

Transition Project



Role of International Organizations

**Vasily
Gatov**



**Vadim
Grishin**



Any country transitioning from dictatorship to democracy faces the challenge of restoring domestic tranquility, including the return to political life of politicians and political forces persecuted by the previous regime and holding accountable those who directed and carried out that persecution.

The most odious component of Putin's regime is its abhorrent treatment of political opponents, opposition-minded citizens, and the dereliction of human rights obligations in general. Therefore, among the critical requirements of Russia's future transition to democracy would be the immediate release and full rehabilitation of political prisoners and the restoration of human rights in accordance with Russia's OSCE commitments (which implies the restoration of Russia's full participation in OSCE activities, including the abandonment of Putin's policy of non-recognition of the ECHR and the return of the rule of international law to the Russian Constitution and legislation). Progress in this direction should be supported by official governmental and public organizations in the United States, the European Union and other countries. This future-orientation should not, however, hinder human rights work today and for the foreseeable future. In addition to the traditional lists of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, it is also necessary to analyze group and package repression, which will need to be reversed once Russia returns to the path of democratic transit.

A substantial part of the sanctions imposed on Russia, its citizens and organizations are already related to human rights violations. The adoption of the Magnitsky Act in the United States and in other jurisdictions allows the foreign policy and financial authorities of these countries to expand sanctions lists when new facts and circumstances are discovered. The activities of OFAC, the U.S. Treasury Department and similar institutions of the European Union and the United Kingdom are constantly increasing the cost to the Russian elite for acts of corruption and human rights abuses. The list of sanctioned individuals has long passed the thousand mark, and it can be assumed that it will grow even larger by the time the country starts moving toward democratic transit.

When future democratic transit is again in sight the focus should shift to putting **international pressure on the transitional authorities in terms of the release of political prisoners and their rehabilitation**, as well as the removal of illegal restrictions on political participation on the grounds of “foreign agency,” dual citizenship, etc. The matters of transitional justice, lustration and even more so criminal prosecution, however, should be left to the competence of the legally elected authorities of the new Russia. As part of the international agenda, this problem can only be formulated as Russia’s return to its OSCE commitments; the release and rehabilitation of political prisoners fits well within this framework.

An important source of existing tensions (and, one can assume, future difficulties in relations with post-Putin Russia) are Russian assets seized by a number of European countries, the United States, Canada and Japan. Most of these funds are part of the reserves of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, but also include funds of state corporations and individuals and companies (unrepatriated proceeds, deposits, escrow accounts, clearing deposits, etc.). As of spring 2024, several states have adopted legislative acts partially authorizing the use of seized Russian assets to help Ukraine (including decisions of the European Parliament, a recently passed US law authorizing the President to confiscate frozen Russian assets, and decisions of the European Commission regarding dividends received from seized assets¹). It is safe to assume that the fate of the Central Bank of Russia’s reserves will be negotiated only after regime change — regardless of whether they are used to help Ukraine in the war or post-war reconstruction. The full confiscation of corporate and private funds creates significant risks of property claims by victims (including sanctioned individuals and organizations). The moral justification for the confiscation and subsequent use of Russian assets does not negate the significant diplomatic and legal implications, so political decisions must be thought through and balanced not only by current but also by future interests. For example, since the start of full-scale invasion in Ukraine, many foreign businesses were forced — by sanctions and Russian government too — to abandon or sell for minimal price the assets in the country. Such transactions should be established by courts as unlawful and forced confiscation, and the courts may choose to consider Russian national assets as a compensation source (as opposed to Western companies’ states having to compensate for their losses).

1 See, e.g., <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-treasury-sanctions-assets-congress-0a3bc97a2d6d77ce3650c767db6ea7ed>.

Western Stakeholders

EU foreign ministries and the leadership of the European Commission, the OSCE, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Parliament, EU parliaments, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the International Criminal Court. Global human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, International Memorial, Freedom House, CPJ and others.

