

# Introduction to the Fifteenth Anniversary Issue

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**D**emokratizatsiya is in constant change, just like the region it studies. Founded by undergraduate students in a dorm room with the help of three visionary deans at American University (AU), it quickly became a normal, professional publication. It began as a biyearly publication that soon thereafter expanded to a quarterly. After two years on its own but in partnership with AU, Moscow State University, the International Freedom Foundation and later the American Foreign Policy Council, the journal became part of Heldref Publications—created by scholars from the American Political Science Association concerned about the survival of worthy scholarly journals. After years with the same familiar look, *Demokratizatsiya* recently changed its format to make it more suitable for newsstands and bookstores. It fluctuates between hard scholarship and policy-relevant scholarship, reflecting the five “stakeholder” groups that shaped it: Western Sovietologists, NIS scholars, Western policymakers, NIS policymakers, and scholars from other disciplines coming in contact with the NIS. Sociologists, political scientists, historians, legal experts, economists, and policymakers make the journal interdisciplinary. Our online edition (through Metapress) has been more successful than anticipated—even surpassing the print version. The students who were instrumental in founding the journal—Kelly Adams, Vasilios Fotopoulos, Ruth Pojman, David Bain, Paula Orlikowski, Frederick Williams, Chris Dwyer, and Steve Cruty (later joined by Peter Serenyi, Grant Benson, Natalia Melnyczuk, Laurence Olson, Rangarajan Soundararajan, John Knab, Chris Corpora, Shinjinee Sen, Dmitri Iudine, Birgit Brauer, Svetlana Bagaudinova, Liesl Heeter, Kelly McKenna, Brian Simon, Craig Coulter, James Stevens, Ross Phelps, Timothy Scott, and Glenn Bryant, among others)—paid the price of their youthful indiscretion by moving on to bigger and better NIS-related *katorga* (hard labor).

Five years ago I also mentioned the instability of cadres in the journal, as its editors are highly successful and mobile types who get big appointments and have to rotate out of their editorial responsibilities. Those of us familiar with the business world see this as *normalno* (as the Russians see their society becoming, according to Richard Rose in this issue). The journal practices what it preaches, subject to the classic formula of democracy: predictable publication every three months, but unpredictable outcomes! Because it is blind peer reviewed and its editorial leadership decentralized, the journal can essentially

run itself. But there is also room for editorial leadership and individual editors nonetheless have left their indelible marks, which proved fortuitous because they are outstanding scholars who predicted defining trends very early. If there is one expert who can say “I told you so,” it is our former executive editor J. Michael Waller, whose articles on the KGB since 1992 predicted to a tee the phenomenon we now call Putinism. So can Louise Shelley and her focus on corruption and organized crime. Nikolai Zlobin, Michael McFaul, Sally Stoecker, Vladimir Brovkin, and Fiona Hill also brought numerous and highly diverse insights of their own and through the networks of scholars they invited to write for the journal. Marshall Goldman’s pioneering work on oil and gas politics is proving no less relevant for today, as is Christopher Marsh’s extrapolations on the transition in China and Henry Hale’s outstanding analyses of party-state structure. *Demokratizatsiya* is a journal of academic and policy Cassandras. Originally provoking unease among some established Sovietologists (one even vowed to “smash” us back in 1992), the journal today is published in partnership with the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies and its avant-garde position today is the mainstream—not least because events proved us right, but also because the then-emerging and maverick scholars that formed the journal have gradually taken over the academy.

Committed readers of the journal (and there are some) have followed the shift in its coverage—from breaking ground in analyzing a wasted opportunity under Boris Yeltsin to a newly assertive and de-democratizing Russia under Vladimir Putin. Authors writing on the latter have also drifted gradually from “authoritarianism with a state-building purpose” to “repression as an end in itself.” The shift concerning the remaining fourteen post-Soviet countries is also apparent. Whereas before it was largely the Baltic countries that were on a consistent trajectory (and still merit special attention—notice David Galbreath’s piece), surprising events since 2003 have added new vibrancy to the study of the rest of the NIS.

Georgia’s Rose Revolution in November 2003, followed by Moldova’s “orange evolution,” the much-discussed Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the Andijon massacre in Uzbekistan (yes, the journal is still banned there), the strained relations between Belarus and Russia, the expansion of NATO and the EU into the former USSR, the possible realignment in Turkmenistan, attempted authoritarian consolidation in Armenia and Tajikistan, among others, have added new tools, methods, and interest to the region. As the past is more unpredictable than the future in Russia, articles have also reflected a changing appreciation for Mikhail Gorbachev and perestroika in the USSR, with a special issue dedicated to its twentieth anniversary. The same goes for Yeltsin, as Leon Aron’s very persuasive piece begins to argue in this issue (the second part will be in a subsequent issue). New experts are emerging all the time, covering previously understudied countries and phenomena—and many of them made a debut of sorts on the pages of this journal. As Russia and the newfound dynamism in the rest of the NIS are back in vogue in Washington, *Demokratizatsiya* can shift further to its original mission of policy-relevant scholarship while not abandoning the building blocks of hard academia.

