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**DEMOCRACY AND DISSENT:
A DECADE OF DECLINE IN RUSSIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

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TOM MELIA: All right, we'll get started, then. Thank you all for coming. We might even need more chairs here. All right, you've got some more chairs coming in? Yes, ten minutes ago we were concerned we didn't have enough people in the room. Now we're concerned we don't have enough chairs in the room, so I guess we're starting right on time.

Welcome, everybody, to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty this morning. My name is Tom Melia. I'm the deputy director of Freedom House. And we are jointly with RFE/RL convening this meeting, this morning, to announce the findings of our annual survey, "Nations in Transit."

This is a scholarly work that assesses the state of democratic governance in all of the formerly communist countries of Central-Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. And we have been doing this now for 15 years, thanks to support we get from the U.S. Agency for International Development. And so in addition to thanking our partners today at RFE/RL for making this facility available, I want to pay special tribute to the good folks at USAID who have made this possible over this last decade and a half.

And I don't see him in the room just yet, but I also want to pay special tribute to Alex Sokolowski from AID, who's been our point person on this and has been a marvelous partner, over the years, in making the grant user-friendly for all concerned and allowing us, with government funding, to produce an independent report about the politics of now 29 countries of great interest to policymakers in Washington and around the world.

Let me just say a word about the moment we find ourselves in. Obviously, the front pages of today's newspapers have reported the arrest of 10 long-term Russian spies who, apparently, have been developing contacts and trying to develop levels of influence in the New York area and along the East Coast of the United States.

It's a reminder that we live in a complicated world that national interests don't always converge in the ways that we would hope they would. So while that interesting story will play out over the next few weeks and months and we'll find out more about – feedback from microphones – we're looking at a much broader relationship with Russia and the other countries of the former communist world. And it's a complicated story and – frustrated by that. No, don't put it near the loudspeakers, right? Okay.

It's a complicated story, obviously, U.S. relations with Russia and its neighbors. As policymakers in the United States government, State Department, the National Security Council, the Defense Department, AID – as all our government agencies try to develop the proper policies to engage more broadly in the world with countries that are friendly and country that are rivals, one of the things that we like to contribute to the mix is honest analysis of the state of political development in these countries.

What to do about it is for people at a higher pay grade and in different places to do. What we try to do is describe, as accurately as we can, the developments over the last year and over the last decade and a half in each of these countries, to put it on the table, let other scholars and critics react to that, use it as a basis for discussion and then hope that policymakers will take note of it and find it useful to their deliberations.

So we are at this moment, now, of what is becoming a multiyear global political recession, worldwide. It's important, as we're looking at this specific region of Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia, that we be a little bit mindful of the broader global climate. Now, over the last several years, as those of you who take note of our "Freedom in the World" findings, there have been more countries seeing declines in overall freedom than improvements in overall freedom, worldwide, over the last four years now.

And as this global political recession intertwines with the global economic recession, which we may or may not be coming out of, we think that it adds additional urgency to the story that these reports tell. We are not in a position – those of us who believe in the expansion of freedom and strengthening democracy around the world – we are no longer in a position where we're going from one accomplishment to the next, or seeing one triumph or breakthrough after another.

We are now in a sustained period in which we are looking at recession and setback. And trying to understand what the reasons for that are is our challenge today and what we try to do at Freedom House, in our analytical capacity.

Before we turn to Chris Walker and his team of researchers, who will talk about this year's findings, I want to ask one of those important officials from the State Department to speak to us and tell us a little bit of how it looks to policymakers, generally, in the democracy/human rights promotion business these days and then, specifically, about the value that a publication like this may have for policymakers.

So we're very pleased to be joined today by Dan Baer, who is a deputy assistant secretary of state in the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Dan has been at the State Department, now, for eight months. He came in at the end of November, last year. And his portfolio in the global Bureau for Democracy, Rights and Labor encompasses precisely the region that we're talking about today: that is, Eastern Europe and most of the former Soviet Union. So we're glad to have Dr. Baer here.

As you can tell, this is a meteoric career in midstream. Dan is new to government. Before that, he was at Georgetown University's school of business, teaching about ethics and corporate integrity in the global environment. Prior to that, he was a scholar at Harvard's Edmond Safra Foundation Center for Ethics. He worked as an analyst for the Boston Consulting Group for three years, earlier in the decade, following his academic career, in which he earned his undergraduate degree from Harvard University and his masters and doctoral degrees from Oxford University.

So we're delighted to have an astute scholar of the scene and now a senior official at the Department of State to speak with us for a few minutes, before we turn it over to our analysts. So Dan, welcome this morning to RFE/RL. Glad to have you.

DANIEL B. BAER: Thanks very much. I'm a little bit worried that the ratio of intro to address will be skewed disproportionately, in this case, but I thank you very much for that introduction. And thank you to RFE/RL and thank you to Freedom House for inviting me. And also, thank you for this report. It's an honor to be here and it's a pleasure to be here and to watch the next sequence of this report.

Following on what Tom said, I think reports like this one are critically important in the policymaking process. I think it's very easy to let policymaking be swayed by combative views traded on op-ed pages. And I think it's really critical that we return to the facts frequently, that we study the facts and that we use the facts to inform the way that we shape policy. And in that respect, reports like this one are crucially important. They are a valuable tool. They're not the only thing we use, but they are a crucial ingredient.

I want to talk a little bit about the content of this year's report and then come back at the end to talk about why I see this report as particularly special. But obviously, as Tom said, the report this year is a sobering one. It's one that calls our attention to declines in democratic standards, declines in freedom, across the former Soviet Union, led, disappointingly, at the vanguard, by Russia.