Recommendations

- Conduct legal analysis of the laws and regulations of the Russian Federation that either by themselves or indirectly (through the assumption of specific practices) violate international humanitarian law and Russia's OSCE commitments.
- Formulate several successively expanding packages of conditions for the restoration of political and civil rights of Russian citizens to be negotiated in the post-Putin period.
- Ensure coherence between the actions of state bodies, international institutions and public/civil society organizations on the dismantling of sanctions while returning Russia to the framework of pan-European behavior.
- Exercise caution in vetting the list of Russian political and military leaders indicted for war crimes/crimes against humanity; any of the potential defendants could simultaneously be the initiators of Russia's peaceful turnaround after the end of the Putin era.
- At the same time, it may be worth considering the creation of a permanent structure, a network of consultants to prepare for Russia's transition. This could very well be based on MEP Andrius Kubilius' 'Friends of European Russia' initiative². Such an institution, which should be anchored to FRF and work in close cooperation with specialists in the European Parliament's Secretariat General as well as its most important Groups, can begin its work now — monitoring changes in Russian legislation, collecting and documenting cases of politically motivated persecution of opposition figures and dissidents (including those who are repressed on religious grounds), and working with Russian activists and exiled politicians in developing ideas for future changes in the Russian Federation. The work of such a dedicated institution would be particularly important when the Russian population becomes seriously disillusioned with the Putin (and post-Putin) regime and looks again to democratic societies for inspiration.

2 <https://russiadayafter.eu/>

Strategic security issues

In line with the policy of escalation in relations with the United States and NATO, Vladimir Putin has withdrawn Russia from most of its existing international and bilateral agreements. START-3, the last bilateral strategic arms control agreement, expires in February 2026. Russia has already suspended its participation in it. Not only the post-Soviet achievements of Russian diplomacy, but even those initiated and supported by the Soviet Union, have witnessed severe setbacks. Actual actions in terms of disrupting strategic stability have so far been limited to aggressive nuclear rhetoric, lowering the ceiling on the use of nuclear weapons (NWs) and moving a small number of tactical nuclear warheads to Belarus, but trust, particularly on the part of the United States, has been severely damaged.

The issues of strategic stability, nuclear weapons and their means of delivery are the only items on the U.S. foreign policy agenda where Russia still occupies a central place. These are the Kremlin's trump cards in relations with the US (and partly NATO), and they will remain such during transition.

Despite Vladimir Putin's pivot to China, the expansion of Beijing's strategic capabilities is of equal concern to Moscow's negotiators and the military. Normalization in this sphere is inextricably linked to nuclear nonproliferation issues: another round of tensions in the world (from the war in Ukraine to Hamas's terrorist war with Israel) and the growth of conflict potential in many regions will almost certainly make many countries consider their own nuclear weapons. Without Russia's active support of a nonproliferation agenda, the efforts of the US, France, and the UK are unlikely to suffice. This also applies to the challenges of controlling today's conventional weapons, which are becoming increasingly destructive. **Sooner or later, the issue of concluding new arms control agreements, both nuclear and conventional, will arise.** Historically, international (bi- and multilateral conventions) on limitation, reduction, and prohibition of certain weapons are part of the UN infrastructure (first of all, the Geneva office of the organization), and, in the narrow "nuclear part," the IAEA (IAEA) as well — also the IAEA (IAEI). The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) was partly within the OSCE's competence due to its pan-continental status. Since the Russian Federation effectively ended its membership in most of the conventions under Putin, negotiations on the creation of new restrictive treaties should include elaborate instruments for monitoring compliance and sanctions against countries that ignore agreed requirements. It may make sense to discuss some conventional arrangements in advance within the European security community, taking into account U.S.

views.

The accumulated problems of sustainability and strengthening regional stability will require a complete overhaul of relations with Russia's immediate neighbors. If progress is made in reconciling Russia and Ukraine, there is likely to be a window of opportunity to discuss the territorial conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, which are sustained purely by Moscow's diplomatic and military posture. This prospect is particularly important for European diplomacy, but it should be seriously prepared for, including by building ties with the leaders of the separatist regimes and discussing options for a possible diplomatic solution under the auspices of the OSCE and/or the UN. It can be assumed that the transitional authorities in post-Putin Russia will not have time and incentives to deal with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria; the separatist leaders probably realize this as well. No one but the European Commission can effectively influence the governments of Georgia and Moldova (which aspire to membership in the EU); the task is to exclude force and military excesses, if the process of diplomatic de-escalation in the breakaway regions can be launched with Russia's consent.

U.S. and European diplomats can become moderators in future Russia's relations with other neighbors, primarily the Baltic states. Negotiations on mutual security guarantees along the lines of contact between Russia and NATO will be necessary (given the accession of Finland and Sweden to the alliance, this task becomes crucial from the point of view of the security of the Baltic Sea; it is also important from the economic and territorial point of view — because of the exclave of the Kaliningrad region).

