would seek if it came to power. A brief description of the Party’s main goals includes “government by the people which means constitutional government by the working majority organized into soviets and other forms of democratic self-government.” The document also proclaims the need to struggle for “Soviet forms of government by the people,” and declares that:

following the achievement of relative political and economical stability [that is, after the Communist Party of the Russian Federation comes to power], the working people will be able to participate in the running of the country on a more active and broader basis through soviets, trade unions, workers’ self-government committees and other bodies of direct government by the people that will evolve naturally.<sup>viii</sup>

The Agrarian Party is also vague and uncertain in its mid-1990s statements about the political structure of Russia following the projected victory of the left-wing forces. Goals include:

establishing genuine government by the people, creating representative bodies of government across the land that will perform legislative and control functions in society, setting up a broad network of bodies of self-government.<sup>ix</sup>

The brief mention of “genuine government by the people,” public self-government and, most importantly, the rebirth of the system of soviets which combine in their activities both legislative and executive functions are also typical of the majority of other left-wing groups and parties. Despite their paramount importance, these issues have not been discussed in sufficient detail in the policy documents of left-wing organizations. In fact, these parties have reduced the issue of what the Russian political system will be like should they come to power to a few concise formulaic statements, which stand in sharp contrast to the elaborate and detailed language found in the sections of their programs dealing with the economy, foreign policy and other issues.

Apparently, the vagueness is deliberate, because a more detailed discussion of the political system they envisage would force these parties to either admit explicitly their anti-democratic beliefs or to accept a liberal interpretation of democracy. Ideologically, the latter is not an option, while the former is not an option politically. An open campaign for dictatorship, let alone the restoration of a totalitarian regime, would transform the leaders of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation into political pariahs, frightening off a considerable percentage of possible voters and even leading to unpleasant legal implications: they could be accused of violating the Russia’s constitution. Therefore they tend to substitute the terms “government by the people” or “genuine government by the people” for the term “democracy.” Formally, such terms are synonymous. However the phrase “government by the people,” when used in lieu of “democracy,” enables Communists to verbally distance themselves from a liberal political system without allowing their political opponents to accuse them of authoritarian intentions.

Furthermore, the Communists and their allies are interested in preserving a democratic regime as long as they remain in opposition. The democratic institutions, primarily the Parliament, allow them to participate in politics and to seek to influence government decisions. In this regard, the debate and adoption by the Parliament of the federal budget are particularly important. A democratic system also provides the Communist Party and its satellites with a possibility to come to power legally; on the other hand, attempts to seize power illegally by inciting social tensions, provoking unrest and prodding politically and ideologically sympathetic members of the military to openly confront the regime would result in a ban on the Communist Party.

Despite their superficial acceptance of democratic institutions, the fact that the Russian left-wing forces identify “genuine government by the people” with the restoration of the Soviet system of government is indicative of either their profound anti-democratic beliefs or of their failure to understand democracy as a mechanism of political power. In the former totalitarian regime, the soviets served merely to disguise the monopoly power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Therefore the fact that such terminology is found in policy statements can point to the actual intentions of the leaders of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and of their allies.

While the Communist Party’s focus on the soviets is indicative of a lasting authoritarian mentality, some Russian intellectuals, not only leftist ones, have pursued the idea in the genuine quest for a non-authoritarian alternative to liberal democracy. Two reasons apparently inspire this quest: first, liberal democracy has been associated in the public mind with all the shortcomings and defects of the current regime, above all with its corrupt practices; second, liberal democracy is viewed as something inherent in the Western political system, which does not fit Russian tradition, culture and mentality. The soviets, on the other hand, are perceived by these intellectuals as a political form congruent with communalism (*sobornost*), allegedly a characteristic of the Russian psyche. From this point of view, the soviets are a political form reminiscent of the traditional form of collective decision-making in rural communities.

A system of soviets combining both legislative and executive functions would constitute a primitive form of democracy at best, lacking the essential mechanism of the separation of powers. Nor is it clear how the proposed soviets would be formed: the policy documents of the left-wing parties do not provide for a multi-party system, but talk about something akin to corporate representation. These so-far-vague concepts differ from the practices of the past Communist regime, but echo to some extent the Fascist vision of government.

