

# CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

## **Democracy in Russia: Trends and Implications for U.S. Interests**

**Updated January 28, 2005**

Jim Nichol  
Specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs  
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

# Democracy in Russia: Trends and Implications for U.S. Interests

## Summary

U.S. attention has focused on Russia's fitful democratization since Russia emerged in 1991 from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many observers have argued that a democratic Russia with free markets would be a cooperative bilateral and multilateral partner rather than an insular and hostile national security threat. Concerns about democratization progress appeared heightened after Vladimir Putin became president in 2000. Since then, there has been increased government interference in elections and campaigns, restrictions on freedom of the media, civil as well as human rights abuses in the breakaway Chechnya region, and the arrest of businessman Mikhail Khodorkovskiy as an apparent warning to other entrepreneurs not to support opposition parties or otherwise challenge government policy.

Following terrorist attacks in Russia that culminated in the deaths of hundreds of school-children in the town of Beslan, President Putin on September 13, 2004, proposed restructuring all three branches of government and strengthening federal powers to better counter the terrorist threat to Russia. The proposed restructuring included integrating security agencies, switching to party list voting for the Duma (lower legislative chamber), eliminating direct elections of the heads of federal subunits, asserting greater presidential control over the judiciary, and mobilizing social support for the government by strengthening political parties and eliciting the views of non-governmental organizations.

Reaction to these proposals has been intense. On the one hand, some Russian and international observers have supported them as compatible with Russia's democratization. They have accepted Putin's argument that the restructuring would counter Chechen and international terrorists intent on destroying Russia's territorial integrity and political and economic development. On the other hand, critics of the proposals have branded them the latest in a series of anti-democratic moves since Putin came to power. The Russian legislature in late 2004 approved a law ending direct elections of federal subunit heads, and was considering bills in early 2005 to create the Public Chamber, elect the Duma by party lists, and counter terrorist incidents.

The U.S. Administration and Congress have welcomed some cooperation with Russia on vital U.S. national security concerns, including the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), strategic arms reduction, NATO enlargement, and since September 11, 2001, the Global War on Terror. At the same time, the United States has raised concerns with Russia over anti-democratic trends, warning that a divergence in democratic values could eventually harm U.S.-Russian cooperation. Following Putin's Beslan proposals, President Bush and other U.S. officials raised concerns about "decisions ... in Russia that could undermine democracy." Some U.S. observers have urged caution in making such statements, lest they harm U.S.-Russian cooperation on vital concerns, while others have urged a stronger U.S. response, regardless of possible effects on bilateral relations. This report may be updated as events warrant. See also CRS Issue Brief IB92089, *Russia*, updated regularly.

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Russia's Democratization .....	2
Trends in Democratization .....	4
The Recent Duma and Presidential Elections .....	4
The Duma Election .....	4
The Presidential Election .....	6
Freedom of the Media .....	7
Civil Society .....	8
Political Parties .....	10
The Proposal for Proportional Voting .....	11
Other Issues of Democratic Development .....	12
Independence of the Judiciary .....	12
Freedom of Assembly .....	12
Federalism .....	13
Implications for Russia .....	14
Scenarios for Russia's Political Evolution .....	14
Managed Democracy? .....	14
Authoritarianism? .....	16
Democratic Progress? .....	18
Implications for U.S. Interests .....	19
U.S.-Russia Relations .....	19
U.S. Democratization Assistance .....	22
Congressional Concerns .....	23
Issues for Congress .....	26
How Significant is Democratization in Russia to U.S. Interests? .....	26
How Much Can the United States do to Support Democratization in Russia and What Types of Support are Appropriate? .....	27

## List of Tables

Table 1. Duma Election Results .....	4
Table 2. Presidential Election Results .....	6
Table 3. U.S. Democratization Aid to Russia .....	23

# Democracy in Russia? Trends and Implications for U.S. Interests

## Introduction

U.S. attention has focused on Russia's fitful democratization since it emerged in 1991 from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many observers have argued that a democratic Russia with free markets would be a cooperative bilateral and multilateral partner rather than an insular and hostile national security threat. At the same time, most observers have cautioned that democracy may not be easily attainable in Russia, at least in part because of a dearth of historical and cultural experience with representative institutions and modes of thought.<sup>1</sup> Concerns about democratization progress appeared heightened after Vladimir Putin became president in 2000. Setbacks to democratization have included more government interference in elections and campaigns, restrictions on freedom of the media, civil as well as human rights abuses in the breakaway Chechnya region, and the arrest of businessman Mikhail Khodorkovskiy as an apparent warning to other entrepreneurs not to support opposition parties or otherwise challenge government policy.

Following terrorist attacks in Russia that culminated in the deaths of hundreds of school-children in the town of Beslan, President Putin on September 13, 2004, proposed restructuring all three branches of government and strengthening federal powers to better counter the terrorist threat to Russia. The proposed restructuring included integrating security agencies, switching to purely proportional voting for the Duma (lower legislative chamber), eliminating direct elections of the heads of federal subunits, asserting greater presidential control over the judiciary, and mobilizing social support for the government by strengthening political parties and eliciting the views of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).<sup>2</sup>

Reaction to the proposals has been intense. On the one hand, some Russian and international observers support them as compatible with Russia's democratization. They have accepted Putin's argument that the restructuring would counter Chechen and international terrorists intent on destroying Russia's territorial integrity and political and economic development. On the other hand, critics of the proposals have branded them the latest in a series of anti-democratic moves since Putin came to power in 2000.

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Pipes, *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service (hereafter FBIS), *Central Eurasia: Daily Report*, September 13, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-92. The judicial initiatives were unveiled later.

The U.S. Administration and Congress have welcomed some cooperation with Russia on vital U.S. national security concerns, including the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), strategic arms reduction, NATO enlargement, and since September 11, 2001, the Global War on Terror. At the same time, the United States has raised concerns with Russia over anti-democratic trends, warning that a divergence in democratic values could eventually harm U.S.-Russian cooperation. Following Putin's Beslan proposals, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell on September 14 urged Russia not to allow the fight against terrorism to harm the democratic process, and President Bush the next day raised concerns about "decisions ... in Russia that could undermine democracy."<sup>3</sup> Some U.S. observers urged caution in making such statements, lest they harm U.S.-Russian cooperation on vital U.S. national security concerns, while others urged stronger U.S. motions of disapproval, regardless of possible effects on bilateral relations. The Putin government and state-controlled media criticized such U.S. Administration statements as "interfering in Russia's internal affairs," as not recognizing the grave threat of terrorism in Russia, and as misrepresenting sensible counter-terrorism measures as threats to democratization.

This paper will assess Russia's progress in democratization, including in the areas of elections, media rights, civil society, and federalism. Three scenarios of possible future political developments are suggested — a continuation of the current situation, authoritarianism, and further democratization — and evidence and arguments are weighed for each. Lastly, U.S. policy and implications for U.S. interests, Congressional concerns, and issues for Congress are analyzed.

## Russia's Democratization

Most analysts agree that modern democracy includes the peaceful change of leaders through popular participation in elections. Also, political powers are separated and exercised by institutions that check and balance each others' powers, hence impairing a tyranny of power. Democracies generally have free market economies, which depend upon the rule of law and private property rights. The rule of law is assured through an independent judicial and legal system. The accountability of government officials to the citizenry is assured most importantly through elections that are freely competed and fairly conducted. An informed electorate is assured through the government's obligation to publicize its activities (termed transparency) and the citizenry's freedom of expression.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, in an authoritarian state the leadership rules with wide and arbitrary latitude in the political sphere but interferes somewhat less in economic and social affairs. The government strictly limits opposition activities, and citizens are not able to change leaders by electoral means. Rather than legitimizing its rule by appealing to an elaborate

---

<sup>3</sup> The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *Remarks by the President at the Hispanic Heritage Month Concert and Reception*, September 15, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2003, p. 103; Robert Barker, *Issues of Democracy*, U.S. State Department, August 2000.

ideology, an authoritarian regime boasts to its citizenry that it provides safety, security, and order.<sup>5</sup>

Some theorists have delineated a political system with mixed features of democracy and authoritarianism they label “managed democracy.”<sup>6</sup> In a managed democracy, the leaders use government resources and manipulation to ensure that they will not be defeated in elections, although they permit democratic institutions and groups to function to a limited extent.<sup>7</sup>

Russia certainly has made some progress in democratization since the Soviet period, but how much progress, and the direction of recent trends, are subject to dispute. Democratization has faced myriad challenges, including former President Boris Yeltsin’s violent face-off with the legislature in 1993 and recurring conflict in the breakaway Chechnya region. Such challenges, virtually all analysts agree, have prevented Russia from becoming a fully-fledged or “consolidated” democracy in terms of the above definition. Many analysts have viewed Putin as making decisions that have diverted Russia further away from democracy, but they have concurred that the country is not yet fully authoritarian, and may be described as a “managed democracy.”<sup>8</sup> Others insist that he is clearly antagonistic toward democracy, not least because he launched security operations in Chechnya that have resulted in wide scale human rights abuses and civilian casualties.<sup>9</sup> The NGO Freedom House claims that Russia under Putin has suffered the greatest reversal among the post-Soviet states in democratic freedoms, and warns that the main danger to Russia’s future political stability and continued economic growth is an overly repressive state.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Authoritarianism is here differentiated from totalitarianism, with the latter viewed as rule using ideology and coercion to tyrannize the economy and society. Juan Linz. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Other labels for this hybrid include “partial democracy,” “delegative democracy,” “guided democracy,” “electoral clanism,” and “oligarchy.” See Neil Robinson, *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 149 — 166.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Smith, *Russia After the Presidential Election*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, April 2004. See also Thomas Carothers, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2002, pp. 11–12; and Nikolas Gvosdev, *Demokratizatsiya*, Fall 2002, pp. 488-501.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy*, Brookings Institution Press, 2003, pp. 206-219.