It is clear that the responsible authorities in Moscow have no right to leave the issue of Kaliningrad transit unresolved. For their part, the European Union and especially the Baltic States may have a particular opinion about the level of militarization of the coast and expect Russia to take counter steps. In practical terms, this means the possibility of concluding a new adapted version of the CFE Treaty, taking into account new conventional weapons and changed geopolitical realities, as well as the sharply increased line of contact between Russia and NATO. In a more general dimension, it could also mean the resumption of consultations between Russia and NATO on a wide range of issues aimed at preventing crisis situations.

Multipolarity

The task of foreign policy agencies and various institutions of the United States, the EU, and other allies in the post-Putin period is to help Russia overcome or at least balance China's attraction and move beyond "bad marriage. By maintaining constructive but competitive relations with China in the interests of the national economy and supporting the transportation infrastructure of global trade, it will be necessary to keep Russia from slipping into vassal dependence on Beijing — which, according to most analysts, will be a threat to strategic stability.

This is a task of the highest complexity — not only because all participants would like to maintain normal commercial relations with China while resisting its desire to take a leading, hegemonic position in the world, but also because the process of global economic fragmentation continues to accelerate. This implies further decoupling of Washington's and Beijing's positions, including in the technological sphere. We cannot rule out an aggravation of the conflict over Taiwan, which could lead the system of international relations to a strict US-China bipolarity.

Supporters of the influential U.S. foreign policy school of thought, the realists, have long advocated the need to repeat the Kissinger-Nixon maneuver (which was fateful for the outcome of the first Cold War) within the Washington-Beijing-Moscow geopolitical triangle, this time choosing Moscow instead of Beijing. It cannot be ruled out that the new Russian government might be receptive to such an approach in order to accelerate the easing of sanctions pressure and make it easier to obtain the Western resources and technologies needed for modernization.

Western Stakeholders

US and EU foreign policy think tanks (CFR, Atlantic Council, Brookings, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Chatham House, ECFR, etc.).

Recommendations

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the problem, including a possible ambiguous reaction from China, continue in-depth monitoring of the situation in Russo-Chinese relations at all possible levels — political and economic ties, military and military-technical contacts, etc. Prepare various scenarios when and under what conditions rapprochement with Moscow (taking into account the possible prevalence of interests of different groups in the Chinese and

Russian leadership) becomes possible and expedient in the context of relations in the West-China-Russia geopolitical triangle.

International organizations

Russia, as the successor of the USSR, is a founding country of the UN, a permanent member of the UN Security Council with the right of veto and an active participant in all UN agencies and initiatives. It is a member of most global economic associations — the World Bank, IMF, WTO. Russia is a member of a large number of international organizations that develop, for example, global rules for industries and technologies; these include such diverse structures as OPEC and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) among others. Russia has created (and predominantly controls) several Eurasian regional entities linking former parts of the USSR: EurAsEC, CSTO, the Union State of Russia and Belarus. At best, they are a manifestation of the Kremlin's regional ambitions and embody its desire to “keep its finger on the pulse” of the former Soviet republics.

Except for the bleakest options for the future in all other cases the Russian Federation is likely to retain its main diplomatic positions in both the UN and other international organizations. Of all Ukraine's demands under the terms of peace with Russia, the least realistic is the denial (or deprivation) of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council: Moscow will insist upon both its right to vote and its right to veto, and likely other permanent members of UNSC will hold the same position. Altering Russia's predisposition toward aggressiveness in its foreign policy will presuppose both the appointment of a new permanent representative to the UN and the replacement of the entire senior staff of the Foreign Ministry's Department of International Organizations and the Foreign Ministry leadership as a whole. It would be right for Russia to raise the internal political status of the Permanent Representative to the UN, making him a political appointee approved by the parliament on a par with other members of the Cabinet of Ministers — and the likely negotiating activity in the process and after peace is achieved in Ukraine will require not only a team of professional diplomats in New York, but also a trusted political representative of the country's leader(s). The need for political appointees will also arise at the ambassadorial level in key capitals — Washington, Kyiv (after the restoration of diplomatic relations), Brussels, Berlin, Paris, London, New Delhi and Beijing.

If we look at the history of Russia's and the USSR's behavior in the UN, we can notice that major crises in Moscow lead to softening and even revision of the country's rigid positions on important international issues. It is possible that we would observe such a dynamic again — and the Russian representative at the UN should be prepared not so much to make unilateral concessions as to offer constructive cooperation on a wide range of current problems in UN activities that have accumulated over the years of confrontation.