Thus, Russian left-wing forces more or less openly oppose the democratic vision of the country’s political future. The results of the parliamentary and presidential elections in December 1999 and March 2000 showed, however, that the left-wing’s chances to come to power are minimal, despite the fact that it continues to play important role in the Russian Parliament. In these circumstances, stronger obstacles for further democratization of Russia’s political system are generated by the latent illiberalism of a large part of Russian ruling elite, including its segments that are politically far from left-wing forces.

Doubts about the Russian elites’ commitment to democracy are being raised by the continuing quest for a “Russian national idea,” which essentially means the development of a new state ideology. As the quest proceeds, it brings visibly closer together the views and opinions of many different political groups: the left-wing nationalist opposition, the theoreticians and political figures close to the current regime, and the former ideological opponents of communism, whether inspired by traditional or national-patriotic ideals.

The modern Russian elites have broadly embraced three ideas, which are not new but have been part of the Russian intellectual debate at least since the first half of the nineteenth century:

- the unique nature of Russian civilization;
- the special dominant role of the state in Russia's political system;
- the tendency of the Russian psyche to gravitate toward collectivist or communal (*soborny*) values and toward a Russian Orthodox vision of the world.

The uniqueness of Russian civilization is seen, in particular, in the incompatibility of Russia's political culture, on the one hand, and liberal concepts and values? including the idea of democracy? on the other. For more than 150 years one of the most important, if not the most important, difference between European and Russian political cultures has been the attitude to liberalism as a political doctrine and as a system of values. Today, these ideas have been explored and set forth in their most revealing and politically relevant form in the publications by the leaders and theoreticians of the left-wing nationalist forces, but they are shared by a large proportion of the intellectual and political elite. According to Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation:

Russia represents the cultural-historic and moral tradition based on such fundamental values as communalism (*sobornost*), the view of Russia as a major power, and the aspiration to embody the loftiest ideals of good and justice ... The liberal democratic ideology with its cult of the individual constitutes the main support of the Western or maritime civilization.<sup>x</sup>

This dramatic contraposition of the Russian and Western civilizations is typical of the leftist and also nationalist segment of the Russian political spectrum. More moderate politicians and intellectuals, including those considering themselves to be part of the democratic segment of the Russian elite, frequently uphold similar ideas, although they express them in a softer or less overt form. For instance, the idea has been floated that it is the West, not Russia, that is a unique civilization whose standards and practices are unacceptable for the rest of humanity. Vladimir Lukin, one of the leaders of the Yabloko Party, and his former colleague from the prestigious Institute of the USA and Canada Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences) Professor Anatoly Utkin, argue:

The West constitutes a unique region and unique civilization. The 1990s have demonstrated, perhaps more clearly than the period of [Cold War] confrontation, that Russia and the West live in separate civilizational realms created, above all, by their different historical experiences. There are visible civilizational differences and ignoring them has never done Russia any good and will not do it any good in the future.<sup>xi</sup>

The argument in favor of the uniqueness of Russian civilization that became a banality a long time ago is frequently complemented by another banality, namely, speculation about the special role of the state in Russian history. The state is often portrayed as the basis and organizer of public life, the driving force of economic development, and, especially, of modernization; it is also seen as the structure that keeps the Russian regions together, along with the increasingly estranged segments of society—and is supremely valuable as a result. If so, the need to subordinate the private interests of the individual to those of the state is quite visible.

The worrisome phenomenon, however, is that these banalities are welcomed and used by the Russian ruling group. The conclusion about special role of the state in Russia is shared not only by opposition theoreticians and intellectuals who enthusiastically recycle century-old Eurasian and Slavophile ideas, but also by President Vladimir Putin himself. Having said a number of

times that democracy is the only way to Russia's future and that it is a part of European culture, he nevertheless wrote the following:

For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly, it is not something against which one should fight. On the contrary, a strong state is a source and guarantor of order, initiator and main moving force of any changes. ... The society wishes the restoration of guiding and regulatory role of state to a degree that correlates to traditions and current circumstances of the country. ... In Russia the gravitation to collectivist forms of social life always dominated over individualism.<sup>xii</sup>