<sup>9</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)*, September 20, 2004, p. A6.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2004*, May 2004; Freedom House, *Press Release*, May 24, 2004. It has cautioned that if Putin’s Beslan proposals are enacted, Russia would become even less democratic. *Press Release*, September 23, 2004. In December 2004, it reduced Russia’s rating to “not free,” because of the “growing trend under President Vladimir Putin to concentrate political authority, harass and intimidate the media, and politicize the country’s law-enforcement system. ... These moves mark a dangerous and disturbing drift toward authoritarianism in Russia, made more worrisome by President Putin’s recent heavy-handed meddling in political developments in neighboring countries such as Ukraine.” *Press Release*, December 20, 2004.

Other observers agree with Putin that stability is necessary to build democracy. He stresses that the government's first priority is to deal with terrorism and other threats to sovereignty and territorial integrity, such as corruption. Some suggest that such a "strong state" may be compatible with free market economic growth, even if it is not fully democratic.

## Trends in Democratization

### The Recent Duma and Presidential Elections

Most analysts agree that Russia's democratic progress was uneven at best during the 1990s, and that the recent 2003-2004 cycle of legislative and presidential elections demonstrate the increasingly troubled status of democratization during Putin's leadership.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1. Duma Election Results**

Party/Bloc	% Party List Vote	List Seats	District Seats	Total Seats
United Russia	37.57	120	104	224
Communist	12.61	40	12	52
Motherland	9.02	29	7	36
Liberal Democratic	11.45	36	0	36
Other Parties	24.65	0	32	32
Independents	—	—	67	67
Total	100*	225	225**	450

\*4.7% voted "against all."

\*\*New races were held in 3 districts in March 2004, so seats do not total to 225.

Source: Central Electoral Commission, December 19, 2003.

**The Duma Election.** On December 7, 2003, Russians voted to fill 450 seats in the State Duma, 225 chosen in single-member districts and 225 chosen by party lists. Nearly 1,900 candidates ran in the districts, and 23 parties fielded lists. Public opinion polls before the election showed that Putin was highly popular, and it was expected that pro-Putin parties and candidates would fare well. On election day, there was a low turnout of 56 percent and 59.685 million valid votes cast. The Putin-endorsed United Russia party won the largest shares of the party list and district votes, giving it a total of 224 seats.<sup>12</sup> The ultranationalist vote was mainly shared by the newly formed pro-Putin Motherland bloc of parties and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (which usually supports the government).

<sup>11</sup> Colton and McFaul argue that the 1999-2000 election cycle (during which Putin was acting president and then a presidential candidate) marked the reversal of democratization rather than the consolidation of regular pluralistic processes. *Popular Choice*, p. 223.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Ortung, *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, June 2, 2004.

Candidates not claiming party affiliation won 67 district seats (most later joined the United Russia faction in the Duma). Opposition parties and candidates fared poorly. The opposition Communist Party won far fewer seats (52) than it had in 1999 (113 seats), marking its marginalization in the Duma. The main opposition liberal democratic parties (Union of Right Forces and Yabloko) failed to reach the five percent threshold for party representation in the Duma, and are virtually excluded.<sup>13</sup>

Election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Council of Europe (PACE) concluded that the Duma race was less democratic than in 1999. They highlighted the government's "extensive" aid and use of media to favor United Russia and Motherland and to discourage support and positive media coverage of the opposition parties. Such favoritism, they stated, "undermined" the principle of equal treatment for competing parties and candidates and "blurred the distinction" between the party and the state. They further considered the Central Electoral Commission's (CEC's) failure to enforce laws against such bias "a worrisome development that calls into question Russia's ... willingness" to meet international standards.<sup>14</sup>

Before the Duma convened on December 29, 2003, most of the nominally independent deputies had affiliated with the United Russia party faction, swelling it to over 300 members. This gave United Russia the ability not only to approve handily Putin's initiatives, but also the two-thirds vote needed to alter the constitution without having to make concessions to win the votes of other factions. The United Russia faction leader assumed the speakership, and its members were named to six of nine deputy speakerships and to the chairmanships of all 28 committees. Allegedly, the Putin government heavily influenced these assignments. Committee staffs were slashed to streamline the process of passing government-initiated bills, and security and police operatives reportedly were detailed to work on committees. The United Russia faction took control over agenda-setting for the chamber and introduced a streamlined process for passing government bills that precluded the introduction of amendments on the floor by opposition deputies.<sup>15</sup>

During its first session (January-July 2004), the Duma handily passed Kremlin-sponsored legislation requiring a two-thirds majority, including Putin's pick for human rights commissioner and changes to federal boundaries. Even a highly unpopular government bill converting many in-kind social entitlements to monetary payments (but retaining them for officials and deputies) was overwhelmingly approved in early August 2004. The Russian newspaper *Moscow Times* reported that some Duma deputies complained that the bill was pushed through even though there was not a full text. Many senators in the Federation Council (the upper legislative chamber), who represent regional interests, raised concerns about the shift of the

---

<sup>13</sup> The Union of Rights Forces and Yabloko won a total of seven seats in district races, too few to form a party faction in the Duma.

<sup>14</sup> OSCE/PACE International Election Observation Mission, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, *Russian Federation Elections to the State Duma*, December 8, 2003; Final Report, January 27, 2004. See also William Clark, *Problems of Post-Communism*, March/April 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Konstantin Demchenko, *Russkii kurier*, July 12, 2004.



welfare burden from the center to the regions. They allegedly were warned by the Putin government, as were the regional leaders, not to oppose the legislation.<sup>16</sup>

**The Presidential Election.** The overwhelming successes of pro-Putin parties in the Duma election were viewed by most in Russia as a ringing popular endorsement of Putin's continued rule. Opposition party leaders were discredited by the vote, and Putin's continued high poll ratings convinced most major potential contenders to decline to run against him. Union of Right Forces party bloc co-chair Irina Khakamada and Motherland co-head Sergey Glazyev ran without their party's backing, and Glazyev faced a split within his party bloc from members opposed to his candidacy against Putin. The Communist Party leader, Gennadiy Zyuganov, declined to run. The party nominated a less-known surrogate, State Duma deputy Nikolay Kharitonov. Similarly, the Liberal Democratic Party leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, declined and the party nominated Oleg Malyshkin. The tiny Party of Life (created by pro-Putin interests in 2002 to siphon votes from the Communist Party) nominated Sergey Mironov, Speaker of the Federation Council. Mironov publicly supported Putin and criticized the other candidates.

**Table 2. Presidential Election Results**

Candidate	% of Vote*
V. Putin	71.31
N. Kharitonov	13.69
S. Glazyev	4.1
I. Khakamada	3.84
O. Malyshkin	2.02
S. Mironov	0.75
Against All	3.45

\*69.5 million votes were cast

Source: Russian Central Electoral Commission

Despite poll results indicating that Putin would handily win re-election, his government interfered with a free and fair race, according to the OSCE. State-owned or controlled media "comprehensively failed to ... provide equal treatment to all candidates," and displayed "clear bias" favoring Putin and negatively portraying other candidates.<sup>17</sup> Political debate also was circumscribed by Putin's refusal to debate with other candidates. Concern that the low public interest in the campaign might be reflected in a turnout less than the required 50 percent, the CEC aired "get out the vote" appeals that contained pro-Putin images, according to the OSCE. While

<sup>16</sup> *Moscow Times*, August 4, 2004. Some polls indicated that a majority of the public opposed the monetization of benefits. *FBIS*, July 2, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-333; July 9, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-102; July 9, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-218.

<sup>17</sup> OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. *Russian Federation Presidential Election, 14 March 2004: Election Observation Mission Report*, June 2, 2004.

praising the efficiency of the CEC and lower-level electoral commissions in administering the election, the OSCE also reported that vote-counting appeared problematic in almost one-third of the precincts observed. Irregularities included penciling in vote totals for later possible alteration, and in one case, the reporting of results without counting the votes. In six regions, including Chechnya, voter turnout and the vote for Putin were nearly 90% or above, approaching implausible Soviet-era percentages. The CEC instigated troubling criminal investigations of signature-gathering by Glazyev and Khakamada that were not resolved before the election, putting a cloud over their campaigning.

## Freedom of the Media

During 2003, Freedom House lowered its assessment of Russia's media from "Partly Free" to "Not Free," and raised new warnings about Russia in 2004, citing the Russian government's tightening controls over major television networks, state harassment and intimidation of journalists, and the enforcement of legislation designed to limit what journalists reported.<sup>18</sup> In early to mid-2003, the government allegedly used its direct or indirect ownership shares to tighten control over the independent television station NTV, close down another station (TV-6), and rescind the operating license of a third (TVS). Not only does the government reportedly have controlling influence over the three nationwide television networks and other major broadcast and print media, but a Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications created in 2004 has major influence over the majority of television advertising and print distribution.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned above, in the 2003-2004 cycle of Duma and presidential elections, the Putin government had major ownership control over all major national television networks, and these networks inordinately provided most time and positive coverage to Putin and United Russia. Also, because a majority of regional leaders backed Putin and United Russia, the regional television stations they influenced followed suit. Media were further constrained by laws enacted in mid-2003 that strictly limited the reporting of news about candidates for political office, except for their paid advertisements. In October 2003, however, the Constitutional Court ruled that media could offer editorial comments about candidates, but other legal provisions and an atmosphere of self-censorship restricted free media coverage of the 2003-2004 cycle of Duma and presidential races, according to many observers.<sup>20</sup>

The Committee to Protect Journalists, a U.S.-based NGO, in May 2004 listed Russia among the ten "worst places to be a journalist," citing the frequency of

---

<sup>18</sup> *Nations in Transit 2004; Freedom in the World 2005*. Some Russian journalists suggested that Putin's anger over unfavorable media coverage of the Moscow theater hostage crisis in 2002 helped trigger harsher media restrictions, while others placed more emphasis on the government's desire for greater control over coverage of upcoming elections.

