

STABLE DEMOCRACY: MANY MODELS, ONE AGENDA

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Unfortunately, the starting point of this talk is Russia's lack of professional discussion of its own democratic development. The moral disaster caused by the first-wave Democrats in the early 1990s made the word 'democratic' almost taboo, and our debates started to be conducted in technocratic or ideological lingo. With an abundance of propaganda, we lack debates based on the heart of the matter. The process of democratic development in Russia has not been accompanied by discussion or analysis for a long time.

Russia knows very little about how its own model of democracy works. The model has been gradually changed and developed, but with a lack of theory, the model being created is one out of default. Even when looking at last year's Forum, it is clear how poorly Russia is represented in the world market of 'democracy models,' and this theory is being advanced by empiricists

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who avoided treading deep into the scientific jungles. **The concept of 'vertical power' and 'sovereign democracy' stood as important priorities of the Russian model, which also included deprivatization of state power, independence and sovereignty of Russia, and opposition to the policy of 'monopolarity.'** Nevertheless, the complex theory of democracy in Russia remains undeveloped. We cannot get rid of the legacy of President Bush, who placed a password of power hegemony on 'democracy.' As a result, we have become stuck in polemics, which are fruitless in democratic building.

In the year after the first Forum, we entered dialogue with the participants from both old and new Forums and a network of debates on the Russian democratic model in the international context has taken shape. It helps to approach the issue of Russian democratization, including which problems must be solved and whether it exists within the global democratic agenda, in a non-propagandistic way. If, as they often state in polemics, there is no democracy in Russia or it is just a facade, then the majority of the authorities' law making acts are senseless; This is not so, and they clearly have a democratic and legal aspect.

When discussing the problems of various countries during the past year, from the US to Japan to Italy, we have learned that **it is a myth that the problems of democracy in Russia are unique. There is no single problem that is being faced by Russian politics that has no equivalent in the West.**

What gets mentioned the most?

An important matter is the **deficits of democracy** and it is being discussed in the context of the European Union, where the problem of 'legitimacy' scissors between the elected government and non-electable bureaucracy in Brussels and this appears in various areas. **For instance, there is a deficit of democracy in metropolises,** and when speaking of the 'modern world,' we usually mean the way of life in metropolises. Nevertheless, it is in these areas where the democratic model often works very poorly. Even if the government is elected in a democratic way, its work post election seems to be obscured.

This democracy is not for the citizens but for the investors, that is the oligarchs. There is a degraded criterion for democratic procedures operating in metropolises and compensation is expected by the high activity of its citizens. But again, metropolises are not quite available to the citizens and it remains a global network that is often invisible for its residents. As a result, the Russian participants discussed Moscow and other Western metropolises, such as those in Europe, the United States, and Japan. Moscow is a perfect example of the oligarchy of investors. It is an absolutely obscure system that has been incorporated into the Russian model by a single enclosed bloc under the name of Mayor Yury Luzhkov. This is a perfect example of a democratic deficit, while the Mayor is being supported by a long-standing and easily prolonged majority.

There was much discussion of the 'post-democracy' trends and the decay of representative power, including the context of the chang-

ing role of mass media that is pushing out party structures and debates, and almost everyone spoke of **corruption** as a self-evident problem of democracy.

There was also talk of the problem of the gap between the elites and the voters, as well as the problem of 'non-governmental' elites in civil society. Theorists, including very well known ones such as John Dunn, Philippe Schmitter, and the late Shmuel Eisenstadt, all point out that there is an obscure class laying claim to universal representation that has taken form within non-governmental organizations. The elite of 'competent people,' elected by no one and acting under the name of a society in general, lays claim to up-scale progressivism, and **such an elite is interested in 'patchy liberalization' which is ultimately only a detriment to democracy.**

All in all, **the problems of democracy's dysfunction in a complicated society** were discussed and it was noted that the modern state that chases efficiency often puts aside its system of democratic procedures. As a result, a completely new phenomenon seems to have emerged. For instance, populism has become a gigantic problem in the United States of America, and while being inherent in the earlier American model, it has grown into a new force that opposes not just one party but, in a sense, the whole direction of party system development. However, we in Russia are used to believing that populism is an exclusively Russian danger when this is clearly not the case.

We are not finding problems in Russia that the West, East, or South have never faced. Here the major questions start. How do we solve these problems for better or for worse? How can we implement and exchange the ideas and technologies to solve them?

We should clarify that **Russia's theoretical deficit is the lag in development of theory and models for a modern democratic state.** We should also specify that the lost idea of a world agenda for democracy

requires joint effort and discussion. In fact, a democratic model has not been worked out within national borders for a long time. As Eisenstadt said, there are no two equal democracies and there is no democracy that can develop solely on a local basis.

Russia has to conduct a great deal of theoretical work to 'translate' the problems of its state building into the language of modern democratic theory. In the talk we gave, **we chronicled the state authorities' law-making activities during the last decade and**



the development of the political party and the election system. Yet it seems to exclude the propagandistic idea that Russia is somehow building a 'display democracy,' and while the democratic aspect shows itself quite evidently, it does not mean that all the adopted laws are working adequately.

We have two problems that are important for Russia. **The first one is the problem of the low quality of procedures that exist to obtain law. The second is a weak culture of political participation** and the citizens' lack of involvement in their own power institutions. A citizen has a chance to participate but he/she does not. In such cases, bureaucracy washes its hands, stating that they have done all that they can! It should be contradicted by noting that a civil society in itself requires a certain amount of political support, but it was on this aspect that President Medvedev focused.

Here we can see an important hidden parameter of Medvedev's policy for modernization. **For Medvedev, modernization is a way to develop a social basis for democracy and for citizens' involvement into its institutions.** Medvedev stated firmly that democracy in Russia is the mainstream and not an accessory. Russian democracy is not a tribute to global fashion, but a state choice that is binding and unalterable. This choice requires that certain standards are obtained. It was in this context that Medvedev actually began to talk about the standards of democracy. Emphasizing that Russia is not looking for an argument about democratic values, but rather democratic technologies and the application of democratic theory.

Western participants of the Forum were the ones who mainly focused on the opponents of democracy: right and left populism and new kinds of religious fundamentalism were the topics most commonly discussed, as was international terrorist and criminal networks. All these problems are real for us.

Russian policy should return to the basic democratic vocabulary compromised and set by its political class almost two decades ago. For better or for worse, it is time to admit that we are talking in 'prose' about modern democracy. The state model of Russia has been and currently is democratic, and it needs democratization. **Democratization is the process of development inside any democratic model.** If this model stops and start to disintegrate, the enemies of democracy will seize their opportunity. Nowhere is it written that modernization in Russia can be done only through democratic means. Russia has an extensive experience in repressive modernization plans, and if we are unable to work out a viable policy of non-violent modernization in Russia, then its modernization will take on another, rather dangerous, form. Can democracy integrate Russia into the global community in the future? This is not only a domestic Russian question, but one upon which the viability of modern democracy depends. ■