This view of the state as a "super-value" is typical for Russia's ruling elite. A book meaningfully entitled "Ideological Guidelines for Russia: The Fundamentals of a New All-Russian National Ideology," published recently under the general editorship of former Russia's Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin (two of the three authors of the book: Andrei Chernenko and Vladimir Kalamonov hold prominent offices in the Russian government) provides an example:

The profoundly historical tradition, conditioned by the national specifics of Russia, that the state and universal human interests must predominate over the selfish predatory aspirations of individuals and their organized groups coincides at present with the fundamental principles of a new stage in the progress of global civilization.<sup>xiii</sup>

This thesis is interesting not only as an almost official assertion of the prevalence of state interests but chiefly as interpretation of private and group interests as egoistic, selfish and predatory. Also interesting is the portrayal of the Russian political tradition as a universal trend gradually embracing the entire world. Being pushed to their logical conclusion, such concepts assume that dictatorship is the inevitable future not only of Russia but of all the humanity too. A typical example of this kind of thinking has been expressed by Russian economist Professor Olgerd Volkov:

The form of democracy that is being actively promoted by the West and by certain figures in Russia is only needed by a very small portion of humankind. Most of humanity needs protection, order and justice. ... Objectively the world is moving along toward a dictatorship. A number of factors that are independent of human will are leading to it: overpopulation of the planet, the limited nature of natural resources, the necessary rigid cooperation in production... It is impossible to overcome the negative impact of such factors and to manage them in the context of a Western capitalist democracy.<sup>xiv</sup>

The claim that the conflict between limited natural resources and humanity's growing needs requires political and economic dictatorship, rigid rationing of consumption, and other totalitarian methods of regulating public life is increasingly common in Russia and constitutes a sort of environmental fascism.

Finally, Russia's elites, including the country's core ruling group, are appealing to Russian Orthodoxy as a spiritual basis and source of legitimacy of the emerging political system. This is the natural result of the crash of the Communist ideology and of the growing interest by Russians in their history and traditions, and of the fact that the new Russian regime could not appeal to any other religion, or other version of Christianity, to provide its conceptual and emotional foundation. But by appealing to Russian Orthodoxy the political elites are creating serious intellectual and psychological obstacles for further democratization. As a political philosophy, Russian Orthodoxy is based on the traditional Byzantine theory of a "symphony of authorities." It presumes that the Church should subordinate itself to monarchical or imperial regime, which is seen as ideal political formation, providing it with ideological legitimacy in exchange for state support for the Church's spiritual and religious monopoly. In other words, political monopoly is

combined in Orthodoxy with intellectual monopoly, forming an effective authoritarian system. And of special importance could be the fact that Russian Orthodoxy rejects individualism, especially individual freedom and individual responsibility, as well as critical and rational analysis of reality that are critical for democratic transformation.

The portrayal of the state as a dominating political entity, communalism, Russian Orthodoxy, and the rejection of liberalism have appeared so frequently in the writings of Russian commentators and in the analytical literature that they have become part and parcel of the current political thinking, displacing liberal concepts and a Western-oriented view of the world. These liberal concepts have lost their political influence because of the renaissance of the traditional state-centric and Eurasian ideas, the dissemination of geopolitical views, and the rebirth of the old Slavophile way of thinking. Moreover, the slogan “return to the traditional values” is already providing a justification for an exceptionally dangerous calls for a “large purge” as a tool for the renewal of country’s elite. The Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Duma, Dimitry Rogozin, stated:

The time has come to go back to the traditional values of Russian civilization, which can be the only basis for a Russia rebirth strategy. The time has come for a new generation of politicians who are young, healthy, and ready to act. ... We are currently trying to renovate dramatically the political forces that evolved primarily during troubled times and that have run their course. On the eve of the third millennium we need to get rid of this political clutter and sweep the house clean.<sup>xv</sup>

Taken as a whole, the statements analyzed above show that unlike the general public, which is gradually freeing itself from ideological perceptions and concepts and leaning instead toward a pragmatic view of reality, the Russian elites display attitudes to democracy and liberalism that are still distorted by traditional illiberal views.