<sup>19</sup> *FBIS*, July 7, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-451; July 23, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-239.

<sup>20</sup> Michael McFaul, *Journal of Democracy*, July 2004. Russian news anchor Vladimir Pozner asserted that managers at the state-owned Channel 1 television network had "strictly controlled" what could be discussed and who could be interviewed in the run-up to the Duma and presidential elections. *FBIS*, June 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-371.

lawsuits and imprisonment, and over a dozen murders of investigative journalists during Putin's first term in office, 2000-2004. Prominent cases include the July 2004 murder of *Forbes* reporter Paul Klebnikov, the September 2004 arrest of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter Andrey Babitskiy after being attacked by government airport employees, and the alleged poisoning in September of *Novaya gazeta* reporter Anna Politovskaya. The latter two reporters had been en route to southern Russia during the Beslan hostage crisis, where Politovskaya hoped to help the government negotiate with the captors.<sup>21</sup> Condemning the latter two incidents, the *Washington Post* stated that "government control of the media is no longer a matter of television stations run by Kremlin proxies, and subtle pressure. These are brutal, Soviet-era tactics...." Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov defended the government's restriction of news during the crisis, stating that media should focus on positive developments rather than "create ... hopelessness."<sup>22</sup>

## Civil Society

According to Freedom House and other observers, the status of civil society in Russia worsened during 2003-2005. The Putin government increasingly constrained the operations and financing of human rights NGOs that lobbied for reforms, and declining public participation in political parties and NGOs weakened their influence over government policy. Worrisome trends included Putin's criticism in his May 2004 state of the federation address that some NGOs receive foreign funding and "serve dubious group and commercial interests," rather than focusing on "severe problems faced by the country and its citizens." Perhaps taking its cue from the address, state-owned Center TV immediately criticized unnamed NGOs for ignoring increasing mortality, the misery of pensioners, and privatization scandals. Center TV implied that such NGOs were tied to anti-Russian U.S. interests and it asked rhetorically why they "hate Russia so much." Responding to Putin's address, fifteen NGOs signed a letter to Putin protesting that they were not anti-Russian.<sup>23</sup>

As a follow-up to Putin's address, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with several NGOs in June 2004 to urge them to present a united front to the world, such as by rebuffing criticism of Russia's human rights policies by the Council of Europe. Some observers warned that this appeared to mark efforts to re-create Soviet propaganda organizations under the control of intelligence agencies, such as the Soviet-era Committee for the Defense of Peace (its successor organization, the Federation of Peace and Accord, took part in the meeting). Critics also alleged that many of the NGOs that met with Lavrov appeared newly created, and that the government's aim was for these groups to crowd out established and independent NGOs, similar to an earlier government effort to cultivate sympathetic religious

---

<sup>21</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, *World's Worst Places to be a Journalist, Press Release*, May 3, 2004; *Attacks on the Press in 2003*, Brookings Institution Press, March 11, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> *ITAR-TASS*, September 13, 2004; Peter Baker, *Washington Post (WP)*, September 11, 2004, p. A13.

<sup>23</sup> *Center TV*, June 5, 2004.

groups.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, pro-government researcher Gleb Pavlovskiy branded longtime NGOs such as Memorial and Soldiers' Mothers as obsolete, "Soviet-era" organizations that needed to give up "dissident" activities and reliance on foreign grants and become more service-oriented.<sup>25</sup>

In the wake of the Beslan tragedy, authorities endeavored to manage the large number of public demonstrations throughout the country to make sure they were anti-terrorist, rather than anti-government, gatherings. A few observers suggested that the demonstrations raised new fears in the Putin administration of public passions and spurred the proposal to create a "Public Chamber." As urged by Putin on September 13, "mechanisms to bind the state together" to fight terrorism would include strong political parties to make sure that public opinion is heard and a "Public Chamber" composed of NGOs that would discuss draft laws, oversee government performance, and possibly allocate state grants. The influence of public opinion also would be bolstered, he claimed, by setting up citizens' groups that would pass on information to security and police agencies and help the agencies "maintain public order."<sup>26</sup> Rejecting the necessity of a Public Chamber, some democracy advocates called instead for strengthening legislative oversight and parties.<sup>27</sup>

Opposition to the Beslan proposals led to the convocation of a Civic Congress on December 12, 2004, attended by about 1,500 representatives of parties, NGOs, and human rights activists. The Civic Congress issued a call for the government to abide by the constitution and not abridge human and civil rights. Perhaps ominously, a counter-meeting and a large pro-Putin demonstration were organized by the Motherland Party and held the same day to denounce the participants in the Civic Congress as agents of the oligarchs and foreign interests.<sup>28</sup>

Public opinion polls in Russia have been interpreted as both proving and disproving that Russians value democracy. U.S. researcher Richard Pipes has concluded from his examination of polls conducted in 2003 that "antidemocratic [and] antilibertarian actions" by Putin "are actually supported" by most Russians, and

---

<sup>24</sup> *Moscow Times*, June 25, 2004. On religious groups, see *FBIS*, June 13, 2000, Doc. No. CEP-207; and December 26, 2000, Doc. No. CEP-168. In late 2001, Putin organized a "Civic Forum" with several NGOs that was widely viewed as failing to further government-NGO cooperation. *FBIS*, November 28, 2001, Doc. No. CEP-256; November 29, 2001, Doc. No. CEP-442.

<sup>25</sup> *FBIS*, July 22, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-4.

<sup>26</sup> *FBIS*, September 9, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-348; September 13, 2004, Doc. No. 92. Putin first broached the idea of a "public chamber" in May 2004. *FBIS*, May 26, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-67. Presidential aide Vladislav Surkov has stated that the Public Chamber would be "attached to" the legislature. Its composition might include political party representatives and regional "civic unions," he suggests, but it will be immune to "populism," implying that its advice will be based on consensus. *Russia Profile*, October 14, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Alexey Arbatov, *BBC Monitoring*, September 16, 2004. Russian analyst Dmitriy Oreshkin has warned that "the Public Chamber is a characteristic architectural frill of authoritarian power." Quoted in Sergei Tkachuk, *Noviye Izvestia*, September 15, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> *FBIS*, December 12, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-73 and Doc. No. CEP-56.

that no more than one in ten Russians value democratic liberties and civil rights. The disdain for democracy, he argues, reflects Russians' cultural predilection for order and autocracy.<sup>29</sup> Other observers reject placing the bulk of blame for faltering democratization on civil society. Russian analyst Alexander Lukin has objected to Pipes' conclusions, arguing that Russians embraced democracy in the late 1980s, and that while the term "democracy" since then has fallen into disfavor in political discourse, Russians continue to value its principles.<sup>30</sup>

Recent polls seem to illustrate the mixed attitudes of Russians toward various aspects of democratization. Several polls by Russia's privately-owned Levada Center during 2004 seemed to indicate that most Russians value social rights more than political rights and do not object to the idea of well-liked President Putin gaining more power. Between one-fourth and one-third of respondents, however, place value on the separation of powers, government accountability, and multi-party elections. Various polls appear to differ, however, on attitudes toward specific rights. One poll by Levada indicated that most Russians would permit the government to eavesdrop on telephone conversations and ban media criticism of Putin's policies. Polls by the state-controlled All-Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) obversely indicated opposition to eavesdropping and censorship, halting party activities and elections, or banning demonstrations. Other polls appeared initially to show that most Russians were opposed to Putin's proposals to eliminate direct gubernatorial and single district elections. Following a large-scale government information campaign, however, Russians have appeared more supportive of the proposals.<sup>31</sup>

**Political Parties.** Putin has orchestrated the passage of several changes to the electoral system that he claims will create a strong and stable party system with fewer parties. After the December 2003 Duma race, it appeared that many of the smaller parties faced increased challenges to their existence. The July 2004 congress of the liberal democratic Union of Right Forces (URF) proved unable to decide on a new party leadership, and a few members advocated that the party join a putative "liberal wing" of United Russia. At its July 2004 congress, Yabloko again refused to join forces with URF to widen its appeal.

Apparent government manipulation of the party system included its substantial support during Putin's first term to bolster the appeal of Unity (renamed United Russia) as the "presidential party." In 2003, the government also was widely viewed as helping to create the Motherland bloc to appeal to nationalist elements of the Communist Party and to members of small fascist groups. Some observers speculate that the Putin government was surprised by the strength of Motherland's electoral support. Although widely viewed as a creature of the Kremlin, Motherland's head, Dmitriy Rogozin, claimed in July 2004 that the party bloc would serve as a "loyal

---

<sup>29</sup> Richard Pipes, *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2004; Dmitriy Babich, *Russia Profile*, August 23, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Lukin, *Moscow Times*, July 21, 2004; Colton and McFaul, pp. 223, 228.

<sup>31</sup> Anfisa Voronina, *Vedomosti*, September 27, 2004; Nikolai Popov, *Novoye vremya*, October 10, 2004; Vladimir Petukhov, *FBIS*, October 5, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-295.

opposition,” perhaps marking further efforts by Motherland to emasculate the Communist Party and fascist groups.<sup>32</sup> The Communist Party split at its congress in July 2004, possibly endangering its future viability.