And we at the State Department are paying close attention to those trends and this report will continue to inform our views. We have ourselves documented, year after year, concerns about Russia in particular in our country reports on human rights practices. And we continue to be concerned by restrictions on civil society and on activists there.

The secretary, speaking last week at the civil society summit that was held alongside the presidential summit, called attention to particular cases and spoke out about the need to maintain a strong support for the space for the civil society in Russia.

Elsewhere in the region, we continue to be concerned – Azerbaijan, obviously, by the cases of the bloggers who have been imprisoned there, as well as journalists. In Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan is the chair-in-office of the OSCE this year. There are commitments to media freedom that have heretofore gone unmet that we are concerned about. And across the region, there are a number of continuing worrying trends of decline.

I don't want to – I know that there will be a focused discussion of each of those cases, or of many of those cases in the panel to come. And so rather than go through the litany here, I want to say something about the particular nature of this report, which is the fact that it captures a moving picture. You can take a static picture and judge whether something is good or bad, but what's really valuable about this report is the way it captures trends. And capturing trends is critically important if you're going to be strategic about the way that you form policy.

And so that's part one. The other part is that it captures the trend of backsliding. And backsliding is, I think, an interesting challenge in the way that policymakers think – for getting policymakers to think about backsliding properly. And I think the report can make a contribution to this.

And it seems to me that there are a number of reasons why we don't pay as much attention as we might to backsliding. These are partly psychological, partly methodological. Psychologically, it's really hard to be the guy who goes out and says, I'm really proud of having maintained the status quo. We all want to be able to be the person or the team or, you know, the country that moves the ball down the field. And so maintaining the status quo is just a harder sell in terms of outcomes.

Part of that's, I think, connected to the fact that we often – perhaps not after reflection, but our first instinct is to think that maintaining the status quo actually takes no effort, which of

course is not true. And this report really underscores the importance of locking in gains, of locking in progress and not taking progress for granted.

The second reason is that, obviously, measuring progress – even if you could accept that there’s an equal amount of good done by locking in those gains – measuring the effects of locking in those gains is very difficult. It depends on a counterfactual. When you make progress from going to autocracy to a free society, you can point to those tangible gains in the lives of people. When you make progress by locking in gains, everything that you’re claiming, in terms of your progress, is based on a counterfactual that it would have been worse had we not done this.

And that’s just difficult. But to me, those problems are things that we have to overcome because if we care about expanding the reach of freedom, to more people and more places, we must be equally focused on backsliding. The costs of backsliding are equal – ought to be equal – in our assessment to the gains of progress. And we should be committed to both.

I think that – and I’ll close now, but I think that what this report, above all, underscores is that, you know, history didn’t end two decades ago. History continues. The struggle to advance freedom continues and we need to be consistently vigilant in using the facts to drive policy and to make sure that we’re raising at every level – both publicly and privately, both in government and people to people – the value of freedom and the principles upon which it’s based. And I’m very grateful to the authors of this report for giving us another tool in that continued effort. Thank you.

MR. MELIA: Okay, thank you. We’ll decamp from here and turn the program over to my colleague Chris Walker, director of studies at Freedom House and the overseer of this production.

CHRISTOPHER WALKER: Well, good morning, everyone. I’ll be very brief in my comments. I’ll give an overview of the main findings from the “Nations in Transit” report and then I’ll give an opportunity to our experts – Erica Marat and Alex Motyl – to talk a bit about two countries that we believe are critical in the larger, former Soviet picture and in the struggle to enhance democratic accountability in the former Soviet Union. That’s Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

Tom Melia and Dan Baer, they touched on the broad strokes of our report and some of the challenges that are there. One of the things we try to accomplish with the “Nations in Transit” project is to give some context for the movement of key institutions. And if you look at the component parts of “Nations in Transit,” you’ll find what might be described as the bread and butter of democratic accountability: electoral process, civil society, independent judiciary, media.

The news in the former Soviet Union is very grim on this count. And there are a host of reasons that contribute to this, but our findings show systematically that there’s an erosion in these key institution across the former Soviet Union. If we look at the last year, just to give the broad strokes from last year to this one, 14 of 29 countries overall, in the entire study, had worse democracy scores than the year before.

Media independence, across the board, across the 29 countries we look at, was the indicator that slipped the most. And this was both in new EU member states and the Balkans, as well as the former Soviet Union. And we see this expressing itself in a number of ways. In the more mature, democratic states you see pressures from regulatory bodies or political elites to suppress open media. As you move into the more authoritarian states, you'll see some of the more brutal methods, as well as sophisticated methods, to suppress open expression and dissent.

This is also one of the themes of this year's report. I think if you look at the non-Baltic former Soviet Union, you'll find that there are enormous pressures on open expression and alternative points of political view. Not so much on issues of – (inaudible, background noise) – the bells are ringing – or general entertainment issues. It's on matters of political consequence where the arteries are being constricted. And I think this is a terribly important point.

This year in the former Soviet Union, there were six declines overall. In the new EU member states, there were also six declines. New media is also an area that our analysts touched on as something that is increasingly being encroached on. New media in the former Soviet Union, by comparison to traditional media, has far more open space to operate.

That's clear, as a snapshot. I think what's critical to keep an eye on and to be vigilant about are the various forms of pressure that are starting to – (inaudible, background noise) – insinuate themselves into the new media sphere in a number of countries in the former Soviet Union.