The Russian elites appear to value democracy as a political tool, while distrusting it as a social ideal based on liberal values. They are interested in democratic institutions as political tools and have said so in official government declarations and documents. At present, democracy suits the interests of all political forces because an authoritarian regime of any type would most likely allow for the domination by some interest groups at the expense of others, while the national parliament and the regional legislatures open up channels of vertical mobility, political influence and representation for all groups. Furthermore, presidential elections complying with democratic procedures enable various groups within the elite to maintain or enhance their influence at the federal level. But this interest in democracy as a useful political tool is not sufficient to dispel the cautious and sometimes negative attitude to democracy as a Western system of values which does not necessarily fit Russian ideas and traditions.

## **COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACY OR A MULTI-POLAR WORLD?**

The sentiments of a sizable segment of the Russian elite described above closely correlate with Russia’s evolving tendency to distance itself from the community of democracy on the international arena. Such a tendency makes the democratization of Russian politics more difficult: the experience of many countries in the last few decades shows that the establishment of genuine democratic institutions is normally accompanied by a rapprochement with, and subsequent inclusion into, the community of advanced democracies.

The concept of a “multi-polar world,” which has emerged as virtually the official foreign policy doctrine of Russia, is at the center of the debate on this issue. Contemporary international politics, according to this view, is shaped by two conflicting trends. The leading trend is the

emergence of a multi-polar world. Russian officials have persistently emphasized that they favor multi-polarity and will help it prevail in every possible way. The opposite trend is the creation of a uni-polar world. Far from being a community of democracy, according to many Russian theoreticians, military figures and government officials, this uni-polar world will be dominated by the United States, which seeks global hegemony and is inclined to use military force to achieve it. The National Security Concept approved by Vladimir Putin in January 2000 sums up these ideas:

The situation in the world is characterized by a dynamic transformation of the system of international relations. After the era of bi-polar confrontation has ended, two incompatible trends are dominating. The first trend reveals itself as the strengthening of the economic and political positions of a substantial number of states and their regional organizations, as improvement of multilateral mechanisms governing international processes. The second trend manifests itself as attempts to create a structure of international relations based on the domination by the developed Western countries led by the USA and aimed at unilateral military solutions to the key issues of world politics, circumventing the fundamental norms of the international law.<sup>xvi</sup>

The official Russian concept of multi-polarity presumes also that the United Nations is the sole international institution empowered to make decisions on the use of force to maintain and enforce peace. The political meaning of this assertion is absolutely evident: the UN Security Council provides Russia with rare leverage, and is one of the few places Russia can influence global politics. As a result, Russia wishes to strengthen the Security Council. But this poses the difficult question of how the international community can use force to maintain or restore peace if the UN Security Council is not able to reach a decision due to veto power of one of its permanent members. Russia also insists that state sovereignty is absolute, thus rejecting the legitimacy of humanitarian interventions unless they are welcomed by the government. Again, this leads to paralysis, because it gives governments that are accused of human rights abuses the power to prevent humanitarian interventions.

There are several, though complementary, visions of what a multi-polar world entails. The initial version has been set forth by Yevgeny Primakov, who interprets multi-polarity as the emergence of several major “power centers” whose interaction bears some resemblance to the balance of power in Europe in the nineteenth century. As such power centers emerge, Primakov argues, the transatlantic relations will become weaker and Europe and Japan will distance themselves from the United States. This development is caused by the collapse of the bi-polar world in which the solidarity between Europe and the United States and between Japan and the United States was driven by their common opposition to the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union gone, the reasons for the military-political closeness of the leading Western nations has weakened. According to Primakov:

The end of the Cold War ushered in a tendency for the transition from a confrontational bi-polar world to a multi-polar world. The centripetal forces that used to pull considerable portions of the rest of the world toward each of the two superpowers grew considerably weaker. ... The Western European nations, no longer dependent on the American “nuclear umbrella,” began to act more independently. Their gravitation to a “Euro-center” is replacing the transatlantic focus. As Japan’s international status soars, its military-political dependence on the United States declines.<sup>xvii</sup>

In this scenario, a multi-polar world represents a direct and unambiguous alternative to globalization. Primakov’s scheme, however, fully ignores not only the process of expansion of the community of democracy, but also other fundamental aspects of the progress of globalization that have become manifest in recent times, including the evolution of economic interdependence

to the point of mutual integration, the growing importance of international institutions, and above all the need for managing interdependence by creating institutions to solve common problems. NATO's ability to survive the cessation of confrontation, to develop new strategic ideas summing up some basic interests of its member-states, and its decision to enlarge refutes Primakov's idea that Western solidarity was simply the product of the bi-polar confrontation. The continuation of the US-Japan security treaty also contradicts his assertion.

