

YET ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO DEFINE RUSSIA'S REGIME

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The article discusses the new state ideology called the idea of “sovereign democracy” proclaimed by the administration of the President of Russia and the presidential party “United Russia”. It is stated that this is another attempt to give a new adjective to the word “democracy” in the Russia’s regime. The article by the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office of Russia Vladislav Surkov, in which the principles of “sovereign democracy” are revealed, is analysed in detail. The article states that these principles are already being implemented in practice; therefore the regime of “sovereign democracy” defines Vladimir Putin’s present and future political programmes.

The author of the article critically reviews the attempts to define “sovereign democracy” as a democratic political system. According to the author, the principles of “sovereign democracy” do not meet the traditional criteria of democracy, and Russia’s real policy is directed only towards increasing its powers in the international system. The Kremlin intends to strive for these goals by strengthening power control in the economic and information sphere, as well as by increasing aggressiveness of its foreign policy.

Russia wants to remain “democracy with adjectives”

Since the downfall of the Soviet Union in 1991 attempts have been made to create democracy in Russia, however, hardly any investigator of political regimes would dare to refer to Russia as democracy. In the index of democracy *Economist Intelligence Unit* compiled in 2006 Russia falls into the category of

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hybrid regimes in which countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa prevail [1]. Recent assessments show that Russia is moving away from the democratic principles. In the assessments of democracies of 167 countries presented in the above-mentioned *Economist Intelligence Unit* Russia is singled out as a state in which movement towards the authoritarian regime is obvious. Main features of this process are restriction of civil and mass media freedoms [2].

Despite obvious violations of democratic principles Russian politicians keep on trying to prove to the world that Russia does not refuse democracy. After 1991 the West highly welcomed Russia's choice to carry out reforms and to create a democratic state. For a certain time the reforms that would be held up were judged with leniency and it was stated that this was unavoidable in "young democracies". However, more than a decade after the end of the Cold War Russia, like many former soviet republics, failed to create a real democracy. There is no point of talking further about the "transitional period". The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Baltic States can serve as an excellent example showing that if democracy is resolutely sought for, it is possible to be established quite soon.

Seeking to veil authoritarian tendencies of the political regime specific terms to define "Russian democracy" were started to be sought for. Attempts to create new epithets for unstable, hybrid or pseudo-democratic regimes acquired even an ironical name "democracy with adjectives" [3].

Though attributing specific terms to a political regime does not change the situation, representatives of the authorities of Russia and political scientists and analysts supporting them do not want to refuse the word "democracy". On the other hand, one can ever more often hear from the representatives of Russia the comment that a traditional democratic system, the one that has become established in the West, does not suit Russia. Russian politicians do not like democracy that is common in the West because it is too liberal and restricts the political power too much. The authorities of Russia do not want to recognise

1. Laza Kekic. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy. London, 2006, P. 5, http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/DEMOCRACY_INDEX_2007_v3.pdf

2. Ibid., P. 6.

3. See: Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." *World Politics*, 49(3), 1997, pp.430-551; Diamond, Larry. "Developing Democracy. Toward Consolidation." Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1999.

the fact that the political system of Russia resembles rather the authoritarian regime. Therefore a search for attractive adjectives, which would allow Russia to be called “democracy”, continues. Most probably this will not help Russia find itself on the lists of traditional democracies; however, it will be possible to explain at least to Russian society that democracy in Russia does exist.

One of the latest adjectives for “Russian democracy” was proposed by the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and advisor to the President Vladislav Surkov. Refusing to admit that “a managed democracy” exists in Russia (that is, the political system is strictly supervised and regulated from the Kremlin), Vladislav Surkov referred to the present regime of Russia as “a sovereign democracy”. Regarded as a highly influential member of Vladimir Putin’s team, at the Presidential Executive Office Vladislav Surkov is responsible for providing organisational, analytical and information assistance to the President of Russia. Different experts of Russia refer to Vladislav Surkov as to the main ideologist of Russia’s President; therefore the definition of the political regime “according to Surkov” could also be called “democracy according to Putin”. A more detailed look at the political ideology being formulated by Vladislav Surkov can also help to understand many present and future solutions of the authorities of Russia. What kind of Russia does the present Kremlin want to see, and on what interests will the relations with the foreign countries be developed? These issues are of great importance to Lithuania too; to which Russia will always be one of the main players in the international policy.