Looking at a decade – we have a decade under our belt in the new century. If we look at findings, this tells us, I think, a more important picture in some ways because it allows us to consolidate the data, look over time. Dan Baer talked about the importance of time-series data in understanding trends. Eleven of the 12 non-Baltic former Soviet republics have worse scores in our findings, overall, than they did a decade ago. The only country that escaped that fate was Ukraine and, of course, it too has its own challenges that are emerging, just in the recent months, to its democratic accountability.

Eighty percent of the countries of the non-Baltic former Soviet Union – populations in these countries live in entrenched authoritarian settings. Two are in the category right below that. We call it semiconsolidated authoritarian states. And two, Ukraine and Georgia, are what we define as transitional or hybrid countries.

It's really quite remarkable if you think about this, 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that you have this sort of structuralized authoritarianism in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union. I'd conclude with this thought. I'd say it's also remarkable today that, as a practical matter, political dissent is restricted systematically in the countries of the region, in the former Soviet Union. It's really quite remarkable, if you think about it.

And there are a host of reasons that contribute to it. If you look at the separate ingredients of our findings, part of it are the range of constrictions put on civil society. Part of it can be attributed to the restrictions in independent media, on political competition. But it's a very serious issue on a number of fronts. It's hard to envision the sort of accountability and reliability and partnerships from countries that themselves operate on coercion and caprice. And I think this is something that's worth discussing a bit more.

I'll stop there on the main findings. I'd like to have two of our special contributors to "Nations in Transit" say a few words about few countries. I think you have their bios. I won't go into detail on them. They're long and it would take up time we don't have. But it's my pleasure to introduce Erica Marat, who'll say a few words on Kyrgyzstan, and Alex Motyl.

I'll take a moment just to highlight something Alex has had published today. I can feel it on my fingers; this is so hot off the presses. This just came out today, a wonderful article on the challenges to democratic accountability in Ukraine that Alex has authored. And I would commend it to everyone here. We have a couple of copies here for those who are interested, but I'll start with Erica and then we'll move to Alex.

ERICA MARAT: Thank you very much. I'm very delighted to be here and for the past three years have been writing the report on Kyrgyzstan. Before I begin my participation, I have to say that I write for Voice of America's Russian service and whatever I say today does not reflect the views of Voice of America.

So in 2009, Kyrgyzstan was put into the category of not free countries. From being partly free, it became a not free country. It was put in the same category as all other Central Asian states. And this was done for a number of reasons. First of all, in 2009 we saw an unprecedented increase of attacks against journalists and against political opponents.

Why this happened: My explanation was because the secret service and the military were given unprecedented power in the government, in the regime. And specifically, the president's brother, Janysh, was able to conduct his own politics in the country without reason and remove his opponents, or the regime's opponents, in a very brutal way. And he felt a sense of impunity.

In December 2009, when I was writing one of my drafts of "Nations in Transit" report on Kyrgyzstan, five journalists and activists were attacked in a very brutal manner. One of them was a journalist, Gennady Pavlyuk, who was killed in Almaty.

Of course, things changed since then. We're now in the midst of a change in Kyrgyzstan. We don't really know where the situation is going, so at this point it's very hard to judge whether Kyrgyzstan will be able to pull itself out of the not free category by the end of this year. We'll see how the parliamentary elections will go, if they're actually going to be more transparent than any other elections in the region that took place before. And there is a possibility. There is still a possibility for this to happen.

It'll also depend on whether violence, ethnic violence, you know, will take place again – once again, we will see repetition, or some form of ethnic violence happening again in southern Kyrgyzstan.

But what's important to note here is that, despite these extreme forms of authoritarianism that we saw last year and in the past five years under president – former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, there are still forces in Kyrgyzstan who are actively pushing for a parliamentary system. And this is very unique for Kyrgyzstan in the Central Asian context, that there are forces that push for a parliamentary system, that are trying to reduce the possibility of repeating the experience of the Akayev and Bakiyev regimes.

Of course, those forces are not – you know, they’re not always guided by their goodwill, by their ideals. Some of them are just frustrated by the political competition in the country and they want to make sure that they’re not suppressed by other political parties. In Kyrgyzstan, there are about two to three strong political parties who want to have majority in the parliament. And so then, a parliamentary system is the only way out, to make sure that political competition does not descend into ugliest forms and that some sort of compromise is found.

So that said, there is a lot of criticism of the constitution. We saw that, at the referendum, an overwhelming majority supported the new constitution. But the criticism goes as following, that citizens of Kyrgyzstan did not vote for the constitution, per se. They voted for stability. And not all of them really know what the constitution says. They only know the very basic elements of the new constitution.

But then again, as I said, there are very strong powers, for good or bad reason, pushing for a parliamentary system. And it’s an experiment for Kyrgyzstan. Let’s see how it goes. Let’s see if the parliamentary elections are going to be freer and fairer compared to previous elections in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asian region in general.

And I think low levels of instability will continue to prevail in Kyrgyzstan. We still need to do a lot of research and investigation of what happened during June 11–14 in southern Kyrgyzstan – whether violence was indeed imminent, as a lot of experts now claim, or whether it was provoked and did not have to happen.

Why did it begin so suddenly? Why did it end so suddenly? Why didn’t we see any repercussions on June 27? So there are a lot of questions which we’re probably not going to find answers this year, by the end of this year. But still, we see some positive change, right now, happening in Kyrgyzstan.

And with that, I would only add that the international community is desperately needed in Kyrgyzstan, starting from training the central elections commission in Kyrgyzstan to, you know, contributing to party building, to continuing supporting NGOs and journalists and to also, probably, working more with government, with local and central government in Kyrgyzstan.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Erica. Alex?