There is also a more sophisticated perception of a multi-polar world as the growing diversity of the global system, the emergence of many diverse power centers at both the global and regional levels, the development of different cultures and civilizations, the evolution of different economic and political systems, and so on. In principle, this vision of a multi-polar world corresponds to what globalization means in practice and reflects the plurality and complexity of the modern world. Globalization does not mean, at least not yet, the removal of all differences between civilizations, the dissemination of a uniform view of the world, let alone of identical types of statehood and of economic institutions.

But there is a fundamental difference between the liberal vision of globalization and the concept of a multi-polar world even in the more sophisticated version explained above. Russian theoreticians and official analysts see multi-polarity as identical to diversity and argue that all cultures and all political and economic systems are equally acceptable and valuable. At first sight, such a statement appears absolutely natural, especially when dealing with culture, a notion that is truly hard to define. But such a statement also implies the equal value and equal acceptability of liberalism, democracy, free competition and other properties of the community of democracy on the one hand, and of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and non-market economy on the other. Thus, democracy is merely one of the possible "poles" of the modern world, with no more legitimacy than other poles.

Russian intellectuals and politicians often identify a "pole" or a "power center" with a certain civilization, essentially reproducing the logic offered by Samuel Huntington in his famous work on the clash of civilizations, but adding to it several elements of the Eurasian concepts and traditional geopolitics. For instance, North America and Europe are frequently seen not as separate "power centers" (which is typical of Primakov) but as a single "Western civilization." This Western civilization is considered often to be aggressive, expansionist, and bent on securing economic as well as political hegemony. The most blatant hostility toward Western civilization has been expressed by the leaders of the left-wing and nationalist opposition. For example, Nikolai Ryzhkov, a former prime minister of the USSR and currently a leading figure in Russian left-wing circles, states:

The West is imposing on us the idea that ... the Western set of values is the only truly humane and democratic system of values ... the war in Yugoslavia provides an example of clash of civilizations. ... A strike is delivered against a nation that is the closest to the Russian civilization. ... Serbia is the outpost of our civilization. That is why the heart of the Balkans populated by southern Slavs has for centuries intrigued the West that has sought to destroy this outpost. ... Indiscriminate acceptance of Western ideological values and their transplantation on Russian soil without due account for the distinct Russian culture may result in the destruction of Russian civilization.<sup>xviii</sup>

The concepts developed by individuals close to the government are basically the same. Alexeyev, Kalamonov, and Chernenko, mentioned earlier, write:

The existence of civilizations, while promoting integration processes at the regional level, at the same time enhances the confrontation of different regions of the world, a confrontation

created not only by their civilizational, cultural, ethnic, and social differences, but also by the increasingly fierce competition for natural and economic resources. ... The attempts by the highly developed, above all Western, civilizations to control the world's progress and to step up the exploitation of the natural and social resources of the less developed nations and civilizations, as well as the active resistance offered by the latter persist, aggravating international tensions in a number of regions. Such aggravation takes place against the backdrop of increased confrontation of civilizations.<sup>xix</sup>

## THE ROOTS OF RUSSIAN ILLIBERALISM

The negative attitude toward liberalism and the unwillingness to fully engage in globalization are to some extent the consequence of the intellectual baggage the political and intellectual elites have carried over from the Communist past, but most importantly they are determined by the vested interests of influential economic and bureaucratic groups.

The Soviet version of Marxism had lost any influence whatsoever on Russian intellectuals by the early 1990s. However its approach to reality, a sort of totalitarian discourse has survived and still exerts considerable influence in Russia. Specifically, it manifests itself in the propensity of Russian intellectuals to build simplified universal schemes purportedly explaining a broad range of social, economic and political phenomena. It is also evident in the entrenched tendency to disregard empirical data, an attitude typical of the social sciences during the Communist period.