Putin’s Russia as “a Sovereign Democracy”

The first time Vladislav Surkov spoke about “sovereign democracy” was at the meeting with foreign journalists in June 2006. Soon a more detailed and comprehensive description of “sovereign democracy” appeared – the adviser to the President of Russia published the article “Nationalisation of the Future” in the journal *Expert* [4]. The article discussed at great length the essential prin-

4. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. “Эксперт” №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006. <http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_budushego/>

ciples, what political regime Russia should seek for, and what should form the most important interests of the state.

Surkov's thoughts, at least in Russia, received a rather strong response. The first Vice-prime Minister Dmitrij Medvedev, who, by the way, headed the Presidential Executive Office of Russia in 2003 – 2005, responded rather critically to Surkov's invitation to assign the new adjective to democracy. According to Medvedev, nationalisation of politics and economics has little in common with democracy, and application of any kind of adjectives to democracy sounds suspicious. Nevertheless, Surkov's observations about Russia's future received many positive responses from the politicians of Russia. The ruling party "United Russia" supported the idea of "sovereign democracy" especially enthusiastically. Its leader and Speaker of the Duma Boris Grizlov stated at the party congress held at the beginning of December 2006 that the principles of "sovereign democracy" were reflected in the new programme of the party, which "would form the basis for the elections to the parliament of Russia to be held in 2007 [5]. The party "United Russia" calls itself the "presidential party"; therefore its ideological position is almost identical with Putin's views. However, the most important thing is that the principles presented in the ideology of such a "new democracy" are already today in line with logic of the recent solutions of the Kremlin. Therefore it is possible to suppose that at least till the end of the term of Putin the authorities of Russia will follow namely this "ideology".

The term of "sovereignty" thereby Surkov supplements the concept of democracy is rather attractive or at least impartial. Many classical theories of politics and constitutions of national states indicate sovereignty as the most important value. The Constitution of Russia is not an exception either. Surkov tries to base himself on the provision of the Constitution that the holder of sovereignty is the multicultural Russian nation. Such a "backbone", which is in essence undeniable from the point of view of policy and values, permits Surkov to formulate the definition of "sovereign democracy".

According to Surkov, democracy is a varying concept, therefore it is quite reasonable to define it by means of additional criteria. In Surkov's opinion the

5. Newslab.ru. "United Russia" Congress held in Yekaterinburg. 2006 12 03, <http://english.newslab.ru/news/207631> NEWSru.com. "Грызлов не видит для России альтернативы "суверенной демократии"" 2006 12 03, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/03dec2006/gr.html>

changing, developing political environment requires such terms, which make democracy more exact. In choosing the term “sovereign democracy” Mr. Surkov underlines the importance of national sovereignty, that is, of the nation, in a democratic regime. According to the adviser to the President of Russia, nobody can make claims to power, which belongs to the Russian nation according to the essential provisions of the Constitution of Russia. In other words, “sovereign democracy” should in essence mean “national democracy”. Such a definition, perhaps, would be even more exact than the term “sovereign democracy”. Nevertheless, Surkov avoids identifying the concept of democracy that he proposes with the terms of nationalism, which in the modern world often sound negative and archaic – nationalism is often identified with radical political forces, which proclaim superiority of its own state over other states.