Many observers suggest that Khodorkovskiy’s arrest in late 2003 was motivated at least in part by his political ambitions and support for Yabloko in the upcoming Duma election. In this view, Putin aimed to block the so-called oligarchs (leaders of the top private firms) and other entrepreneurs from gaining greater political influence through support for parties and for candidates in single-member district races. Since Khodorkovskiy’s arrest, businessmen sharply have reduced their donations to opposition parties, and business groups have pledged fealty to Putin.<sup>33</sup>

**The Proposal for Proportional Voting.** At the end of August 2004, a working group of the CEC, with Kremlin support, proposed to eliminate single-member districts in the Duma in favor of having all seats determined by the proportion of votes each party won nationally. It argued that proportional representation would give more importance to minority parties and regions with small populations, but it acknowledged that party lists would have to be revamped to assign more candidates to particular regions. It also admitted that these winning candidates might need to be “obliged” to work with their local constituents.<sup>34</sup> After the Beslan tragedy, Putin on September 13, 2004, included this proposal in his package of electoral “reforms,” claiming that proportional elections would strengthen public unity in the war on terrorism.

Critics of the proposal have asserted that it aims “to redistribute ... deputy accountability from the voters to the [government loyalists] who compile the party lists.”<sup>35</sup> They have also raised alarms that, in the condition where United Russia is the dominant party, elections may come to resemble Soviet-era elections where citizens were mobilized to vote for the sole Communist Party. Some critics claimed that the Putin government’s main aim was to eliminate the surviving minor party and independent “back-bench” deputies elected in the districts, who often were the sole critics of government-initiated bills.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> In December 2004, Rogozin stated that Motherland was a constructive opposition party because it opposed liberal economists within the Putin administration and backed state control over most “strategic areas of life.” *FBIS*, December 12, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-56.

<sup>33</sup> Mikhail Vinogradov, *Izvestia*, September 24, 2004; Maksim Glikin, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, October 4, 2004. This view is supported by CEC chairman Aleksandr Veshnyakov, who claimed that eliminating single-member districts would prevent “buying democracy with dirty money.” *FBIS*, June 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-366. Novgorod governor Mikhail Prusak aptly pointed out that pecuniary interests are a fundamental reason for the existence of democratic parties. *FBIS*, April 28, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-301.

<sup>34</sup> *Kommersant*, August 30, 2004; *FBIS*, June 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-366.

<sup>35</sup> Nikolay Petrov, *Moscow Times*, September 15, 2004.

<sup>36</sup> *FBIS*, August 18, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-215; Robert Coalson, *RFE/RL Feature Articles*, October 11, 2004.

Other observers familiar with party list voting for legislatures appeared supportive or neutral on Putin's proposal for such elections. German analyst Alexander Rahr suggested that the proposal "will probably find recognition in Europe....[It] is understood and quite in line with the political practice of any democracy." Russian analyst Konstantin Simonov likewise asserted that "elections according to party lists, tested by experience in many countries, creates perfect opportunities for development of political parties." These observers argue that eliminating single-member district legislative elections at all levels will eliminate nonparty candidates, hence strengthening parties and making them better able to articulate citizens' interests.<sup>37</sup>

## Other Issues of Democratic Development

**Independence of the Judiciary.** On September 29, 2004, bills were quietly introduced and passed in the Federation Council to give the president greater direct control over judicial appointments and salaries. The bills were then sent to the Duma for approval. Current law provides for a Council of Judges to secretly vote on most members of a Higher Qualifications Collegium, which reviews candidates for higher courts, monitors similar regional bodies that appoint lower court judges, hears complaints about judges, and decides whether to remove them from the bench. The proposed bill provided for all members of the Collegium to be appointed by the president or the Federation Council. Another bill extended presidential control over the salaries and perquisites of judges. While Putin and the speaker of the Federation Council argued that the bills would assist in combating terrorism and judicial corruption, one Russian asserted that the proposed bills would result in "no democracy," since the president would control court decisions.<sup>38</sup> The Council of Judges met on December 1-2, 2004, and denounced the bills as violating constitutional and international commitments to maintain an independent judiciary.<sup>39</sup>

**Freedom of Assembly.** In 2003, opposition parties and groups were somewhat effective in persuading the government to modify amendments it had introduced to tighten restrictions on public assembly. At first, the legislation was bottled up in a committee headed by a Communist deputy whose party opposed the bill. After the election of the new Duma, however, United Russia moved to enact the bill, but complaints from some deputies and public organizations led Putin to intervene to "propose" some changes. The amended bill then was quickly passed and signed by the president in June 2004. Some critics assess the bill as still overly restricting public demonstrations by prohibiting them in front of court houses, jails,

---

<sup>37</sup> *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, September 15, 2004; Vladimir Ignatov, *Trud*, September 15, 2004; Jonathan Riggs and Peter Schraeder, *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2004; Eric Kraus, *Johnson's Russia List*, September 25, 2004. Kraus asserts that single-member district candidates for the Duma usually are "cronies" of the governors or oligarchs. After being elected, these deputies usually reveal their true party orientation or affiliate with whichever party offers them the best perquisites.

<sup>38</sup> *FBIS*, October 20, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-378; October 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-27; September 30, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-160; Francesca Mereu, *Moscow Times*, October 6, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> *FBIS*, December 6, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-82.

and the president's homes, and permitting them to be terminated if participants commit undefined "illegal acts."

**Federalism.** The Putin government has substantially reduced the autonomy of the regions. During his first term in office, Putin asserted greater central control over the regions by appointing presidential representatives to newly created "super districts" (groups of regions) to oversee administration. He greatly reduced the influence of the governors in central legislative affairs by forcing through legislation that eliminated their membership in the Federation Council. He also strengthened the powers of central agencies and the authority of national law in the regions.<sup>40</sup>

Since the latter 1990s, virtually all governors of the regions and presidents of the autonomous republics have been elected by direct vote.<sup>41</sup> In many of Russia's 21 autonomous republics, this principle is enshrined in their constitutions, and it is also part of regional statutes. During the Yeltsin period, presidential interference in local elections was generally characterized as selective and inept, but it has appeared much more organized and effective under Putin. According to one estimate, fewer than a dozen of the 89 regional elections held during the Putin era resulted in wins for candidates who were not favored by the center.<sup>42</sup> Primary examples where the Putin administration appeared to manipulate local elections include the 2003 St. Petersburg mayoral race and elections of the regional heads in Ingushetia and Chechnya. Voters elected Valentina Matvienko, a Putin proxy, as mayor of St. Petersburg after a campaign where opponents complained of harassment and biased media coverage.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these successes in centralization, the Putin administration lost a few regional elections to non-favored candidates and continued to face undesired lobbying by governors seeking budgetary resources. Such "problems" may have contributed to Putin's September 2004 Beslan proposal that regional heads be designated by the president and confirmed by regional legislatures so that the federal system functions as "an integral, single organism with a clear structure of subordination."<sup>44</sup> In addition, he proposed that these governors should "exert more influence" in forming and "working with" lower-level governments. These "reforms," he stated, would not violate the constitution. His deputy chief of staff, Vladimir Surkov, explained that the "presidential nomination" of regional heads

---

<sup>40</sup> After the Beslan tragedy, the Duma Committee on Local Self-Government began to consider whether to permit the appointment of mayors by the governors who are appointed by the president.

<sup>41</sup> In late 1991, the Russian legislature granted Yeltsin the temporary power to appoint governors to newly created posts in Russia's 66 regions, territories, and areas (the heads of the 21 republics and two federal cities remained locally elected). Some regions were permitted to elect governors, and in 1996-1997 such elections were held across the country.

<sup>42</sup> *WP*, September 16, 2004, P. A28.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon Hahn, *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2004, pp. 195-234.

<sup>44</sup> *FBIS*, September 13, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-92.



would facilitate anti-terrorism efforts by permitting central authorities to freely crack down on “extremist infection” in the regions.<sup>45</sup>

Indicating that the proposal would easily pass in the legislature, pro-Putin party officials such as Dmitriy Rogozin, the head of Motherland, praised the proposal as ending the practice of governors “blackmailing the federal center” for favors. Most federal subunit leaders such as Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov and Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaymiyev hailed the proposal, with Luzhkov proclaiming that it would end the election of “popular” rather than “professional” rulers. Besides the possible distaste of these leaders for having to solicit votes, and their desire to remain on the Putin “bandwagon,” many governors endorsed the proposal because they would no longer face term limits. Many are in their final term of elected office. Both chambers of the legislature approved the bill and it was signed by Putin and went into effect on December 15, 2004. The last gubernatorial race was held on January 23, 2005, in the Nenetskiy Autonomous Area.

## Implications for Russia

The implications of Putin’s rule and his recent Beslan proposals may be organized into three major trends or scenarios of Russia’s future political development, namely democratization, authoritarianism, or a middle ground that many observers term “managed democracy.” The main question in considering the scenarios is whether the current level of managed democracy can endure for some time, or whether it is a stage on the way to either more democratization or more authoritarianism. Implications include how the level of democratization may affect the economy and foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

## Scenarios for Russia’s Political Evolution

**Managed Democracy?** Scenarios of managed democracy usually envisage the continuation of current policies that hinder democratization. Eventually, according to some analysts, Russia may resume democratization, or it may become authoritarian. Others warn that managed democracy could persist indefinitely, with political processes sometimes leaning toward greater “management” and sometimes toward greater “democracy,” but not leading to fundamental changes in policy or personnel. Those who view recent politics as managed democracy suggest that Putin prevented public debate during the 2003-2004 Duma and presidential elections of problems facing Russia — such as Chechnya and privatization — that might have resulted in different electoral choices and policies.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, September 29, 2004; *Russia Profile*, October 14, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> For background, see CRS Report 95-1128, *Russia’s Future*; and CRS Report 98-642, *Democracy-Building in the New Independent States*. A fourth scenario is instability and break-up, also termed the “failed state” scenario. It is deemed by many observers to be less likely, but has been advanced by Putin as a justification for more authoritarianism.