ALEXANDER J. MOTYL: Thank you very much. The dreadful news coming from Ukraine, as you all well know, is that since being elected president, Viktor Yanukovich has essentially embarked upon a kind of bulldozing of the political system, which has entailed the transformation of a very messy, very chaotic and somewhat dysfunctional democracy into what, at this point, looks like an increasingly consolidated authoritarian regime with decided paternalistic, sultanistic elements, whereby Yanukovich himself is the key to the system and seems to be in virtually every agency, with his finger in just about every decision that’s being made.

I won’t go into more detail on that. You obviously know what’s going on. If one were – if I were, if I were to be compiling the scores for Ukraine in the “Nations in Transit” at this particular point in time, I’d be inclined to introduce quarter-point, possible even half-point diminutions on virtually every single category. You may notice Ukraine had a total democracy

score of about – well, of exactly 4.39 in the 2010 study. If my changes were to be made today, clearly that would go up to close to five, 4.75. Who knows, exactly? But in any case, it would go up a substantial amount.

The question is, is this sustainable? Is this going to work? And here, I think, there's at least some cause for some possible optimism. Hence I started out with the terrible news and let me suggest to you that there may, actually, be some semi-good news lurking on the horizon.

One bit of good news is that, as much as this has been a process that resembles a bulldozer, there has been opposition. The opposition isn't necessarily terribly effective at this point in time, but it's not as though people are just lying over and pretending to be dead. The political opposition is somewhat disorganized, but nevertheless, looking for all sorts of venues, looking for opportunities. And sooner or later – it's my hunch, in any case – they will begin to get their act together, as do all demoralized oppositions in virtually every country of the world.

More important, perhaps, is that despite the pressures on civil society – I mean, there have been curtailments of freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. There have been curtailments of independent media. Suffice to say, as you know, that the head of the security service is a media mogul. You know, if this isn't a conflict of interest, I don't know what is.

Nevertheless, the independent media and civil society are still quite vigorous and they are fighting back. It is striking that there are very many people, very many NGOs, very many institutions that are taking part in various actions involving civil obedience, civil disobedience of one kind or other. So far, it's all been very peaceful and above-board and I expect it to remain that.

But the point is, it's taking place and people have not given up. They haven't given up in places such as L'viv, where you would expect it to be the case. But they haven't given up in Kiev and they haven't given up in Kharkiv, where there's been a recent movement to protect a park from the depredations of the local authorities. So all of these things are encouraging and my guess is that, unless the bulldozer just goes into high gear and people simply give up all together, that there will be some kind of tension for the foreseeable future.

The other bit of good news – which is to say bad news for Ukraine, good news in terms of democracy – is that Ukraine, as you know, is in the throes of a very serious economic crisis. And Yanukovich has to – bollens-nollens (ph), willy-nilly, we simply has to embark on some kind of economic changes. There is no alternative at this particular point in time.

And inasmuch as this man has accumulated all these powers and claims to be responsible for the future and current development of Ukraine, whatever economic problems emerge – as they are sure to emerge in the foreseeable future – will sooner or later will be considered his fault, his responsibility. So in that sense, his legitimacy, his trust, his confidence level – which at this point in time is about 50, 60 percent – is almost certain to decline within the next year or so.

And then, last but not least, I mean, the very nature of this kind of hypercentralized, paternalistic regime is, to my mind, intrinsically unstable. I won't bore you with all the political science details. Suffice to say that when a man who cannot spell the word professor and

confuses Akhmetov with Akhmatova is at the core of this particular system, then we may have doubts about its sustainability in the short, medium and indeed the long term as well.

That's all the good news. The other bit of good news, conceivably – and here let me make, you know, some reference to the Freedom House scores – is that Ukraine, despite all these upheavals and dysfunctions, over the last 10 years – I mean, keep in mind the Gongadze scandal, Kuchmagate, the Orange Revolution and then, of course, the durdom affiliated or associated with the Timoshenko-Yushchenko five years in office and then, of course, now, with Yanukovich.

What is striking to me is that, if you look at the scores for Freedom House – the total democracy score in 2000 – it's comes out to 4.63. The worst it gets is 4.88 in 2004, that is to say, on the eve of the revolution. After the revolution, I think, to Freedom House's credit, it goes down – that is to say, it improves to 4.50. That is to say, there was an awareness that this was significant, but not necessarily the end of history. It improves, at most, to 4.21. This is in 2006, 2007. And then there's been a steady, slow erosion since then. And my guess is that there will be a bump up in the erosion this year.

That said, notice that the scores are all within about .6 percent, you know, points of each other. I mean, they're sort of between 4.21 and 4.88, right – .67, which is not insignificant, but that does suggest, possibly, that there is something in the nature to – this is more a hope, perhaps, than an expectation – something in the nature of genuine institutionalization, that these rules are perhaps somewhat stickier than we think.

And inasmuch as they prevented Ukraine from becoming hyperdemocratic, as all of us hoped it would in 2004 and 2005, they may – this is a hypothesis and a hope – they may, perhaps, prevent this bulldozer from becoming quite as destructive, at least, as it seems it might become at this particular point in time.

Two final points, in terms of the implications of all this. You know, obviously, whatever happens in Ukraine – especially if it goes in a nondemocratic direction – that's not necessarily good for the country, but more important, or as important, but in terms of wider implications is, if Ukraine goes, this is the last country in the non-Baltic Soviet regime that was still quasi-democratic or democratic. It's over.

And then, I think, the chances for any kind of future democratic development in the former Soviet, non-Baltic space, in general and in Russia in particular, will become increasingly dim. Ukraine was always that example one could point to and say, well, democracy may or may not be able to take off, but there are possibilities. There are, perhaps, exceptions to this rule.