At that time, special attention was given to refined interpretations of Marxism, on the assumption that such work was more important and meaningful than the analysis of empirical data; the fact that scientists often had no access to empirical data undoubtedly contributed to this tendency.

Soviet-style thinking is still also evident in the perception of the world as an arena for rivalry between impersonal entities. These days, the main role is assigned not to social classes, as in the Communist period, but to civilizations; the term "imperialism" has been replaced by "Western civilization," "socialism" by "Russian or Eurasian civilization"; the influence of Soviet ideology is nevertheless unmistakable. Finally, the focus on the uniqueness of Russian civilization, like the ideological discourse of the communist period, enables the Russian intellectual elite to avoid discussing something that is extremely complex and also unfamiliar to most: the concepts and theories of modernization, as well as the results of research into the processes of democratization in various countries and regions. It also frees Russian intellectuals from the necessity of conducting labor-intensive comparative studies.

But the main reason for the rejection of liberal Western values by many segments of the Russian elite resides in their vested interests. Some of the powerful interest groups associated with significant segments of Russia's economy and governance are not able to adjust to the changing conditions in Russia and in the rest of the world; in particular, they are unable to compete in an open economy and to operate effectively in international markets. That is why they oppose Russia's integration into the global economy and close relations with advanced democracies.

Former Prime Minister Sergei Kiryenko has divided the Russian economy into four basic segments:

- Old Soviet-type enterprises, the remnants of the "material-technical base of Communism" producing "negative added value," that is, losses instead of profits. Their only *raison d'être*: to provide comprehensive social support for their employees.



- Export-oriented industries that depend highly on the dynamics of the world prices for raw materials. These will continue to play a key role in the Russian economy, but are not able to become a force for rapid modernization.
- Market-oriented enterprises working efficiently in the traditional sections of economy to produce food and other consumer goods for the domestic market. These stimulate formation of market institutions and practice but cannot boost Russia into the post-industrial realm of the modern economy.
- New industries typical of the post-industrial economy: electronics and computer technologies, biotechnology, etc. These are crucial for Russia's future.<sup>xx</sup>

The economic entities that are not capable of adapting to new economic conditions need massive financial assistance from the government. This requires large-scale government interference in the economy as well as broad use of administrative or even police methods to confiscate resources from the economically effective industries and redistribute them to the inefficient ones. Social groups and elites associated with the industries in need of subsidies are campaigning against market reforms and for the transition to the so-called "mobilization economy." The latter basically means the restoration of planning mechanisms of management, except perhaps in small and micro enterprises in the service industry? in other words, a return to the Soviet system. Since the model is impossible, or extremely difficult, to implement within a democratic system, an attempt to translate it into reality would inevitably require the presence of a strong authoritarian regime.

The vested interests these groups have in continuing state intervention in the economy are given political and ideological legitimization by the claim that the state has always played a special role in Russia and that its interests have always prevailed over those of individuals and groups. In reality, the so-called state or national interests are the interests of specific social groups and economic enterprises, above all of the part of the government bureaucracy that fears it will become redundant if Russia implements market and democratic reforms and joins the world economy. Thus, those groups want to isolate Russia from the world, remaining outside the international economic system and the community of democracy. The troubled Russian economic situation makes it easier for these groups to advocate strong government control over the economy and restrictions on economic and political freedoms. Many industries will undoubtedly fail if they have to compete in an open economic system. Adding to the complexity of the situation, many of these industries are part of the military-industrial complex, which depends on continued international tensions and external threats in order to survive on the scale inherited from the former Soviet Union. Because of its importance, the military-industrial complex will be discussed more exhaustively later. At the opposite side of the spectrum are the export and "post-industrial" industries that grow by being closely integrated into the global economy? those industries producing software, for example. These entities have gained the most from the reforms of the 1990s. They are interested in an increasingly open Russian economy, growing international trade, and foreign investment that will allow them to renovate their fixed assets and adopt modern production processes and technologies. The elites of this sector are aware that their interests can best be realized in the context of normal political relations with the leading Western nations and in the absence of confrontation. They especially oppose a mobilization economy bound to bring back Soviet practices and to pump the revenue from the sales of oil, gas and other commodities into the military-industrial complex.