<sup>47</sup> Steven Myers, *New York Times*, September 1, 2004; Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, (continued...)

Some observers argue that regional, ethnic, economic, bureaucratic, and other groups remain strong impediments to Putin's exercise of more power. Putin uses revenues generated by high world oil prices as largesse to these groups to placate them, rather than using the funds to further democratic and market economy reforms. Such a standoff could persist for some years, but eventually democratic activism and economic developments could threaten this fragile system of rule.<sup>48</sup>

Other observers assert that Putin is necessarily stifling some democratization in order to pursue economic reforms that would be threatened by populism. They suggest that popular demands for prosecuting the oligarchs and other businessmen, re-nationalizing assets, and resurrecting Soviet-era price controls and social subsidies would have been irresistible if democratic institutions functioned freely. They also caution that ultra-nationalists and communists might have garnered dangerous electoral power. Eventually, according to this view, popular prejudice against free markets — a legacy of Soviet-era propaganda — will abate, and Putin or his successors can permit greater democratization.<sup>49</sup>

Another view at least somewhat supportive of Putin's Beslan proposals is that they are necessary to combat terrorism and do not fundamentally set back Russian democratization. Analyst Dmitriy Simes has suggested that Putin's Beslan proposals to concentrate decision-making "make a lot of sense," in order to strip power away from "political warlords called governors," eliminate power grabs by oligarchs, and end control by regional "corrupt structures" over Duma deputies elected in the districts. According to this view, Russia will seek to strengthen cooperation with the United States on the Global War on Terror and issues such as non-proliferation, although differences on some foreign policy issues may continue, such as Russia's criticism of U.S. operations in Iraq and U.S. opposition to Russian nuclear cooperation with Iran.<sup>50</sup>

Analyst Anders Aslund has viewed the Putin era as interrupting Russia's substantial movement toward democracy and a market economy during the 1990s. He argues that Putin's rule is a throwback to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and tsarism, both typified by rule by whim without checks and balances, an overweening bureaucracy and security apparatus, and rampant corruption. By constraining democratic and media checks on his power, Putin has been freer to move against the private sector,

---

<sup>47</sup> (...continued)

*Journal of Democracy*, April 2002, pp. 51-65; Michael McFaul and Nikolai Petrov argue that such electoral irregularities may be common in recently democratizing states. See *Journal of Democracy*, July 2004, pp. 20-32. Also see Larry Diamond, *Journal of Democracy*, April 2002, pp. 21-35.

<sup>48</sup> Donald Jensen, *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, October 1, 2004; Daniel Kimmage, *In the National Interest*, October 1, 2004. For assessments of Russian budget revenues and expenditures, see *FBIS*, May 21, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-229; September 1, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-378; and September 30, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-246.

<sup>49</sup> *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, April 28, 2004. Joseph Siegle rejects the thesis that greater democratization can threaten economic development. *Harvard International Review*, Summer 2004, pp. 20-26.

<sup>50</sup> Dmitriy Simes, *PBS Newshour*, September 14, 2004.

and foreign investment and economic growth will suffer. Putin's atavism cannot long endure, Aslund states, but it is uncertain whether ultra-nationalist authoritarianism or democratization might come to the fore.<sup>51</sup>

Some observers argue that younger, educated Russians are more likely to support democracy, so that generational turnover eventually will end the current era of managed democracy. Others are more pessimistic about this support for democratization, citing polls supposedly indicating that younger Russians may be more worldly than their elders, and value freedom over equality, but are not yet committed to the "basic values of human rights, tolerance, and constitutional liberalism." In the 2003-2004 elections, these young Russians appeared to support United Russia or Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party rather than liberal parties.<sup>52</sup>

**Authoritarianism?** Some analysts view current political developments in Russia as marking the descent to undemocratic rule in Russia, although they usually argue that such rule will not approach the repressiveness of the former Soviet Union. U.S. analyst Michael McFaul has reflected this viewpoint, warning in June 2004 that "if current trends continue, full-blown dictatorship in Russia is a very real possibility."<sup>53</sup> After Putin's Beslan proposals, McFaul has appeared to view this possibility as closer to reality. He has criticized Putin as misguidedly "focused primarily on eliminating checks and balances" on his power, which "has not produced a more effective state, but a weak, corrupt and unaccountable regime: authoritarianism without authority."<sup>54</sup> Reacting to the arrest of Khodorkovskiy and other moves against the oligarchs, former Senator Robert Dole likewise has concluded that Russia's "return to authoritarian policies ... has already begun to undermine ... the foundations of rule of law, due process and political freedom essential to sustaining Russia's new economy."<sup>55</sup>

Analysts who blame lagging democratization in part on the Soviet legacy point to the high percentage of Russian officials that are holdovers from the Soviet period or received training in Soviet-era organizational methods. These officials have feared democratization and have worked to substantially undermine it, according to this view.<sup>56</sup> Russian sociologist Olga Kryshantovskaya argues that these holdover officials have relied on ideologically-kindred security, police, and military personnel (the so-called *siloviki* or "strong ones") to retain power, and have elevated them to many posts. She asserts that about 60 percent of Putin's top advisors are *siloviki*,

---

<sup>51</sup> *Sunday Telegraph*, March 14, 2004, p. 25. He also has stated that Putin's statist economic policies eventually will impede economic growth and Putin may be forced to change course. *New York Times*, April 21, 2004, p. 1; *Financial Times*, August 24, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Beat Kernan, *East European Quarterly*, March 2004, pp. 85-107; Nadia Diuk, *Journal of Politics*, July 2004.

<sup>53</sup> *The Putin Paradox*, Center for American Progress, June 24, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> *WP*, September 12, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Bob Dole, *Financial Times*, June 15, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Riggs and Peter Schraeder, *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2004, pp. 265-293; Emil Pain, *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2001, pp. 182-92.

about 20 percent of the Duma, and over 30 percent of government officials. At the regional level, even if security officials do not hold governorships, many hold deputy governorships, she alleges. The *siloviki* are attuned to order and obedience to authority and view pluralism and free markets as chaotic, she warns, and they will try to prevent any democrat from winning in presidential elections scheduled for 2008.<sup>57</sup>

Another proposed reason for authoritarian tendencies is that ageless cultural factors predispose Russians to seek a *vozhd* (strong leader), and that Russians are not ready for democracy. But some observers, while recognizing the influence of culture, also stress that political leaders such as Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin may bolster or hinder democratization. For instance, U.S. scholar James Billington suggests that under Putin, Russia may be moving toward “some original Russian variant of a corporatist state ruled by a dictator, adorned with Slavophile rhetoric, and representing, in effect, fascism with a friendly face,” that he hopes will only be a temporary interlude.<sup>58</sup>

After the Beslan hostage crisis, state-controlled media appeared to amplify a campaign for resurrecting some features of Soviet-era authoritarianism. In his address to the nation on September 4, 2004, Putin set the tone for this campaign by decrying the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia’s subsequent weakness as partly responsible for the deaths of the Beslan children. Russian state television commentator Mikhail Leontyev expanded on this theme by proclaiming that “boosting the authoritarian component is the only means to restore order, and when the nation is at war, it should be done fast.”<sup>59</sup> The newspaper *Argumenty i fakty* similarly argued that Putin was weakened in preventing and responding to the crisis by Russia’s loss of Stalin-era institutions, including a united intelligence-police agency, a cadre of domestic informants, and a communist-type party through which Putin could mobilize officials and the public to action.<sup>60</sup>

Other Russians condemned Putin’s Beslan proposals and urged Yeltsin (who is viewed as the architect of the current system) to speak out. On September 17, he seemingly dismissed views that Putin was backtracking on democratization, but then appeared to contradict this by warning that “oppressing freedoms and going back on democratic rights is surrendering to terrorists.” In contrast to Yeltsin’s ambiguous statement, Gorbachev more clearly attacked the proposals, stating that they “reversed” democratic policy-making “by means of the separation of powers and ... more accountab[ility] to the people.”<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Vitaliy Yaroshevskiy interview, *Novaya Gazeta*, August 30-September 1, 2004. Some observers have warned that the *siloviki* increasingly influence state finances and the media. See Jamestown Foundation, *The NIS Observed: an Analytical Review*, June 24, 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Graeme Gill, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2002; James H. Billington, *Russia in Search of Itself*, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> *FBIS*, September 9, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-348.

<sup>60</sup> *FBIS*, September 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-110; September 8, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-240.

<sup>61</sup> *Moskovskiy novosti*, September 17, 2004; *Novaya gazeta*, September 16, 2004.