Nonetheless, Surkov evaluates “sovereign democracy” rather clearly as a national regime contrary to an open state, which is ready to fully and actively participate in global processes. According to Vladislav Surkov, the concept of “sovereign democracy makes claims to express the might and self-respect of the Russian nation, which is sought through the development of the mechanism of civil society, a reliable state, competitive economy and an efficient impact on the world processes”[6]. This provision enables us to suppose that “sovereign democracy” should be understood namely as the consolidation of the ideas of nationalism in Russia. It is obvious that though Surkov uses the concept of “nationalism” cautiously, he does not conceal the aspirations to proclaim the ideals of strengthening Russia as a powerful nation. He also clearly specifies the reason why he underlines the importance of nationalism. According to him, to seek for “sovereign democracy” means to resist any global dictatorship or monopolies. Indirectly this specifies the opposition to an ever-increasing influence of globalisation on the national states, and at the same time to the Western societies, the United States, in particular, which encourages globalisation.

The interesting thing is that Surkov, similarly to more radical right-wingers of Russia (for example, creators of the “doctrine of Russia”) states that the creation of democracy in Russia started only with Vladimir Putin’s coming to power. The regimes that were before that – tsarism, socialism and oligarchy

6. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. “Эксперт” №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006, http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_budushego/

(that is, the regime attributed to the time period of Boris Yeltsin's presidency) are assessed equally in the negative as the regimes, which did not serve the interests of Russia's society. Therefore, according to Surkov, now it is time to turn back to look at the interests of the nation.

The mission of "Sovereign Democracy"

Why did it suddenly become necessary to turn back to look at the interests of the Russian nation, which the rulers of Russia had never been too concerned about before? And what interests of the nation is the present regime of Russia going to defend now?

Answers to these questions can be easily found in Surkov's text. First, actualisation of sovereignty and turning back to look at the nation are based on a rather commonplace argument that has been heard in history many a time and oft – there exist ill-intentioned people beyond the borders of Russia who seeks to decrease Russia's sovereignty (in Surkov's words – have intentions of "desovereignisation"). It is not only foreign subjects that lay schemes to encroach on sovereignty belonging to the Russian nation and impose recipes of their own democratisation and globalisation on Russia but also internal saboteurs – "marginal unions of the former officials, proponents of nazi and refugee oligarchs", which are being still encouraged by the "entering diplomats"[7]. The main reason due to which the external forces have designs to encroach on Russia's sovereignty is ever-increasing needs for resources and security in the world, therefore Russia, which disposes of large resources of the nuclear weapon, oil, gas, wood and water, unavoidably becomes an attractive object in a global fight for resources and power. Such attempts should be stopped, and income earned by the international projects, which invest in the extraction of resources of Russia, must be left in Russia.

Surkov urges people to support the idea put forward by Vladimir Putin stating that the nation's assets (Surkov uses the word "savings") must be preserved, and this should become the "fundamental principle of democracy"[8].

7. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. "Эксперт" №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006. – P. 5, http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_buduschego/

8. Ibid

It would be difficult to find somewhere else a similar comparison of assets as a goal and democracy. All classical definitions of democracy, first and foremost, underline participation of the public in state administration and representation of the majority, respect of civil rights and freedoms [9]. Of course, it is possible to come across very broad definitions of modern democracy, however, it would suffice to remember the criteria for evaluating democracy applied by the *Freedom House*: 1) A competitive, multiparty political system; 2) Universal adult suffrage; 3) Regularly contested elections conducted on the basis of secret ballots, reasonable ballot security and the absence of massive voter fraud; 4) Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open campaigning [10].

Alongside these “technical” criteria, which define freedom of elections, the *Freedom House* also basis itself on the criteria of civil rights and freedom of the press.

In his book *Models of Democracy* [11] David Held describes autonomy and national sovereignty in modern democracy at great length. However, he evaluates autonomy of democracy from the point of view of relationship between the authorities and the citizens. David Held seeks to expand the classical contents of democracy by stating that it is necessary not only to separate the state and a civil society but also actually to strengthen the possibilities of society to take part in the decision-making process. As one of the preconditions to guarantee greater possibilities for citizens to participate in a decision making process David Held indicates expansion of economic possibilities, that is, citizens must be economically independent and free from other structures so that they could realise their democratic freedoms [12]. Perhaps one could suspect that some ideas of David Held about autonomic democracies could “inspire” Surkov to speak about re-distribution and concentration of economic resources at the disposal

9. See about the principles of democracy: Dahl R. “Poliarchy: Participation and Opposition.” New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971; Dahl R. “Democracy and its critics.” Yale University Press, 1990; Lipset S.M.

Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics. Doubleday, 1963; Lipset, Seymour Martin. Encyclopedia of Democracy, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995.

10. Freedom House. “Methodology: Electoral Democracy Designation”, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=35&year=2006>

11. Held, David. *Models of Democracy*. Stanford University Press, 1997.

12. See for more about it: Held, David. *Models of Democracy* . Stanford University Press, 1997, P. 295-325.

of the Russian nation. However, even if Surkov became acquainted with the ideas of David Held, their transformation into the idea of “preservation of assets” in the concept of “sovereign democracy” seems to greatly distort David Held’s proposals to increase the possibilities of a civil society to participate in democratic processes.

The ideal of preserving or striving for assets is closer to oligarchic and plutocratic regimes. Though Surkov speaks about the preservation of assets of the entire Russian nation in a very abstract manner, it is easy to understand how he imagines the implementation of this process. The very title of Surkov’s article enables us to suspect that the best way not to permit foreign capitalists to impoverish Russia is to increase influence of the national authorities in economy, or speaking in even simpler terms, to nationalise the most valuable objects of Russian economy. However, such nationalisation of the policy and economy will not enrich the entire Russian nation but it will sooner strengthen the power of the ruling circles to regulate state-owned companies and will make wealthier the officials who head the largest state-owned companies. Taking into account the social sphere Surkov speaks neither about social wellbeing nor about reducing social differences in society. Therefore aspirations to maintain and increase the economic power of Russia are not directed towards increasing the wellbeing of society. One can understand that certain restrictions imposed on property possibilities would mean a struggle against concentration of private capital (that is, the state’s attempts to reduce the economic power of the oligarchs) or limited possibilities for foreign capital to become established in Russia. However, it is most likely that consequences of such “reform of redistribution of the assets” will be beneficial to the new elite of Russia, which has become rooted in the structures of the state power, rather than to a civil society.

Is sovereignty a pretext for nationalisation and militarization of economy?

Though Surkov speaks about “open economy”, he fails to present any arguments about why “sovereign democracy” in Russia could be regarded as “open”. However, it is not difficult to find in Vladislav Surkov’s article to what the priorities should be given when re-distributing the amassed assets. Accord

ing to him, to protect Russia's sovereignty it is necessary to strengthen defensive powers and to allocate "reasonable budgetary financing to the Army, the Navy and special services"[13]. It is especially difficult to understand why special services are included in the aims of financing. Surkov does not even trouble himself to hide the liking that the present ruling elite feels for the structures of the force, and secret services in particular. There are even no hints that effective military or intelligence service institutions are necessary, let us say, to fight against new threats – terrorism, traffic of weapons, drugs or people. Therefore there remains only one conclusion – Russia is going to strengthen its military forces following the attitudes that a "national state" has to compete and fight with other national states.

One can notice even now that the authorities of Russia do not grudge money to secret services: On 8 November 2006 the new Headquarters of the military intelligence service GRU was opened, according to the Defence Minister of Russia S. Ivanov, the most modern building of this type in Russia, or, perhaps, even in the world. A 77-thousand-square-meter building was built and equipped within as short period of time as three years, thus, one can understand that its construction did not lack funds [14]. Vladimir Putin, when congratulating the GRU officers on opening the new Headquarters said the following: "We need to be fully aware that the potential for conflict in the world is on the increase. The international community finds itself in a situation in which factors of force are dominating in international relations. Stability is being seriously undermined by the practice in countries of taking unilateral action – action that is not legitimate in international law – and by attempts by some countries to unceremoniously impose their views without taking into account at all the legitimate interests of other partners." [15] These statements of the President of Russia coincide with Surkov's ideas that Russia has to strengthen its internal security and protect it from a conflicting and aggressive world.

13. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. "Эксперт" №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006. – P.5, http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_buduschego/

14. According to the data presented in the Russian daily *Kommersant*, construction of the GRU building officially cost 9,5 milliard Russian roubles, or about 365 million US dollars, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.html?docId=720044>

15. Putin V. Speech at the New Headquarters of the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff. November 8, 2006, http://president.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/11/08/1741_type63376_113574.shtml

Goals of strengthening the economic power are currently already being implemented in Russia with an unconcealed enthusiasm. The main measure of the implementation of these goals is Russia's dominance in the energy sector. Russia's aggressiveness in energy markets of recent years has become an especially popular theme. Even NATO countries became concerned that Russia might use energy as a weapon against economy of other states [16].

Russia, however, does not refuse other sources of income that were tested in the times of the Soviet Union. According to the latest data of the study *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations* submitted to the US Congress, in 2005 Russia outdid the USA by arms sale to developing countries. In 2005 Russia sold weapons for 7,4 billion US dollars (in 2004 – for 5,6 bln. US dollars), the larger part of which – 7 bln. US dollar value arms were given to developing countries [17].

This orientation of Russia towards strengthening heavy and military industry partially confirms the aspiration for preserving and increasing “assets” in Russia that is accentuated by Surkov. Vladislav Surkov clearly underlines the necessity for Russia to become an economically competitive state; however, the choice of measures to increase its competitiveness is surprising. There is an ever-growing aspiration for free trade in the world, and the most competitive economies distinguish themselves by largest openness and dynamism, orientation towards knowledge-based economy, the development of science and technologies. Though in his article Vladislav Surkov mentions the importance of knowledge to the development of competitiveness, the general context of “sovereign democracy” as though promises that Russia's economy will become ever more “national”, that is, closed to foreign capital, especially in the strategic sectors of economy.

Of course, Russia does not think of building a new economic “iron curtain” from the West. After a longer than a decade lasting negotiations, in November

16. At the NATO Summit meeting, this issue was especially accentuated by the US Senator Richard Lugar. More about it see: “Lugar: Attack on Allies' Energy Supplies is Attack on NATO Alliance” NATO Summit, Riga, November 27, 2006, <http://www.rigasummit.lv/en/id/newsin/nid/239/>; Vladimir Socor “Lugar urges active role for NATO in energy security policy” Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 3, Number 222, *Published by The Jamestown Foundation*, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2371701

17. Thom Shanker. “Russia Led Arms Sales to Developing World in '05”. New York Times, October 29, 2006.

2006 at last it was possible to agree with the USA on Russia's joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, Russia's joining the WTO is enmeshed in plenty of restrictions for foreign capital (for example, the USA failed to achieve that Russia should permit foreign banks to found their affiliates in Russia). Furthermore, the fact that Russia will become a member of the WTO does not mean yet that it will be inclined to open its economy to the world, especially sectors of energy and other resources. On the basis of the ideas put forward by Surkov, Russia will seek to increase the state influence on the systems of energy supply, processing and distribution, especially in Europe. Politicians of Russia do not conceal the fact that the economic rebirth of Russia is related to a more efficient functioning of the energy sector and the increase in energy prices to foreign buyers. Russia's ambition to become an important and, perhaps, the most significant world centre for energy production and distribution is becoming to seem not so utopian. Russia is active in establishing relations with other suppliers of oil and gas (for example, Venezuela, Algeria, and Kazakhstan) and threatens Europe that it would direct its oil and gas supply to China. Unfortunately, thus far the response of EU to such an obvious blackmail of Russia was reserved and it permits Russia to impose energy prices and conditions of supplying to the countries of the EU and Eastern Europe unilaterally.