UN agencies, including the organization's peacekeeping forces, can and should play an important role in the post-war settlement and reconstruction of Ukraine. Perhaps the UN is best able to offer a non-humiliating option for Russia to financially compensate the affected neighbor through UN agency funds. Such models should be analyzed and prepared in advance, and interested countries could join initiatives that could not only help in the settlement, but also enhance the credibility of the international organization.

United Nations Organizations Potentially Involved in Post-War Settlement in Ukraine

UN Security Council

UN Peacekeeping Force

International Court of Justice

UN Secretariat

International Atomic Energy Agency

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

International Civil Aviation Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization

World Bank

International Monetary Fund

Countries Expressing Interest in Post-War Reconstruction of Ukraine

U.S.

EU as a whole

Italy

Spain

Austria

Latvia

Lithuania

Estonia

Greece

Denmark

China

Turkey³

A transitional Russia could prove to be a convenient partner for the preparation and implementation of UN reform, which is long overdue. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, **Russia in a sense holds the keys to decisions that could be acceptable to both China and Western partners under certain conditions** (e.g., expanding the number of permanent members of the Security Council, including by including India, with which China has difficult relations). This also applies to the issues of gradual mitigation of the veto right and transition to decision-making by a qualified majority of the UN Security Council on certain consensual topics.

All these points — working out ideas, solutions and options — are also fully within the purview of the key diplomatic departments of all permanent members of the UN Security Council - from the US State Department and the UK Foreign Office to France's Quai d'Orsay and China's Foreign Ministry.

The Bretton Woods organizations — the IMF and the World Bank — are unlikely to play as important a role in relations with the future Russia as they did in the early 1990s. There are no grounds for special assistance programs for the country, and the economic information and reporting systems created in Russia

3 The list is based on statements made by country officials to the press between 2022 and 2023.

with the participation of the IMF and the World Bank (which are now failing) are much easier to restore than to rebuild from scratch, as they were 30 years ago. Finally, it is hoped that the authorities of the future Russia — whether transitional or permanent — will not need to be tweaked and tampered with to cover up corruption or failed government projects. Hopefully, the world’s financial institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Investment Bank/EBRD, IFC) will learn from the mistakes of the paternalistic practices of the 1990s and will not recommend that Russia cut its already meager social spending for the sake of ruble stability. In contrast to the usual practices of these organizations, which are based on exclusively monetarist models, austerity and attributing social expenditures of states “for the future,” in post-Putin Russia more attention will have to be paid to issues of social responsibility of the state, building a fairer system of distribution of national wealth and fighting corruption. The actual formulation of these decisions is the sovereign responsibility of the future Russian government, but international economic institutions could offer (without imposing) expertise, criticism, macroeconomic warnings and forecasts. Some components of such expertise could be prepared in advance, such as demilitarization of the economy, effective anti-corruption legislation and organizational solutions that reduce the size and power of the bureaucracy, methods to reduce regional economic imbalances, and transition to renewable energy sources. Moreover, **such work can take place with the participation of Russian civil society in exile**, which includes a significant number of experts in the field of economics, sustainable development, ecology, anti-corruption practices, etc.

As for the international organizations created on Russia’s initiative in the former Soviet Union in 1991-2023, their artificiality and parasitic nature will become evident in any crisis of power in the Kremlin — whether it is a normal succession process or something less predictable. Most likely, a future Russia will either initiate the dissolution of these “living diplomatic dead men” itself or agree to the other members’ proposal for their radical transformation.

The fate of Moscow’s membership in organizations created on Beijing’s initiative or with Beijing’s participation is more complicated. It will be advisable for Moscow to depart some organizations or at least downgrade its status in them (e.g., the SCO), and in some, perhaps, to maintain its current level of presence (e.g., the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and/or the BRICS Development Bank).