If this exception fades, then the case for authoritarianism doesn't necessarily, perhaps, become objectively more persuasive, but it will be presented as being objective, as being rooted in the very nature of these people's political culture, by the authoritarians themselves.

Last but not least, the question, to my mind, is, you know, how will this confrontation – this looming confrontation between the bulldozer and the surviving, sticky institutions, the vigorous civil society, the still-vigorous independent media and the economic crisis play itself

out in Ukraine? With any luck, Yanukovich, at some point, will say, oh my God and decide to create a government of a larger coalition by bringing in the democrats.

I mean, alternatively, we could be facing another Orange Revolution. The difference this time would be, perhaps, that it could be an orange and blue revolution, entailing broader parts of the population. And that could be very peaceful and it could lead to all sorts of wonderful, happy ends. Or not. Thank you.

MR. WALKER: Thank you very much, Alex. We're going to move quickly to the Russia panel. We have time for just a couple of questions relating to Kyrgyzstan or Ukraine. We're going to do a quick musical chairs in just a moment. We have a question over here.

Q: Nadia McConnell, U.S.-Ukraine Foundation. What role do you think – this picture you paint of the bulldozer – does the West play, in the sense that sometimes the West is ignoring some of the things that are going on because of the stability that they thought Yanukovich was bringing to the political scene?

MR. MOTYL: Well, the bottom line, of course, is that these processes are primarily driven internally. That said, there are no stop signs. There are no yield signs that are being created, either by the Europeans or the Americans. And in that sense, it certainly encourages Yanukovich.

And more significantly, perhaps, it discourages the opposition. I mean, what you hear from everybody – whether it's a journalist or an NGO person – when will Obama finally say something? And I think they've given up on the Germans and the French, but there's still this hope that maybe the Americans will finally say something.

MR. WALKER: We have one more question.

Q: Yeah, this question is also directed to Dr. Motyl. I'm Bill Gleason from the State Department, the Foreign Service Institute there. I guess I agree with you, generally, in terms of your hope for some pushback and for the strength of civil society here ultimately being to turn the situation back in the other direction.

But I guess I'm a little – I guess I'm uncertain about your analysis of Yanukovich because on the one hand, you use a term like bulldozer to describe him and his entourage. On the other hand, by referring to him as a functional illiterate, I'm wondering if we are unintentionally underestimating him, or if we're taking him too lightly, or if we're seeing him in ways that, you know, kind of take us off the track here in terms of what needs to be done or said here.

I mean, for some time, I've been rather struck by the speed and the enormity – which is the bulldozer phrase that you used – that he's moved or his people have moved. So I guess I have to ask you, are we really sure that this guy is the kind of lightweight that seems to be referred to within terminology like that?

MR. MOTYL: In my effort to be brief, cursory and pithy, you know, I focused on his particular, possible intellectual shortcoming. Clearly, they've performed a, quote, tour de force,

in terms of their seizure of power. I mean, in an op-ed I compared it to the Nazi Gleichschaltung of mid-1933. That's eventually what they've done. They've coordinated. They've seized power.

And of course, it hasn't been just him. I mean, there's been an entire entourage of people who have assisted by all sorts of circumstances: popular apathy, opposition disorganization and so on. What is striking, to me, is that now that they are in power, these individuals, who claimed to be professionals who could get the job done, really don't seem to know what to do. I mean, again, I think it's a larger problem. I mean, Mr. Azarov, the prime minister – (chuckles) – you know, heaven help us all if these are the kinds of reformers they have.

You look at the ministers in the cabinet of ministers – I mean, largely incompetent people without experience – and again, with some exceptions, obviously. But you look at the team that he's assembled and, by and large, it consists of relatively undistinguished individuals. You look at Mr. Yanukovich, who is claimed to have street smarts – that's the best I've heard about him, tough guy who kind of knows how to get the job done.

And you know, to suggest that he can't spell professor is not necessarily a disqualification. That said, I'm not sure he has the capacity to see big pictures, to think strategically. And so far, in these three or four months that they've been in power, I don't see strategic thinking. I don't even see effective authoritarianism.

This is what strikes me. I mean, it's not that they're – you know, that they're authoritarian bugs me, obviously. But that they're bad authoritarians really bugs me because it suggests that you have – you know, it's not just a bull in a china shop. It's a stupid bull in a china shop, if one can put it in those terms.

And that, I think, has something to do with the political culture of the Party of Regions. It has something to do with their origins in a relatively backward province of Ukraine. It has something to do, obviously, with their experience in governing modern societies. It has a lot to do with their inability to think out of the box and to think in terms of capitalism, markets, globalization, integration into the West. I mean, that's not the way these guys think. Again, there are exceptions, but generally, they don't.

So in that sense, I mean, his functional illiteracy is just – well, just kind of the icing on the particular cake. I didn't mean to suggest that was the cake.

MR. WALKER: I'm certainly not going to try to top those observations. I'd like to thank Alex Motyl and Erica Marat for their contributions and for their contributions to the project. We're going to do a quick change up here. And Alex will remain and he will moderate the Russia panel.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you very much. I'm putting on a different hat. It's my pleasure to be chairing this particular panel that's focused on Russia. And again, you know who all the people are. I won't even bother to introduce them. And if you're unsure as to who they are, please look at those handouts.

I'm going to start the discussion by addressing three questions to our three panelists. They will all provide brief introductions. I mean, these will be answers and, sort of, introductions to their commentary. And once they're done, we'll open it up to you, all right? I'll encourage all my three colleagues to be relatively brief because the briefer you are, the more opportunity you'll have to interact with the audience.