**Democratic Progress?** Some analysts urge patience in assessing Russia's fitful progress toward democracy, and argue that a stable pluralism sooner or later will be established. They point to democracy analyst Robert Dahl's suggestion that it may take new democracies around twenty years, or about a generation, to mature enough to resist backsliding.<sup>62</sup> They argue that a robust civil society will emerge as cultural predispositions favoring all-powerful leaders change. Analyst Christopher Marsh has argued that despite the authoritarian legacy of a thousand years of tsarist and communist party rule in Russia, some cultural aspirations for democracy developed and form a basis for further democratization.<sup>63</sup>

Those researchers who maintain that Putin is essentially committed to democratization argue that the term "managed democracy" exaggerates the degree to which he has been able to dominate politics. Although civil society is underdeveloped, some regions remain authoritarian, and the Kremlin intervenes in elections, "the overall trend is still probably toward democracy," according to analyst Richard Sakwa. Although the numbers of *siloviki* in top political posts have greatly increased during the Putin era, Sakwa has argued that they do not appear to make policy in the economic, foreign policy, or regional realms. Russia's relations with the United States and the West have not suffered, and the Russian cabinet contains several reformists, so economic policy is not dominated by the *siloviki*, he contends.<sup>64</sup>

According to some critics, the Putin government's 2004 replacement of many social benefits in kind (mainly free rides on public transportation, but also soon to include medicine, rent, and utility subsidies) by cash subsidies demonstrated that democratic institutions had not fully functioned. Instead of a democratic process that involved soliciting public input, the government and legislature too hastily enacted the reforms, these critics allege. The reforms caused large-scale protests not seen in Russia in several years, because the cash payments have fallen short of the former in-kind benefits. The Putin government, so far, has resisted overturning the reforms, but has boosted budgetary funding for cash payments. Health Minister Mikhail Zurabov and Finance Minister Alexey Kudrin on January 21-22, 2005, accepted responsibility for the problems and promised a quick resolution. In the face of protests, many cities and regions extended transportation subsidies for awhile, but face budget deficits.<sup>65</sup> On January 17, 2005, Putin partly justified the elimination of direct gubernatorial elections by blaming the sitting regional governments for the problems with the reforms. The "constructive opposition" Motherland Party, voicing support for Putin, has demanded the resignations of "liberal ministers" and a moratorium on the reforms. The United Russia Party faction in the Duma has blamed the central ministries and regional governments for problems with the reforms, perhaps with some success.

---

<sup>62</sup> *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 315.

<sup>63</sup> *Making Russian Democracy Work*, Lewiston, New York: Edwin Meilen Press, 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Sakwa, *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, July 7, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, January 24, 2005; Julie Corwin, *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, January 28, 2005.

Protests by many pensioners, war veterans, students, and disabled persons about the reforms have galvanized opposition political parties, which have moved quickly to abet protests. These parties may gain more popular support from these actions and be better able to win future elections, according to one view. Some college students and other youth have become involved in the protests and have set up new groups, viewed by some observers as encouraging aspects of future civil society development.<sup>66</sup>

## Implications for U.S. Interests

### U.S.-Russia Relations

Successive U.S. administrations have argued that the United States has “overriding interests” in cooperating with Russia on critical national security priorities, including the Global War on Terror, the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and the future of NATO. They also have agreed that the United States has “a compelling national interest” in seeing Russia consolidate its transition to democracy and free markets. Such a Russia would provide a powerful example and force for democratization and stability in the rest of Eurasia, would expand U.S. opportunities for trade and investment, and would enhance Russia’s ties with the Euro-Atlantic community.<sup>67</sup>

At least until the latest cycle of elections in 2003-2004, the Bush Administration has viewed Russia as having made some progress in democratization. However, the Administration has criticized threats to the process such as state control over media, Khodorkovskiy’s arrest, and pressure on NGOs. While the Administration has been critical of Russia’s human rights abuses in Chechnya, it also tentatively has supported Russia’s efforts to hold local elections and a constitutional referendum there (but also has criticized the campaigns and outcomes as not free and fair).<sup>68</sup>

Reflecting a positive assessment before the most recent Russian elections, President Bush at the September 2003 Camp David summit stated that “I respect

---

<sup>66</sup> Tim Murphy, *Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 2005, p. A1. According to analyst Nikolay Petrov, “One would like to believe that the main lesson the Kremlin learns from this is that it is much more effective and advantageous for it to support the existence of a functioning political opposition, of legitimate channels of opposition in parliament and the participation of such an opposition in the decision-making process, rather than having to deal with such mass social protests, which can lead to an explosion.” *RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly*, January 20, 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Office of the Secretary of State. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2005*, February 10, 2004; U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). *Budget Justification to the Congress, FY2004*, Annex III, p. 355.

<sup>68</sup> *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2005*. USAID. *Budget Justification to the Congress, FY2005*, Annex III, p. 361. Assistant Secretary of State Lorne Craner, remarks, National Endowment for Democracy, June 10, 2004. Craner acknowledged that Russia had made progress in democratization, but that the “pace seems to be slowing.”

President Putin's vision for Russia: a country at peace within its borders, with its neighbors, and with the world, a country in which democracy and freedom and rule of law thrive."<sup>69</sup> In the wake of the 2003 Duma election, however, Secretary of State Colin Powell was more critical, writing in the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* in January 2004 that "Russia's democratic system seems not yet to have found the essential balance among the ... branches of government. Political power is not yet fully tethered to law. Key aspects of civil society ... have not yet sustained an independent presence." He also raised "concerns" about Russian actions in Chechnya and in former Soviet republics, and warned that "without basic principles shared in common," U.S.-Russian ties "will not achieve [their] potential."<sup>70</sup>

President Bush still appeared to stress Putin's democratic potential during a June 2004 G-8 meeting, hailing "my friend Vladimir Putin" as "a strong leader who cares deeply about the people of his country," although he reportedly also raised concerns about media freedom in Russia. Perhaps a subtly negative response to concerns raised by President Bush, Putin at the meeting allegedly denounced the U.S. Administration's advocacy of democratization in the Broader Middle East or elsewhere as interference in the internal affairs these countries.<sup>71</sup>

Putin's announcement on September 13, 2004, that he would launch a government re-organization has heightened concerns by the U.S. Administration and others that Russia's democratization might be threatened. Although supporting Putin's goal of enhancing anti-terrorism efforts, Secretary Powell the next day raised concerns that Russia was "pulling back on some ... democratic reforms" and emphasized that there must be a "proper balance" between anti-terrorism efforts and democracy.<sup>72</sup> Dispensing with Putin's earlier apparent subtlety, Lavrov retorted that the re-organization was an internal affair and that the United States should not try to impose its "model" of democracy on other countries, particularly since direct presidential elections do not occur in the United States.<sup>73</sup>

Terming Powell's comments insufficiently harsh, some observers argued that the United States, as the world's oldest democracy and sole superpower, should take the lead in urging Russia to continue to democratize. They maintained that a harsher response would be in line with the Administration's objective of fostering democracy

---

<sup>69</sup> The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *Remarks by the President and Russian President Putin in Press Availability, Camp David*. September 27, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> *Izvestia*, January 26, 2004. The next day, however, Secretary Powell seemed to soften this criticism by affirming that "what we have seen over the last fifteen years is a remarkable transformation [in Russia] to a democratic system.... So I am not concerned about Russia returning to the old days.... [T]he United States views Russia as a friend and a partner and wants to be helpful." U.S. Department of State. *Interview With Vladimir Varfalomeyev, Ekho Moskvyy Radio*, January 27, 2004.

<sup>71</sup> The White House. Press Release. *Remarks by the President and President Putin of Russia in Photo Opportunity*, June 8, 2004.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Department of State. Washington File. Interview by Arshad Mohammed and Saul Hudson of Reuters [With] Secretary Colin L. Powell, September 14, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> *RIA Novosti*, September 15, 2004.

and respect for human rights in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps in partial response to such criticism, Bush on September 22 stated that “as governments fight the enemies of democracy, they must uphold the principles of democracy,” and that he was concerned “about the decisions that are being made in Russia that could undermine democracy in Russia.” Some of these critics urged a still stronger response and they were disappointed that President Bush’s subsequent address at the U.N. only praised Russia’s anti-terrorism efforts.<sup>75</sup>

Russia’s apparent efforts to interfere in Ukraine’s presidential election reportedly have raised additional Administration concerns about Putin’s commitment to democratization at home and in other Soviet successor states.<sup>76</sup> These concerns will be raised by President Bush at his summit meeting with Putin in Bratislava, Slovakia, in February 2005, according to the State Department.

The Administration has stressed that it must maintain a balance between advocating democratization and U.S.-Russia cooperation on anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, energy, and other strategic issues. In testimony at her confirmation hearing, Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice reiterated this policy to “work closely with Russia on common problems,” while at the same time to “continue to press the case for democracy and ... to make clear that the protection of democracy in Russia is vital to the future of U.S.-Russia relations.”<sup>77</sup> Advocates of such a restrained U.S. response argue that the United States has economic and security interests in continued engagement with Russia. The United States has a growing economic interest in diversified sources of energy. Russia’s capabilities to provide oil and liquified natural gas to U.S. markets are growing, and proposed Russian shipping from arctic ports would be quicker and more secure than shipments from the Middle East, according to some experts.<sup>78</sup> Some observers more generally urge a U.S.-Russia relationship like that between the United States and China, where the United States advocates democratization but nonetheless maintains close economic ties that may “mak[e] China richer and eventually freer.”<sup>79</sup>

Some observers warn that Russian foreign policy-making by a more secretive presidential administration may cause the United States to be surprised by some of Russia’s activities and to consider it an unpredictable and unreliable partner. These observers also have raised concerns about Putin’s accusations in his speech about the Beslan tragedy that it was caused by unnamed powers that want to weaken Russia

---

<sup>74</sup> *WP*, September 15, 2004, pp. A17-A18, A24. The newspaper editorialized that while his democratic proclivities might not have been clear in 2000 when he was first elected president, now it was apparent that Putin is a “dictator.” It also stated that the Beslan proposals should have “galvanized” Administration condemnation.