NGOs, civil diplomacy and soft power

In the initial period of the New Cold War (2007-2014), Vladimir Putin designated international civil society programs and initiatives as the main threat to his Russia. It started with George Soros's Open Society Foundation; soon thereafter, a wide variety of foreign NGOs were listed as Russia's enemies. At first, they included American foundations engaged in promoting democracy and a rules-based world order — the National Endowment for Democracy, USAID, USRF, and international institutions of the Democratic and Republican parties of the United States. They were soon joined by a variety of international organizations — WWF, Bellona, Prague Civil Society Center, a group of Protestant churches whose activities are considered dangerous by the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. Soft power institutions of a number of “unfriendly” countries — from the American Council for International Education, the British Council and the Heinrich Böll Foundation to a long list of American and European think tanks and even several universities whose position does not suit the Russian Federation — were listed [as “undesirable.”](#)

The hatred of NGOs with even a hint at a political agenda has been expressed not only in the designation of “undesirable organization” status, but also in the persecution, including criminal prosecution, of employees and former employees of foreign NGOs and Russian organizations that have been placed on this list as political opponents of the Putin regime. Putin's regime is cracking down on both human rights organizations and a number of Protestant denominations, primarily Jehovah's Witnesses. Currently, convicted “witnesses” constitute the [largest](#) group of political prisoners/prisoners of conscience in Russia.

Whatever the scenario of Russia's return to the path of democratic transit, aversion toward activities of foreign human rights organizations, democracy support foundations and foreign media will persist both in the post-Putin leadership of the Russian Federation and among a significant number of citizens. Decades of anti-American propaganda that frightened citizens with myths about the participation of pro-democracy and human rights organizations in the preparation of the “orange revolution” in the country do not disappear without a trace. All the more so in the last two years, propaganda has used Western support for Ukraine as “proof” of the malicious intent of the United States and its allies against Russia.

For the U.S. and European organizations mentioned above, as well as for Russian opposition groups in exile and independent media, Moscow's move toward democratic transit will be both an opportunity and a categorical challenge.

Another work in progress

When Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika opened the door to democratic development, U.S. NGOs and programs had an advantage that they do not (and alas, will not) have now: the opening Soviet Union and then Russia had genuine fondness for yesterday's adversary. The exuberance of capitalism and the prospect of an open world had not yet stood the test of time, and the Soviets expected that change would result in something like a Marshall Plan for postwar Europe. Unfortunately, hopes were dashed against the pitfalls of reality, the "American dream" did not take hold, and numerous aid, democracy and development programs were quickly discredited, both by Russian intelligence agencies and, alas, on their own. Since the mid-2010s, it's been an overt policy of the Russian authorities to squeeze out the remaining cultural, academic and educational foreign and joint organizations from Russia; the aforementioned bogeyman of "orange revolutions" was created.

When and if the possibility of democratic transit opens up again in Russia, all organizations without exception that would like to help the democratic development of the country⁴, will need not only to analyze the shortcomings of the previous attempt, but also to build new structures taking into account the experience gained. Even after their activities in the future Russia have been legalized, American and European pro-democracy organizations will have to face "criticism from the right" from Ukrainian and other Eastern European structures, which will demand reparations, apologies, remorse from Russia and Russians, and certainly will not approve any activities of USAID or EED on the Russian side of the border. The following measures seem most important in that regard:

Prepare a rapid and as complete as possible restoration of educational and academic contacts. For almost three decades this direction has shown itself to be not only sustainable but also to have a profound effect; the young people of the future Russia should be given maximum opportunities to study, work & travel, simply to travel. Unfortunately, the war and political persecution of dissenters have done enormous damage to the Russian academy. Large

⁴ As mentioned above, we believe that the main American democracy promotion institutions (USAID, USRF, NED, IRI, NDI) are likely to refrain from direct work in Russia, using proxy organizations and traditional partners (Freedom House, IREX). The Open Society Foundation and Internews are likely to reconsider their positions on work in Russia in the new situation. It is almost certain that German political foundations (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation), which were active before their activities were effectively banned, will resume their work in Russia at the first opportunity.

groups of scientists, teachers, and students have found themselves in exile and are trying to restore the educational process. Their experience and expertise should be taken into account when making plans for rebuilding.

Programs to support and develop movements and activism with critical but “Western” agendas (from LGBTQ+ to gender balance) should be carefully considered; when making plans, it should be understood that Russian society has been pitted against all manifestations of diversity and identity for the past 15 years.

It is advisable to **raise the priority of the environmental, climate agenda,** nature conservation and biodiversity issues — due to the minimal “allergy” to them in Russian society.

Support the media today, but exercise caution at the moment of transit. Russian media in exile play a major role in informing the country’s population about what is happening, but maintaining grant support for media outlets that decide to return to Russia on the “first flight” is extremely dangerous, at least until full rule of law and political diversity are restored. It makes sense to prepare journalists and editors for the fact that they will have to build the media sphere in Russia anew without American and European support, including in order to avoid repeating their own and imposed mistakes.