The interests of the economic enterprises involved primarily in the manufacturing of goods and services for domestic consumption? which constitute the majority? are not as clear-cut. On

the one hand, the powerful and influential economic lobbies that represent such groups, including the agro-industrial sector, favor protectionist policies because Russian products generally cannot compete with imports. As a result, they demand that the government raise the price of imported goods, giving domestic industries a chance not only to compete but also to increase the price of their own products. Opposition and national-patriotic groups have tried to win over these powerful interest group? and at the same time to criticize the Yeltsin regime's policies? by campaigning extensively for the "protection of the domestic producer."

On the other hand, industries producing for the domestic market have no interest in a confrontation between Russia and the outside world or in the implementation of a great power foreign policy. The outcome of confrontation would be a switch to a mobilization economy, including the confiscation of resources from the newly emergent private sector and their redistribution for the benefit of the military-industrial complex. Furthermore, a large percentage of producers catering to the domestic market need to import equipment, attract foreign investors, and engage in other forms of foreign economic relations. The Russian service industries in particular rely to a considerable extent on imports, and severance of relations with the outside world would undermine their position.

The stabilization of the financial system and thus the end of the present crisis and the economic rebirth of the nation are only possible if the leading Western nations and international financial institutions continue to provide support, and if foreign direct investment flows in on a massive scale. Post-August 1998 events have demonstrated that the Russian economy is critically dependent on external support, and that Russia's great power ambitions cannot be sustained by its economy. The leaders of the major Russian financial groups, who are vitally interested in Russia's economic stabilization, obviously understand the importance of international support and of removing great power aspirations from Russia's foreign policy.

In conclusion, there are extremely influential economic and political interest groups in Russia calling for a degree of isolation from the international community and from globalization processes, for renewed confrontation with the leading Western nations, and for limiting or even terminating democratization. These groups are the military-industrial complex and a large part of the military command.

The military-industrial complex is playing a particularly negative role from the perspective of Russia's domestic democratization and its participation in globalization. It evolved as a privileged part of the Soviet economy, completely closed off from society and beyond the control of even the upper tiers of the Soviet Communist Party; the upper echelons of the defense industry and of the military research and development community managed gigantic material resources and to a considerable extent defined the nation's foreign policy, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. According to former Deputy Minister of Economy Sergei Vasilyev:

In principle, the high-technology industries in this country have always been geared to war, rather than to satisfying the needs of society. The high cost to consumers of supporting the production of such industries was only sustainable because of the confrontation with the West. Once the demand for military products waned, such industries lost meaning to society, although they used high technologies. The research-intensive nature of a particular industry does not necessarily mean that the industry should be developed. The obvious paradox and plight of our economy is that advanced technology is concentrated in an industry which is no longer needed and that simply cannot be supported because this country is not rich enough to subsidize that sector unless it can be justified by external threats.<sup>xxi</sup>

The end of confrontation with the outside world, changes in Russia's international standing, and dramatic reduction of its economic power have combined to deprive the military and the defense industry of their *raison d'être* and to make them societally superfluous. Society at large and especially the political leadership are confronted with the monumental task of restructuring the military machine to fit new realities. But that task contradicts the interests of the defense industry and of the military research and development community.

Not surprisingly, the captains of the defense industry and the leaders of the military research community see a continued role for themselves, claiming that Russia's economic growth during the next few decades should be driven by the preservation and promotion of the "traditional" high-technology sectors, with the military-industrial complex at the core. They argue that otherwise Russia will turn into a provider of raw materials for the West, lose its economic independence and become a second- or even third-rate country. In their view, Russia's topmost strategic objective should be to maintain the status of a great power, which is associated with military, including nuclear, might. Such strategy can only be implemented if the government redistributes material and financial resources in favor of the defense related industry.