<sup>75</sup> Strobe Talbott, *Financial Times*, September 27, 2004.

<sup>76</sup> For details, see CRS Report RS21959, *Ukraine’s Presidential Elections and U.S. Policy*.

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. *Opening Remarks by Secretary of State-designate Dr. Condoleezza Rice*, January 18, 2005.

<sup>78</sup> CNBC broadcast, *Russia*, October 20, 2004. The White House. *National Energy Policy*, May 17, 2001; *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, April 29, 2003.

<sup>79</sup> David Ignatius, *WP*, September 17, 2004.



“because they think that Russia, one of the world’s greatest nuclear powers, is still a threat.”<sup>80</sup> Putin’s staffer Surkov appeared to spell out that terrorist attacks in Russia were encouraged by U.S. and other “interventionists [whose objective] is the destruction of the Russian State.”<sup>81</sup>

Some U.S. allies have become increasingly concerned about democratization trends in Russia. In a February 2004 EU meeting, concerns about diverging EU-Russia values were highlighted, including respect for the rule of law, human rights, freedom of the media, property rights, the Chechnya conflict, and Russia’s role in Eurasian conflicts. The EU emphasized that in order to strengthen the “strategic partnership” with Russia, the EU should make clear where Russia’s activities violate “European values.” After Putin’s Beslan proposals, EU Commissioner Chris Patten warned that the Russian government should not try the failed policy of combating terrorism by centralizing power. A group of Baltic, Nordic, and Central European foreign ministers — concerned that a more authoritarian Russia could be hostile — met to urge EU members France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and others to stress at an upcoming summit with Russia that it adhere to democratic principles. PACE in October 2004 likewise called for Russia to ensure that its anti-terrorism initiatives complied with democratic and human rights commitments, and created a roundtable to regularly discuss such problems with Russia. Responding to a report it commissioned on the Yukos case, PACE on January 26, 2005, adopted a resolution stating that it appeared that the Putin government’s arrest of Khodorkovskiy “goes beyond the mere pursuit of criminal justice, to include such elements as to weaken an outspoken political opponent, to intimidate other wealthy individuals and to regain control of strategic economic assets.”<sup>82</sup> (See also below, *Congressional Concerns*.)

## U.S. Democratization Assistance

U.S. democratization assistance historically has accounted for less than 10 percent of all U.S. funding for Russia. Most aid to Russia supports security programs (in particular, Comprehensive Threat Reduction initiatives to help secure and eliminate WMD), and economic reform efforts. Democratization aid has included technical advice to parties and electoral boards, grants to NGOs, advice on legal and judicial reforms (such as creating trial by jury and revising criminal codes), training for journalists, advice on local governance, and exchanges and training that

---

<sup>80</sup> *FBIS*, September 4, 2004, Doc. No. CEP-110; Nikolay Zlobin, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, September 8, 2004. Analyst Alexander Tsipko was more pointed, blaming the Beslan tragedy on a “strategic rival” of the former “great nation of the USSR.” He argued that if Russia’s democrats came to power, the country would be more vulnerable to terrorism. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, September 8, 2004.

<sup>81</sup> *Komsomolskaya pravda*, September 29, 2004.

<sup>82</sup> European Commission. *Communication on EU-Russia Relations*, IP/04/187, February 9, 2004. EU. External Relations Council, session, February 23, 2004 and October 5, 2004. EU. *Joint Statement on EU Enlargement and EU-Russia Relations*, April 27, 2004. EU. Speech by Commissioner Chris Patten at European Parliament Plenary, *Press Release*, September 15, 2004. Marcin Grajewski, *Reuters*, October 8, 2004; *Dow Jones International News*, October 19, 2004. PACE. Resolution 1418, approved January 25, 2005. *RFE/RL Newswire*, January 27, 2005.

familiarize Russian civilian and military officials and others about democratic institutions and processes. Most aid has shifted over the years from government-to-government programs to support for local grass-roots civil society programs, particularly aid to NGOs.

**Table 3. U.S. Democratization Aid to Russia**

(million dollars)

<b>Budgeted FY1992- FY2002*</b>	<b>Budgeted FY2003*</b>	<b>Estimated FY2004*</b>	<b>Requested FY2005**</b>
893.63	79.98	57.45	29.67
8.1%***	8.7%	6.4%	37.3%

\*Freedom Support Act and Agency funding.

\*\*Freedom Support Act funding.

\*\*\*Percentage of all program funding for Russia.

Source: Coordinator's Office

In its FY2004 budget request, the Administration called for substantially less FREEDOM Support Act aid to Russia, "in recognition of the progress Russia already has made" in transforming itself into a free market democracy integrated into global political and economic institutions. The budget request averred that Russia would be "graduated" over the next few years from receiving FREEDOM Support Act aid, with ebbing aid dedicated mainly to ensuring "a legacy of sustainable institutions to support civil society and democratic institutions." FY2004 aid was planned to support NGOs, independent media, and exchanges at the grassroots level to foster ethnic and religious tolerance, civic education, and media freedom. However, most FREEDOM Support Act and other Function 150 aid to Russia was focused on non-proliferation and cooperation in the Global War on Terror. Congress disagreed with the Administration's level of support for democratization and increased the amount of aid earmarked for Russia (see also below).

In its FY2005 budget request for foreign operations, the Administration has placed greater emphasis on support for democratization than the year before, stating that "given Russia's strategic importance, the United States has a compelling national interest in seeing Russia complete a successful transition to market-based democracy." The Administration has stressed that this new emphasis reflects concerns that limits on media freedom, the manipulation of elections, abuses in Chechnya, increased control over the localities, and seeming political prosecutions have "called into question the depth of Russia's commitment" to democratize. The FY2005 budget request has called for much of its boosted aid to Russia to be used to support independent media, NGOs, and local governance.

## **Congressional Concerns**

Major Congressional concerns with democratic progress in Russia have included passage of the Russian Democracy Act of 2002, signed into law on October 23, 2002 (H.R. 2121; P.L. 107-246). The law stated that a Russia that was integrated into the global order as a free-market democracy would be less confrontational and

would cooperate with the United States, making the success of democracy in Russia a U.S. national security interest. It warned, however, that further liberalization in Russia appeared uncertain without further assistance, necessitating a “far-reaching” U.S. aid strategy. The “sense of the Congress” was that the U.S. government should engage with Russia to strengthen democracy and promote fair and honest business practices, open legal systems, freedom of religion, and respect for human rights. Among other provisions, the law amended the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 by adding language stressing support for independent media, NGOs, parties, legal associations, and grass-roots organizations. Responding to the passage of the act, the Russian Foreign Ministry criticized it for underestimating Russia’s reform accomplishments and for presuming to teach democratization to Russia.<sup>83</sup>

In introducing H.R. 2121 in June 2001, Representative Tom Lantos stated that the bill targeted aid to local governments and NGOs in part because the Russian central government had seemed more reluctant to accept foreign assistance, and because Putin was “consolidating state power at the expense of Russian civil society.” Other reasons for the bill reportedly included concerns that the Administration should maintain a balance between its cooperation with Russia on defense matters and its support for democratization and human rights.<sup>84</sup> During debate on the floor, former Representative Doug Bereuter stressed that the world owed “a tremendous debt” to the democrats in the Soviet Union who were pivotal to its dissolution. By helping them in Russia, he stated, the United States would be protecting efforts to ensure European freedom stretching from “the landings on Normandy beaches” to the present.<sup>85</sup>

Actions in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress regarding democratization trends in Russia included S.Res. 258 (Lugar; approved by the Senate on December 9, 2003), which expressed concern about Khodorkovskiy’s arrest. Following the arrest, Representatives Tom Lantos and Christopher Cox established a Congressional Russia Democracy Caucus to highlight concerns about the decline of freedom of the media, property rights, and other violations of the rule of law in Russia. Other bills included S.Con.Res. 85 (McCain; introduced on November 21, 2003) and H.Con.Res. 336 (Lantos; approved by the House International Relations Committee on March 31, 2004) that recommended that Russia be denied participation in G-8 sessions until it made progress in democratization. In introducing S.Con.Res. 85, Senator Joseph Lieberman urged that the G-8 countries use Russia’s desire for continued membership as leverage to convince it to live up to its democratic commitments.<sup>86</sup>

Congressional concerns about democratization trends in Russia were at the forefront of deliberations over foreign assistance for FY2004. Conferees on H.R. 2673 (Consolidated Appropriations, including foreign operations; P.L. 108-199; signed into law on January 23, 2004) stated that they were “gravely concerned with the deterioration and systematic dismantling of democracy and the rule of law” in

---

<sup>83</sup> *AP*, November 4, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> *CR*, June 12, 2001, p. E1072; Mary Warner, *National Journal*, November 1, 2001.

<sup>85</sup> *CR*, December 11, 2001, p. H9110.

<sup>86</sup> *CR*, November 21, 2003, p. S15400.

Russia. Calling for not less than \$94 million for Russia, \$21 million above the request, the conferees (H.Rept.108-401) “expect[ed] a significant portion of these [added] funds to be used to support democracy and rule of law programs in Russia.”