Surkov speaks with hostility of the earlier attempts of Russia's politicians to become involved in globalisation processes. According to him, these were attempts to "hide Russia in the past"[18] and both Russia's oligarchs and the bureaucratic elite, which feared global competition, encouraged these attempts. Most probably Surkov can imagine Russia in the global world only as a struggle of national companies against foreign capital. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand why, for example, *Yukos*, which was recognized as a company, that created the most modern and most efficient management systems, was destroyed in no time and its assets were divided among the state companies controlled by the Kremlin officials.

The interesting fact is that the above-mentioned David Held investigates also the problems that a democratic state faces in maintaining its sovereignty in the global world. According to David Held, "there appear disjuncture between the idea of a democratic state, which in principle is able to decide its future,

18. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. "Эксперт" №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006. –P.5, http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_budushego/

and the global institutions, international law and military unions, which form and limit the possibilities of individual national states to choose”[19]. However, David Held admits that there appear plenty of disjunctures in the global world between sovereignty of the states and the influence exerted by global processes. Main disjuncture arises because of the world economy, international adoption of political solutions, international law and the global mass media, as well as the environmental development. All these disjunctures determine that it is in principle impossible to speak about sovereignty of democracy in the modern world. Instead of this Held proposes a cosmopolitan model of democracy – attempts to combine globalisation and autonomy of power.

Held’s “cosmopolitan model” is quite opposite to Surkov’s idea of “sovereign democracy”. Surkov regards globalisation as an instrument of the USA, or, more generally, means of western capitalism to expand its economic influence in the world. Therefore for Russia to open itself to globalisation means to become the victim of predatory western capital.

On the other hand, Surkov does not speak of complete isolation of Russia. On the contrary it is stated that Russia has to “stick to the West”[20], however, this slogan is intended for Europe only. Vladislav Surkov refers to Russia as a “European nation” and invites it to draw intellectual ideas from Europe, to cooperate in the sphere of science because it is only in this way that Russia would be able to modernise itself. Though he does not forget to remind that there are many bad things in Europe (for example, he reminds that Nazi was the “invention” of Europe), still he recognises that at the present time Europe is necessary for the restoration of Russia’s majesty. At the same time attention is drawn to the fact that there are different positions on Russia in the West – some seek to make Russia obey, whereas others are looking for mutually beneficial partnership. According to Surkov, in the relations with the former (one should understand that with the USA in the first place) Russia is ready to resolutely defend its sovereignty, whereas in the relations with the latter it is determined to show openness and flexibility, as well as productive co-operation.

19. Held, David. *Models of Democracy* . Stanford University Press, 1997, P. 342.

20. Владислав Сурков. Национализация будущего. “Эксперт” №43 (537), 20 ноября 2006. –P.5, http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_budushego/

Freedom from foreign forces but not from the state

Though in his article Surkov repeats the word “freedom” many times, this freedom means to him only freedom from the influence of the foreign policy or foreign capital. In the ideology of “sovereign democracy” the least is said about freedoms of citizens and freedom of the mass media. Unfortunately, the concept of “sovereign democracy” does not include these freedoms that are so common in democratic countries. Most probably this means that besides nationalisation of economy in Russia one should expect further “nationalisation of information”, that is, a non-decreasing pressure on the mass media and suppression of any public opposition to the ruling elite. The murder of the well-known journalist A. Politkovskaya strengthened suspicions even more that journalists in Russia cannot feel safe, especially if they speak unfavourably of the leaders of the Kremlin.

At the present time there are no national television channels in Russia, which are not supervised by the Kremlin. Only very small number of the press and radio and certain Internet media can express a somewhat freer position. Most likely the President’s administration considers that it is possible to maintain “sovereignty” of Russian democracy only by restricting freedom of the media in Russia and announcing exclusively positive news of the Kremlin.