We will start with Bob Ortung at the right, then move on to Vladimir Milov and then end with Oleg Kozlovsky, okay? And let me ask the three questions, so that you know what they are. And then you can take it from there, okay?

Robert, would you address the fact that in the last 10 years, Russia has backslided most of all the countries covered by the "Nations in Transit" project? A very significant development; what does that mean? What does that tell us about the systemic or, perhaps, smaller kinds of obstacles to democratic development within Russia today?

Vladimir, if you'd be so kind as to focus on the obstacles and/or – or perhaps not obstacles. I mean, the degree to which energy development and the recent focus on technological modernization in Russia will or will not affect Russia's possible democratic development in the medium – in the short, medium and long term.

And then Oleg, please, would you then bring this discussion down to the ground and focus on your activities as an NGO activist promoting democracy in Russia? And tell us what the obstacles are, what the opportunities are and what you see as your potential strategies. Gentlemen, thank you. Bob?

ROBERT ORTTUNG: Thank you very much, Alex. As Alex mentioned, Russia is not the worst country in this region, but it's suffered the biggest decline over the last 10 years. And that's been a steady decline since the beginning of the decade.

And if you look at the NIT numbers that came out today, the worst drop-off was in electoral processes. So the only elections today in Russia that have real meaning, in the last several years, were a handful of mayoral elections out in various regions, where you have real competition and often have a case where United Russia loses the election.

You've also seen a drop in national governance over this period, the second-biggest drop. And over the last two years, since the transition from Putin to Medvedev, political life in Russia no longer reflects what's described in the constitution, which gives extensive power to the presidency.

You also see killings continuing in the North Caucasus, which Medvedev has described as the biggest problem that Russia faces today. And the Kremlin has given a considerable amount of its sovereignty to Kadyrov, who controls Chechnya today. The only real political change that's taken place in the last couple of years was the amendment of the constitution in the end of 2008, which extended the term of the president from four years to six years, which is not obviously a way to increase the accountability of a very powerful executive in Russia.

For the most recent year, the year covered by "Nations in Transit 2010" which we are releasing today, the only ratings change for Russia came in the area of corruption, which went

from 6.25 to 6.50 on the Freedom House scale of 1 to 7 where 7 is the worst. And this change is a result of the growing prevalence of bribe paying in Russia, the failure of the authorities to address widespread police corruption and the growing use of sophisticated and illegal means to pressure businesses that are operating in Russia.

Of course, the level of corruption has been high in Russia for many years, for almost – it has been consistently high over the last decade and even earlier under the Yeltsin period. And of course, Medvedev has made battling corruption one of his signature issues. But none of the things that he has proposed to deal with corruption have been significant in actually addressing this problem.

And most importantly, just sort of going down a list of the things that Freedom House keeps track of, which is having free elections, having a relatively independent media, especially in the national television level where the vast majority of people get their information, and having independent courts. You can't fight corruption unless you make progress in those areas. And so, unfortunately, corruption has become a defining feature of the Russian political system. And it's hard to see where any kind of change is going to come from. It's not coming from domestic political forces and it's not coming from external forces either.

And unfortunately, corruption has had a number of consequences in Russia. The biggest that we see is a de-participation so that the authorities are working to keep people from participating in all aspects of political and civil life in Russia. And according to the latest data from the Levada Center in a poll conducted at the end of June, it shows that 84 percent of the people feel that they have no way to impact political processes in Russia; 6 percent of the people don't know; and 10 percent of the people say that their actions can actually influence events. That's the latest data.

Another consequence is that there's no turnover possible at the political top. There's too many interests who are dependent on Putin and the people around him to allow an opposition to form and for it to take power. So that's a direct consequence of the level of corruption in the country. And of course, there's few ways to hold the officials accountable. And finally, the consequence is that maintaining this current system is extremely expensive. It's expensive for the authorities to pay subsidies to the population to keep political acquiescence. And it's expensive to fund the repressive apparatus.

So that's a quick summary and I hope it lays out in very brief bold terms the atmosphere in which some of our colleagues who live and work in Russia have to operate.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you, Bob.

MR. MILOV: Well, thank you, Alex. And I'd pick up in the beginning on how great this report is in terms of illustrating the dynamics of the Russian system in the recent decade. And it's sometimes striking if you take a look back and see how the political and civil society institutions in Russia have degraded over the years.

This is what Dan Baer here has been speaking about in the first part, this static versus dynamic view on what's going on, because the official Russian propaganda likes to depict things more in a static mode, saying, look, things are not as bad as they could have been and using very

specific examples like take a look at Ukraine where regional governors have always been appointed by the president or take a look at the United States where there are only two major political parties. And in Russia, we have seven official parties registered.

The dynamic picture here instead shows that there has been steady degradation of all the major parameters of democracy and civil society and governance. And the situation five years ago has been far better than today and even during 2009, certain degradation took place.

This is inevitable outcome of the system that we built over years. And the system is very confrontational. If we talk about the cost of authoritarianism here, it's very confrontational in itself with the basic idea of innovative modernization, which is currently proclaimed as the major political goal in Russia, because if we take a look at the history of successful innovations in modern countries, we see that what drives them normally is the creativity and the initiative of the people so to be able to reach out and reach some innovative breakthroughs.

We've got to unleash that initiative. We've got to support creativity, freedom of thinking, and freedom of expression. This is something which current Russian system simply doesn't afford. And moreover, it's built on totally contrary values.

And this is actually something, which makes the ultimate goal that is currently announced by Russian authorities as the priority, the diversification of the Russian economy from the hydrocarbon export dependence toward high-tech innovative industries impossible because we simply – the system which is too centralized, too consolidated, and too dependent on the factor of redistribution of hydrocarbon revenues, which is in turn the founding pillar of its political stability.