Congressional concerns about democratization trends in Russia continued to be at the forefront in foreign assistance deliberations for FY2005. In the Senate, S. 2812 (foreign operations appropriations for FY2005; substituted in the form of an amendment to H.R. 4818) provided not less than \$93 million for Russia, \$13.5 million above the request. The bill called for not less than \$4 million of this amount to be made available to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) for programs in Russia. The Senate Appropriations Committee (S.Rept. 108-346) also called for \$3 million for political party training, and stated that “an investment in these activities is critical to sustaining democracy promotion efforts.” In the House, the Appropriations Committee raised concerns (H.Rept. 108-599) about risks to democratization and human rights in Eurasia, particularly in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The Committee recommended that more democratization and human rights assistance be provided to NGOs, such as Russia’s Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers, and through NED, and called for a report from the Coordinator of Assistance to Europe and Eurasia on plans to increase such assistance to NGOs. Conference managers on H.R. 4818 (H.Rept. 108-792) requested that of the \$90 million provided for assistance for Russia, \$3.5 million be made available to NED for democracy and human rights programs in Russia, including political party development (signed into law on December 8, 2004; P.L. 108-447).

Putin’s Beslan proposals triggered debate in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress about possible U.S. responses. In introducing H.Res. 760, condemning terrorist attacks against Russia, Representative Edward Royce stated that while setbacks to democratization in Russia are of concern, the United States and Russia face critical terrorist threats.<sup>87</sup> Senator McCain criticized Putin’s proposals as an excuse to “consolidate autocratic rule.” He characterized Putin’s rule as a “long string of anti-democratic actions,” and urged that the United States “make known our fierce opposition” to anti-democratic moves that will rebound to less Russian cooperation with the United States.<sup>88</sup> Representative Curt Weldon the next day warned that punishing Russia in response to democratization lapses would be the “worst step” the United States could take, because it would only boost authoritarianism there. Instead, he called for developing closer economic and security relations with Russia, so that President Bush would have leverage to convince Putin to “allow democracy to survive, to grow, and prosper.”<sup>89</sup>

Senators McCain and Joseph Biden joined over 100 prominent Western officials and experts in signing a September 28, 2004, letter to NATO and EU leaders that warned that Putin’s Beslan proposals “bring Russia a step closer to authoritarianism.” They also stated that Putin was reverting to the “rhetoric of militarism and empire” in foreign policy. Putin’s policies, they concluded, jeopardize partnership between

---

<sup>87</sup> *CR*, September 13, 2004, p. H7011.

<sup>88</sup> *CR*, September 21, 2004, p. S9420.

<sup>89</sup> *CR*, September 22, 2004, pp. H7430-H7436.

Russia and NATO and EU democracies. They urged Western leaders to change strategy toward Russia by “unambiguously” supporting democratic groups in Russia and perhaps reducing ties with the Putin government.<sup>90</sup>

In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, trends in Russian democratization were a concern during the hearing and floor debate on the confirmation of Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice. Many Members appeared to endorse Senator Dianne Feinstein’s view that Rice’s expertise on Russia would prove useful in responding to a more authoritarian Putin government.<sup>91</sup> Senator Joseph Biden criticized the Administration for advocating democratization in the Middle East while “being silent” about declining democratization in Russia. He stated that the Administration had received little in return for “silence” on this issue, not even Russia’s cooperation in dismantling WMD.<sup>92</sup> At the hearing, Senator Lincoln Chafee asked Rice why the United States maintained close ties with some authoritarian countries and not with others, and she responded that “some of this is a matter of trend lines,” but that “the concentration of power in the Kremlin ... is a real problem [and] is something to be deeply concerned about, and we will speak out.” She also stated that “while we confront the governments that are engaged in nondemocratic activities, we also have to help the development of civil society in opposition,” and suggested that more such support was needed in Russia.<sup>93</sup>

## Issues for Congress

### How Significant is Democratization in Russia to U.S. Interests?

Successive administrations and Congresses generally have agreed that a democratic Russia would be a U.S. friend or ally rather than a strategic security threat. They have viewed political developments in Russia as a vital U.S. interest because of Russia’s capabilities, including its geographical size (including its extensive borders with Europe, Asia, and Central Eurasia), educated population, natural resources, arms industries, and strategic nuclear weapons. A democratic Russia that is integrated into global free-markets could cooperate with the United States on a range of economic, political, and security issues, rather than use its capabilities for hostile confrontation, in this view. At the same time, setbacks to democratization in Russia have led successive U.S. administrations to argue that the United States should remain engaged with Russia to cooperate on international issues and to urge it to democratize.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> *WP*, September 29, 2004, p. A21; October 2, 2004, p. A20; *Novaya gazeta*, October 4, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>91</sup> *CR*, January 25, 2005, p. S411.

<sup>92</sup> *CR*, January 26, 2005, p. S518.

<sup>93</sup> *Transcript*, Federal Document Clearing House, January 18, 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Michael McFaul, *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 2003.

Many observers argue that there has been a close relationship between domestic and foreign policy in Russia, so U.S. policy-makers must try to encourage pluralism and discourage authoritarianism. They maintain that when the Soviet Union (of which Russia was a part) was communist, it opposed the West, and as it began to democratize, its foreign policy became more accommodationist. These observers argue that a prospective Russian dictator would need to rely on the military and security forces to maintain power. These forces have lagged the most in adopting democratic values and continue to favor anti-American foreign policies that, if implemented, would threaten U.S. national security interests.<sup>95</sup> Such policies conceivably might include a hostile nuclear strategic posture, stepped-up proliferation of arms and WMD technologies to governments or groups unfriendly to the United States, and neo-imperialist moves to threaten Europe and to re-impose authoritarian, pro-Moscow regimes in the former Soviet republics.<sup>96</sup>

Other observers stress that Russia's cooperation with the United States in the Global War on Terror is a critical U.S. security interest, while the issue of democratization in Russia is of lower priority and if necessary, must be de-emphasized. They assert that an authoritarian Putin would prove to be at least as capable of stanching terrorist activities in Chechnya or elsewhere in Russia, and to firmly safeguard WMD and infrastructure from falling into terrorist hands. They also discount the ability, if not the desire or wisdom, of an economically and militarily weakened Russia to establish substantial control over other Soviet successor states (except perhaps Belarus), and instead accentuate its moves to build ties to the West.<sup>97</sup>

## **How Much Can the United States do to Support Democratization in Russia and What Types of Support are Appropriate?**

Many observers have maintained that U.S. democratization aid to Russia will at best be effective at the margins, given limited funding and the large scope of the challenge. Those who advocate ending such aid point out that the Russian government increasingly regards it only as interference in its internal affairs, so the aid actually reduces U.S. leverage to encourage Russia to cooperate in the Global War on Terror and other issues. They also maintain that civil society should be able

---

<sup>95</sup> Colton and McFaul, pp. 225-229; Strobe Talbott, *Financial Times*, September 27, 2004; Gordon Hahn, Andrew Kuchins, and Janusz Bagaiski comments in Peter Lavelle, *UPI*, October 15, 2004. Stephen Blank, *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2003.

<sup>96</sup> On Russia's attempts to influence the Ukrainian election, see Jackson Diehl, *WP*, October 25, 2004, p. A19; Mark MacKinnon, *Globe and Mail*, August 17, 2004; Fredo Arias-King, *Demokratizatsiya*, Winter 2004, pp. 9-12.

<sup>97</sup> Dan Simpson, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 6, 2004. Analyst Dale Herspring argues that just as "we had bigger things to worry about than freedom of the press" in U.S.-Soviet relations, "we have bigger fish to fry now — the war on terrorism." Comments in Peter Lavelle, *UPI*, October 15, 2004. While Russia may seek more influence in the Soviet successor states, most of these states highly value their independence and resist such overtures, and they receive U.S. security assistance to bolster this independence. Thomas Nichols, *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2002/2003, pp. 13-23; John Laughland, *The Spectator*, October 9, 2004, p. 24.

to stand on its own resources, given Russia's recent economic growth.<sup>98</sup> U.S. diplomatic and public expressions of disapproval about Putin's Beslan proposals and actions such as the Chechnya conflict are likewise counterproductive, they assert, because they are regarded by Putin as offensive and reduce U.S. credibility. Instead, the United States should work with Russia only when solicited to foster democratization in Chechnya and elsewhere in Russia.<sup>99</sup>

Others reject the view that U.S. democratization aid can only be of marginal effectiveness in Russia. They argue that some of the assistance has proven beneficial, and that there would be much more of a positive effect if the aid were increased. These observers suggest that such aid will serve U.S. interests because Russia will ultimately become a more cooperative partner to the West. They warn against any reduction of such aid at the present time, because Russia's civil society is too fragile to stand on its own in the face of threats from the Putin government. These observers claim that U.S. diplomatic and public expressions of concern to Russia about its democratic policies would be better tolerated if they were part of a robust U.S. democratization aid effort.<sup>100</sup>

Some observers dismiss the view that the United States has little leverage to encourage democratization in Russia. They agree with other analysts that the U.S. advocacy of democratization should not be permitted to endanger cooperation with Russia on critical national security issues, but see a role for minor U.S. threats and sanctions against Russia for civil and human rights abuses. Russia has a large stake in its major ongoing and potential exports of energy and other resources to the United States and the West, and membership in the World Trade Organization, they argue, providing the West with major potential economic leverage to encourage democratization in Russia.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Dmitri Simes, commentary, *PBS Newshour*, September 14, 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Vlad Sobell, commentary in Peter Lavelle, *UPI*, October 15, 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Michael McFaul, *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 2003; James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003; Graham Allison, Mark Brzezinski and Toby T. Gati, *Moscow Times*, June 16, 2004; Ira Strauss, commentary in Peter Lavelle, *UPI*, October 15, 2004. Strauss suggests that the United States would do better to expect the "outputs" of democratization aid to be commensurate with the "inputs" of aid.

<sup>101</sup> Gordon Hahn, commentary in Peter Lavelle, *UPI*, October 15, 2004.