Conclusions

The Kremlin does not stop explaining to Russian society and the foreign mass media or politicians that democracy does exist in Russia. Though Russia is obviously going down in all ratings of democracy and free society, the very word “democracy” is still attractive to Russian politicians. Therefore they use various means of various terms to fill in the gaps in democracy acquire ever-new forms, and ideologists or parties supporting Vladimir Putin are trying to persuade everybody that Russia needs special democracy.

Unfortunately, even the most beautiful adjectives placed next to the word “democracy” will not change the political reality. Vladimir Putin strengthens domination of power in the state and uses various measures for this purpose – control of the media, decrease of the possibilities of free elections, taking over

the most important economic sectors into the state's supervision, strengthening of special services and the military sector.

Russia is already speaking openly of the ambitions to substantially strengthen its influence in the international system. The first task, which should help Russia acquire more weight in solving the issues of international policy, is strengthening of the economic power. The situation in the world energy market enabled Russia to feel that it has an important instrument of impact on other countries, especially on the countries, which depend on import of energy resources. It is understandable that Russia's authorities want to make use of this measure of power as effectively as possible, therefore it seeks to achieve that as few as possible secondary players should interfere with the energy sector of Russia. Several years ago it was thought that Russia would not manage without foreign investments in oil and gas extraction sector. High prices of energy resources and an aggressive penetration of Russian companies into the energy sectors of Central and Eastern Europe strengthened Russia's self-confidence in its own powers. Recently, it is said more and more often that Russian companies themselves are capable to make considerable investments into the energy sector. It is true, however thus far more that investments have been allocated to infrastructure of transportation than to extraction of energy resources. Some of these infrastructure projects do not seem to be economically well-grounded (for example, the planned North European Gas Pipeline, which *Gazprom* and German companies intend to lay through the ground of the Baltic Sea), however, they correspond with the aspiration of Russia to be as little as possible dependant on any external players, for example, potential transit countries or other oil and gas suppliers.

Domination in the energy sector gives hopes to Russian politicians that Russia will recover its former political influence. Nostalgia for the status of the superpower that the Soviet Union had makes the present authorities of the Kremlin demonstrate at least some symbols of power. In the Soviet Union power and might were directly related to fear. It is not surprising that the present authorities of Russia also encourage the rebirth of traditional measures of fear. The cult of power emerges again on the TV channels controlled by the authorities – broadcasts heaping praises on the work of special services or documentaries about the former professionalism of the KGB are constantly

shown, movies and serials about heroism and everyday life of the Army of the Soviet Union and Russia are created. Unfortunately, patriotism of the Russian population is encouraged not only by the means of public agitation. Attacks against foreigners are on the increase in Russia, however, the authorities are inclined to ignore this tendency.

Russia's turning back to look at the policy of the Soviet Union times is felt not only in the internal policy but also in its relations with other states. Smaller states, Russia's neighbours have already experienced Russia's increasing disfavour – almost all means of communication were broken off with Georgia, export of Georgian and Moldavian goods to Russia was impeded, since July 2006 supply of oil to Lithuania through the pipeline *Druzhba* has been terminated. Russia's criticism with respect to the USA and NATO is becoming more severed. On the other hand, Russia seeks to strengthen its bilateral relations with Germany, France, and Italy. It is regrettable but these largest countries of the European Union still regard Russia as a "reliable partner" without noticing that in the name of good relations with the Kremlin common interests of the European Union are disrupted.

The West seems to have reconciled with the idea that there will be no democracy in Russia and is inclined to maintain "rational" relations, that is, to ignore Russia's growing aggressiveness and to rejoice if Russia agrees to make exceptions to "its best friends", to supply larger quantities of gas and oil. Up till now neither the European Union nor the USA showed how far their compliance to Russia might go. This will only strengthen Russia's self-confidence and resolution to behave the way it likes, not only inside its country but also on the international arena. As can be judged from the ideas of Vladislav Surkov and the "United Russia", Russia's politicians feel ever less embarrassed to state that they intend to resolutely seek to achieve the rebirth of Russia's might by any means. The strange thing about it is that the symbol of "democracy" is still being used for this purpose.