Support and develop civil society institutions in exile and train new leaders at all levels. The mass emigration of 2022-2023 (as well as earlier years, since 2014) has brought hundreds of thousands of young, energetic citizens abroad, including many activists, journalists, cultural figures, and regional politicians. By assisting their initiatives aimed at Russia or at emigrant communities, Western humanitarian, political and cultural institutions not only enable them to survive in their new social environment, but also facilitate the emergence of new leaders from below — through the organization of local communities, horizontal associations or even political organizations.

One of the key challenges for post-Putin Russia will be the presence (and emergence) of new leaders, as well as the return of those who have been in exile and their inclusion in domestic political processes. As has often happened in the country’s history, the period of gloomy isolationism and hostility toward Europe is likely to be replaced by a more open and even interested attitude toward Western experience, allowing new leaders to move and grow faster. The political party foundations in Germany (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Heinrich Böll Foundation) and the United States (IRI, NDI) can play a special role in helping young politicians from Russian emigration to learn, formulate platforms and possible practices for the future.

Support of the masses, distrust of the elites

During the previous transit, Western NGOs paid increased attention to elite programs to the detriment of programs aimed at the general population. This was evident from the very beginning, literally from the first months of the work of the Cultural Initiative Foundation in the USSR and Russia. One of the authors had the opportunity to observe it from the inside: the task was to open the political, academic and cultural elite of the late USSR to Western values, influence and integration into global networks. The alternative approach — working with broader populations, outside the capitals, opening up unremarkable people to the world and the world to them — was of little interest to U.S. headquarters. The happy exceptions were the Internews and, to some extent, IREX programs, through which thousands of Russian journalists and students passed.

When the opportunity for democratic transit returns to Russia, the focus should shift (primarily for U.S. and European organizations) to programs in which the widest possible participation of Russians is possible. Work & travel, a new version of the FLEX, language courses and student exchange opportunities, sister cities, educational programs for regional and city levels of government — all of these initiatives should be multiplied when the opportunity arises. Again, on a significantly less costly scale, these initiatives could be “tested” with activists in exile; such programs would also help with the identification and development of future local leaders of change that will be sorely needed in the Russia of the future.

On the contrary, current Russian elites, children and family members of Putin’s entourage, oligarchs, even quite distant ones, and even more so law enforcers, should be deprived of the priority and attention of Western organizations. This is that rare case when the son should be held responsible for the father. **The study of the current Russian elite, its connections and penetration into the networks of the West should become a tool for limiting privileged access to the opportunities and joys of European and American civilizations.**

A separate sensitive issue concerns the participation of Western advisors, legal, lobbying and PR companies in the new period of the Russian transit. Numerous investigations by both journalists and law enforcement agencies have shown that the participation of Western “consultants” in the 1990-2020 transit often became a method of cynical enrichment for unscrupulous individuals both in the West and in Russia. Cynical and unscrupulous bankers, political and legal consultants — especially those who continued to cooperate with Putin’s regime even after 2008-2014 — significantly damaged the reputation of the United

States first and foremost, but also of European institutions.

However, most of the Western firms and personalities involved in building Putin's fascizoid criminal state are fairly well known through investigations by journalists, activists, and law enforcement agencies. Perhaps an important action to restore trust should be an acknowledgment and apology by Western states and professional communities for the malpractice of 1990-2000 against Russia. A legislative or judicial restriction of opportunities to work in Russia for individuals and corporations implicated in the oligarchic and corruption schemes of the time (at the level of cease-and-desist type decisions) could be in the same line. This important (though not determinative) topic in the future relations between Russia and the West should be clarified.

Overcome the stereotype

Many pro-democracy organizations (as well as Russian liberals) drew from the 1990s and 2020s the notion that Russians were generally "hopeless" in adapting to common values, their Euro-Asian nature, their deep and insurmountable path dependency, and their genetic tendency toward paternalism, chauvinism, and xenophobia. As one famous Russian journalist put it: "One can endlessly watch fire, water and how Russians turn any good idea into shit."