The ideologues of these groups also argue that the West is seeking to prevent Russia from re-establishing itself as a great power and emerging as a full-fledged power center in the projected "multi-polar world." Therefore, the strategic interests of Russia and the West, above all the United States, are seen as mutually contradictory. According to these groups, NATO expansion, The West's activities in the former Yugoslavia, support for the independence of former Soviet republics, measures taken to prevent Russian arms manufacturers from accessing world weapons markets, and the possibility that the US will proceed with the development of a national ballistic missile defense are all proof of the West's hostile intentions toward Russia. On the whole, these ideologues continue to see international relations as a zero-sum game and thus argue that Russia must take a tough stand, reacting decisively to moves by the West that run counter to its interests, and strengthening relations with its potential allies. They argue that Russia's strategic interests include increased exports of weapons as a way of overcoming the crisis of the military-industrial complex, and thus that the government should focus on promoting partnerships with the leading buyers of Russian weaponry, primarily China and India, which account for over half the sales of Russian weapons and materiel.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above discussion does not provide an exhaustive description of the exceptionally complex interaction of economic and political interests as well as of ideological postulates and constructions that will determine whether Russia will move toward democratization and acceptance of globalization or will turn to a new authoritarianism and distance itself from the outside world. However, it does illustrate the overall logic of the process and points to four major conclusions.

First, the profound transformation of the economic system and the emergence of new economic and political institutions in Russia have had a different impact on various segments of the former Soviet economy and the related social groups and bureaucracies. Some, including the military-industrial complex, have become redundant or incapable of competing in a market-economy, and thus are dependent on massive government support. Government support requires the restoration of the dominant role of the state, restrictions on democracy, a degree of international isolation and Russia's association with totalitarian regimes rather than with the community of democracy. The conceptual underpinning for these policies are provided by the

argument that Russian civilization is unique, requiring a special role for the state, and by other ideological arguments discussed earlier. These ideas are embraced by part of the military establishment, which is professionally oriented to confrontation with the West. Other segments of the Russian economy and the related elites, however, want Russia to join the global economy, albeit on special terms, because few of them would be competitive in a completely open economy. Domestically, these groups are fearful of authoritarianism, because they believe it would lead to a dominant role for the military and the defense industry. But these groups are not completely prepared to embrace liberal democracy, which would entail association with the “community of democracy”? and subsequently political as well as economic integration along with it. The ideological underpinnings for such a position are provided by various “soft” versions of traditional views.

Second, most Russian intellectuals are not prepared, and more importantly are not interested, in familiarizing themselves with the notions, concepts and ideas of modern political science. This encourages Russia’s current focus on the traditional geopolitical and “Eurasian” concepts and the totalitarian discourse which evolved during the Soviet period. The modern “Eurasian” philosophy is popular with the left-wing nationalist opposition, the elites that are involved with the inefficient industries, and also with those government institutions that are not interested in a genuine liberal democracy. That philosophy provides the conceptual foundation for a range of anti-liberal slogans.

Third, the prospects for democratization in Russia and its inclusion in the globalization are closely interconnected. In order to open up to the outside world Russia needs to build up democratic institutions and establish appropriate standards.

Fourth, the Russian psyche is going through a complicated process of de-ideologization. The process is most evident in the public’s general lack of support for ideological theses and slogans, in the priority it accords to everyday issues and private interests, in its distrust towards the state, and in the high value it places on individual rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, Russian citizens still do not view themselves as active social agents, are inclined to delegate the solving of important problems to an effective leader, and shy away from social responsibility? all traits that create the psychological prerequisites for authoritarianism.

## NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Fareed Zakaria introduced the term in “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997), pp. 22–43.

<sup>ii</sup> ROMIR is Gallup International’s only Russian member organization. It is one of the few Russian research institutes using its own national network of interviewers and is therefore capable of conducting regular opinion polls on a nationwide sample, yielding results that are comparable across the polls. The author has worked with ROMIR over the past few years on studies of the political awareness of Russians. Some of the results have been published in an article co-authored by ROMIR Director Yelena Bashkirova and Yuri Fedorov, “Labyrinths of Post-Totalitarian Consciousness,” *Pro et Contra*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 120–143. The other can be found at: [www.romir.ru](http://www.romir.ru)

<sup>iii</sup> Presidential Office of the Russian Federation, “National Security Address to the Federal Assembly by the President of the Russian Federation” (Moscow, 1996), pp. 9–10 (in Russian).

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