It just cannot afford itself to get out of the box because Russian – current Russian approach to innovation is like this. Let's take some hydrocarbon money that we still have in our pockets and spend it on financing some innovation activities. Now, this is not how innovations work in the modern world.

I just give you an illustration, which is a quote from one of the recent interviews by Vladislav Surkov who is the first deputy head of Kremlin administration and one of the most influential domestic policymakers in Russia – basically the architect of the current authoritarian model. He was talking about innovation in the interview to a business newspaper, Vyedmosti (ph), and said, look, most of the global demand for innovation comes from the governments and large corporations, most of which are government-linked.

Now, some of you, I'm sure, are familiar with how innovation process in the world works. You just need to type words size and innovation in Google and you will find out that the major breakthrough innovations have been instead achieved the small and medium-sized firms, which has a direct relevance to the effectiveness of the large R&D budgets of the state and large corporations.

On the contrary, the small and medium-sized private firms, this is one of the fundamentals which the current Russian rulers seemingly don't understand. And they continue to focus on maintaining centralized system, hoping that through distributing hydrocarbon revenues, it will be able to achieve some kind of innovative breakthrough, which history and the

past decade proves that it's not able to achieve. And I think it's clearly demonstrated in this report, particularly as nationwide and local governance is concerned.

I think, to conclude, I'll just give you an illustration that recently in the beginning of this year, we saw something which was unprecedented for Russia before. We've had quite substantial mass protest gatherings in certain Russian regions where people demanded resignation of Vladimir Putin government, gathering thousands of people demanding that. This is something totally unexperienced (ph) for Russia in the previous decade.

And these demonstrations plus some crashing defeats for the ruling United Russia party on some regional and municipal elections where flexibility is still possible was happening in the regions where there was a clear failure recorded in connection with the system of appointing regional governors instead of electing them. Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Arkhangelsk, Samarra – all these are regions where you have governors appointed from the outside bearing no relevance to region whatsoever, having no connection with local elites in population, and having no experience in public politics and no need for actual accountability.

Basically, these protests and this hope for local and regional election defeats United Russia is a direct consequence, to me, of a failure of a system of transfer to a system of electing regional governors to appointing regional governors with the will of the president. So I think if we speak about the cost of authoritarianism, it's quite clear there are visible signs that this system produces unfortunately many failures. And if it remains in place, there will be more.

Thank you.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you so much. Final comment?

MR. KOZLOVSKY: Thank you. I would like first to thank Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty and Freedom House for giving this opportunity to speak to you. And if we talk about my observations from the ground of human rights and democracy activism in Russia, I would only agree with what Chris Walker said earlier that the whole system in Russia has its aim to stop civil society organizations from functioning on every level and on every step.

Whatever you are going to do, you are going to face all those obstacles that have been installed by the government in order to secure their power. For instance, if you are going to raise funds, then you won't be able to – and if you don't have good connections with the Kremlin, you are not going to find any funds from the local sources because most businesspeople are not going to risk their businesses, and nobody wants to share the fate of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. And it will be very difficult for you to raise funds from abroad because of the legal obstacles and because of the propaganda that will immediately tie you to the foreign intelligence or call you an agent of foreign influence.

If you are going to hold a protest, then you will immediately face a lot of illegal – usually illegal – obstacles when you are not allowed to have your protest where and when you want it. And even if you have, then there are a lot of many ways – small methods – to decrease the efficiency of your protest. For instance, most government-controlled media will never cover it. And even if they do, they will not mention what you are demanding. They will just say that there were some hooligans who demanded something but they didn't know what.

And then, there is the infamous OMON. But not just OMON; there are many regiments of riot police that are very efficient at arresting peaceful protestors and you have very little chances of being heard unless you have a very huge protest like the one that Vladimir mentioned. And there were such protests this year. But in most cases, after one such protest, the government cracks down on the organizers. It uses a range of methods from threatening to bribing people. And in case of Kaliningrad, for instance, the main organizers were forced to give up and not participate in politics anymore because of the pressure from the government.

And it is quite difficult for general population, for the society to unite in such conditions. And of course, this is a problem of the media, which is controlled on the federal level. But even the local media outlets are usually very well controlled too. It's getting worse with the Internet because in the last two years, there have been more and more cases of bloggers who have been prosecuted for criticizing the government or certain government agencies or certain government officials on the Internet – one of them – (inaudible) – was sentenced to imprisonment for inciting hatred against a social group. And the social group was his local government.

And there are unfortunately many cases like this, so what the government is trying to do is impose self-censorship on the bloggers. And the Internet has until now remained the only or the most free media outlet. And at the same time, the freest way to discuss issues, political issues and social issues on the Internet.

However, I wouldn't say that everything is so bad that we shouldn't have any hope. I think that there are some positive changes too. And these changes come from the society because more and more people join into groups, sometimes very informal groups that even have no names or at least have no leaders or no officers, no structure.

But these are the groups like, for instance, people who protest against the flashlights that bureaucrats use, especially in Moscow to have a privilege in traffic. This is a very extraordinary group. They put blue buckets on tops, on roofs of their cars to imitate those flashlights. And initially they also faced a lot of pressure and traffic police was stopping them and fining them. But after some time, they gained so much support from the general population that the police decided not to mess with them anymore.

And these very guys whose – there were many others like them who protest against construction rules or protest corruption in their local municipalities. They have already become very politically active because they faced the system that doesn't want to listen to them, that doesn't want to be accountable to them. And in general, all of them are dealing with the same problem.