The result of this "lesson" is the extreme limitation of any Russia-related support programs. Up to 90% of funds and resources go to people and organizations that have been working with NGOs and pro-democracy institutions for decades. Going outside this circle is considered at least dangerous. After the transit is restarted, it will be necessary to significantly upgrade the competencies of organizations that will again extend their activities to the territory of Russia. It will become necessary to expand the circle of experts, strengthen regional knowledge and consciously refuse unconditional support to those who have enjoyed it for decades. This will require decisions to:

- significantly increase the level of regional expertise, primarily in the South of Russia, the Urals, Siberia and the Far East — regions with underdeveloped infrastructure and sidelined civil society; as well as regions where anti-West sentiments are most pronounced;
- create and expand networks of contacts (for additional expertise, activist support and human resources), utilizing the potential of the 2020-2023 emigration among young activists, professionals and people from developed regions;

- actively use the tools of citizen diplomacy between Russian communities in exile and societies in Western (primarily European) countries, overcoming prejudices against Russia and Russians; in fact, it is necessary to create and maintain Track 2 channels — but not only with the extremely limited circle of those who can do so from Russia, but also with the emigrant community;
- **promote the idea that support for the future Russia, “Russia of a new chance,” is also an investment, also the security of Europe and the world.** (By analogy with today’s communication approach to Ukraine, “military and economic aid is an investment in the security of the West.”)

Conclusion. Post-Putin Russia in Search of Revival

Russia of the future will again have to go through a post-authoritarian transit. In the economic sphere, it will be easier: some market mechanisms have already been created in Russia (although they need deep reformatting). But in the field of domestic and foreign policy, the situation will be a lot worse than in the early 1990s. In these spheres, we will have to start from minus marks.

There is reason to believe that a change in the trend of internal development from a rigidly repressive, archaic and militaristic policy to a more open, peace-loving and integrative policy with priorities in the sphere of economic and social development will predetermine a relative turnaround in foreign policy. Without détente and a correspondingly renewed and cooperative approach to international affairs, the new post-Putin system is unlikely to be sustainable.

Despite the heavy legacy of Putinism, which has significantly narrowed the field for diplomatic maneuvering, Moscow will always remain an important international player. However, for a variety of reasons (and not only because of the consequences of the aggressive war in Ukraine), future Russian politicians and diplomats will have to struggle to raise their status in the international system.

Opportunities for rapid integration into the community of advanced countries that opened during perestroika and the early 1990s is unlikely to be available to the future Russia. The reasons are not only Western politicians’ and societies’ fears about Russia (as a government and Russian society too as they supported the war of aggression, and only few protested) and their desire for evidence of change within the country and in its foreign policy, but also the condition of Russian society as such after years of autocratic rule and propaganda pressure. There are several crucially important lessons stemming

from mistakes and failures the first transit for international organizations, Western pro-democracy institutions and even cultural foundations. These lessons are similarly important for future leaders and politicians in Russia.

First, the route to stable democracy is paved with citizen's agency. Neither reformer nor their aides, allies, foreign and domestic should decide what to do, how to proceed. Choices that are freely made in elections, referendums, local polls develop agency and responsibility. Do not accelerate democratic development but help it grow from the roots — local self-governance, first and foremost.

Second, democratic process must be protected by legitimate means. That means at least three basic principles every sympathizer of future Russia should insist on: FSB should be disbanded and banned as a criminal organization, officers and clerks should be prohibited from politics and state jobs for long period of time; all political parties that are (were) present in The State Duma since 2012 should be dissolved and all ranked members personally prohibited from participating in politics; but all this can only be done with an agreement of one and only legitimate source of power — national referendum.

Third, as much as this could be an initial desire after war, Russia and Russians must not be humiliated, collectively sanctioned and excluded (until some distant time in the future). In order to prevent inevitable resentment and further growth of anti-Western sentiment the focus of foreign pro-democratic aid should lie in the field of re-integration of Russians into European civil community. Exchange programs, citizen diplomacy, sister cities, cultural ties — all of this should be expanded and supported.

A second attempt at democratic transit will not be greeted with the enthusiasm and admiration accorded to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1988-1990. Whether or not the recommendations proposed in this chapter are heeded, Western countries will take a much more pragmatic approach to future change than they did during perestroika. Accordingly, the terms of reconciliation will be tougher and more specific than during the previous transit.

European and American policymakers and institutions concerned about Russia's future need to take this account. This is why initiatives to include political and activist projects of Russian emigration in the implementation of current EU policies and in the formulation of future approaches to the expected second transit attempt are so important. Such cooperation would increase the expertise of Western organizations and institutions on the one hand and help manage the expectations (inflated in advance) of the Russian opposition on the other.