A topic that will increasingly be studied here and elsewhere are the implications of Russia’s economic growth and newfound geopolitical assertiveness. Whereas Moscow’s posturing has been defined as “absurd” by Václav Havel and dismissed by many other reasonable observers, a little-understood phenomenon seems to be taking hold across the region. Parties and politicians sympathetic to Moscow’s interests (mainly focused

on the politics behind energy distribution), and possibly financed by the Kremlin or elements close to it, have been making inroads into many countries of the region, even those assumed to be safely integrated into the West. Rolandas Paksas in Lithuania seemed to be a first warning shot, not sufficiently heeded, of what became a largely successful counter-assault involving Latvia's top politicians, the Gyurcsány government in Hungary, Robert Fico in Slovakia, the initial failure of the Orange coalition in Ukraine, and, of course, the more visible and controversial "Molotov-Ribbentrop pipeline" deal with Germany's Gerhard Schröder, among other deals with countries further south. On the other hand, despite offers of millions to derail Yulia Tymoshenko, all the MPs in her razor-thin coalition voted for her in late 2007. Even the Kremlin's money, it seems, cannot buy everyone.

Is this phenomenon largely a Putin pet project that will subside after he leaves office? Or is it more widespread and deep-rooted in Russia's *chekist* elite? Is Putinism just a façade for massive enrichment of the political elites, as Anders Åslund hints in these pages? How will the United Russia party survive the transition? What other transitions are the most comparable to Russia's? (China's lessons are not what you think—see Harley Balzer's article for that.) Will the regime survive another terrorist assault? Or Ukrainian membership in NATO? What will be Moscow's reaction to those countries not easily intimidated? If Estonia and Georgia are any guide, the prospects for additional aggression (even military) cannot be ruled out. How will the EU react? After the flare-ups between Moscow on the one hand and member states Estonia, Poland, and the United Kingdom on the other, the EU's legitimacy could be called into question, after both Brussels and the major countries (namely France and Germany) failed to protest the Kremlin's wanton provocations of fellow EU partners.

What about Washington? Certainly, much of the State Department and the White House have come a long way from their previous appeasement compulsion toward Moscow. An increasingly realistic posture is evident in such areas as Moldova, further NATO expansion, alternative pipelines, the stationing of weapon systems and bases in the region, Russia's human rights and democracy-building record, among other issues. Estonia received far more sympathy in Washington than in Brussels during its crisis with Moscow. However, Washington's overwhelming focus on the Middle East has allowed Moscow increased leverage, which, if unchallenged, could be catastrophic in the end—not least for Russia. What is seldom discussed is how fragile Putin's experiment could turn out to be. As the journal led the debate in the 1990s on the effectiveness of foreign aid to Russia and the other NIS countries, maybe that topic will be relevant again. Hopefully the lessons from the last time will not be in vain.

How Washington and Brussels handle this empire striking back should occupy many pages of the journal. Other hot topics presumably will be Russia's new leader, its demographic and Islamization challenges (see Gordon Hahn's piece), relations with China and the Muslim world, its changing military posture, the positive aspects of Putin's tenure (Peter Solomon's article), in addition to Ukraine's continued geopolitical drift, Belarus's increasing ties to Venezuela, Kazakhstan's evolution, possible breakthroughs in Moldova and Armenia, and many other phenomena that will keep us modifying existing theories and explanations. Though some have argued that the wave of "color revolutions" is over, some of the remaining CIS autocracies fit several of the parameters as outlined by Taras Kuzio in these pages. The fourth wave can begin with "elite cleavages" in fast-growing autocracies such as Kazakhstan, as argued in previous issues of the journal, as well as

inherent instability in hybrid and even in sultanistic regimes, as also argued here. These topics should keep not only the journal's editors (the "party"), but also the hard-working and always innovative staff at Heldref (the "state") busy—its new director, Jim Denton (formerly the head of Freedom House), Carmen Jessup, Janine Chiappa-McKenna, Jon Terry, Azalia Stephens, Christine Polcino, among others, who put out four issues (in addition to another forty-five periodicals) yearly, rain or shine.

The journal has lost some wonderful friends along the way—fifteen years is a long time for a publication, after all. Galina Starovoitova, often dubbed "the mother of Russian democracy," was assassinated in November 1998. Yuri Shchekochikhin, Russia's leading investigative reporter, died under mysterious circumstances in 2003. The president of Heldref Publications, who was also a major intellectual force behind American foreign policy in the 1980s, Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, passed away in December of 2006, following the loss of her son, Doug, who had managed Heldref for many years. A few months before, we also lost Aleksandr N. Yakovlev, dubbed the architect of glasnost and perestroika, and one of the few figures admired by all democratic forces in the former USSR. All of them were part of this journal not only directly, but also through creating the phenomena that we study. Each issue of *Demokratizatsiya* is a tribute to these towering figures.

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