The problem is the detachment of the ruling elite, which includes the bureaucracy, which includes the police and also their top management of corporations connected with the government. – the detachment of them from the general population. And this accountability, this huge gap between these two groups in the Russian society is driving more and more people to protest. And I believe that this movement, a very broad and very informal movement is something that we may trust on and we may believe will finally bring democracy to Russia.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you so much. We have – I'm sure there are many questions – we have about 25 minutes. I suggest the following format. We'll cluster questions. Please make

them as brief as possible. Address them to whomever. And then once we've clustered the questions, we'll just go down the row and give each of the panelists about five or so minutes to respond to whatever happens to be of interest. Please, hands? Sir?

Q: This is for Vladimir and Oleg. I'm with Voice of America. I live in Moscow. And as you both know, now-Prime Minister Putin has demonized opposition people who seek foreign assistance or meet with Hillary Clinton. I think in the words of Putin they were jackals stalking the foreign embassies looking for help. What is the best and most pragmatic way of counteracting this kind of demonization of opposition people as traitors to the nation, et cetera? You're very familiar with this syndrome, I'm sure.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you. There was a question – a hand over there in the middle? Yes, please.

Q: Anthony Schott (sp) from the George Washington University. Obviously, the Obama administration is attempting to reset relations with Russia. And I'm wondering how the human rights abuses – specifically, Mr. Kozlovsky mentioned Mikhail Khodorkovsky – how that is impeding the reset and if this attempt to reset may cause some shifting in policy from Russia? Thank you.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you. Any other hands? Okay, gentlemen.

MR. MILOV: Well, thank you first on this CIA spies issue – jackaling. Of course, this is one of the cornerstones of the official propaganda to label the democratic opposition activists as the agents of foreign influences. Oleg rightly put it. It's difficult to confront because Russian propaganda has been very successful in recent years in fueling the anti-Western sentiment among the Russian public.

And the recent opinion polling very clearly shows, which I confirm – it's not just opinion polls. In the recent couple of years, I have traveled about 40 Russian regions and talked to thousands of people. And I have to say that the anti-Western and particularly anti-American sentiment is quite strong. So someone who is advocating for good relations with the United States naturally has all reasons to become a candidacy for being an American spy.

This is one thing which is difficult to confront. But our point is, look, if Russians want to live better, if they want to live decent lives like only people in the Western world do in developed countries, they have to embrace the idea that they will have to implement democratic, Western-style democratic institutions on Russian soil. And they have to maintain strategic partnership with the Western countries, United States, European Union, Japan and others.

And I think I have participated in many debates recently. This message gets through because there is no alternative. Alternative is Asia. And people in Russia, although a lot of people really view United States as a somewhat hostile establishment, at the same time, basically people refuse the idea of Asian model of living as a standard for Russian modernization, if you will. They still embrace Western lifestyle as a positive role model for Russia.

And I think the recent failures of authoritarianism basically are very helpful in that because more and more people get a feeling and have a great dissent about the fact that

authorities are really not accountable in front of the Russian people. And only the Western system, basically, gives an example of that outright accountability because you know it's a very funny development. When you pick a cab in Moscow, which was a very frequent development two years ago, and the driver would start asking you questions, who would be better president for United States, Obama or McCain? Which means that the Western mechanisms of accountability of rulers basically get through to Russians and people understand that it's better to have rulers accountable through democratic election system than self-appointed rulers who do not allow free elections.

So I think we can overcome that attitude towards demonstrating the advantages of the normal civilized Western democratic model. This is, I think, how we are going to work with it. And I'll leave Oleg the question about the reset.

MR. KOZLOVSKY: Well, and to add to what Vladimir said, this propaganda really is very difficult to argue with because they are never calling any names. They never give any details. And so this is some cloud that you have to fight against.

You have to argue against some very abstract clues that somebody must be working in the interest of someone. And it's very difficult to do. But naturally, you have to just reframe the question from who is working on who or who is getting money from somebody to what everybody is doing. Are they doing a good thing or a bad thing? And this is a more concrete and more specific question where you can bring your argument.

And on the reset, I think this – well, I don't know exactly what the reset is because I haven't seen really any kind of reset inside Russia. The propaganda, the ideas that are brought into the Russian society are just the same as they used to be. Maybe some very slight changes have been made. But only probably the Irkutsk can find them. So and we saw from yesterday's events when 10 people were arrested and suspected of espionage for Russia that it doesn't look like the relations have really improved or that the Cold War past has been forgotten.

I think that the reset shouldn't mind a carte blanche for Russian government or for an American government. And it shouldn't mean that human rights and democracy agenda should be pushed out of the talks. I don't think that this is done. I think that the Obama administration has its best intentions to help Russian democracy as much as they can.

But I would like to see more relations between the issues where some progress is done like the issues of investments into Russia and relations and issues of human rights, democracy and rule of law. And it's especially important since in fact there is a direct connection between rule of law and the safety of investments. This is important to have a rule of law in Russia, not just for Russian people but also for American investors and also in general for the whole world because without the rule of law, even the foreign relations with Russia are very difficult.

If you remember, there were in Georgia in 2008, I think many of you know that it was a violation of the Russian constitution to bring troops into Georgia, because according to the Russian constitution, they had to get permission from the senate first. But they just didn't have time or forgot to do it. So but nobody really objected because there is no rule of law and nobody is going to sue the government for doing that.

So this is something that really affects everything. And I hope that the United States administration also understands that.

MR. ORTTUNG: I just want to make two quick points on this question of the reset. First one is that, of course, U.S. policy has very little impact on democratic processes inside of Russia, so there's very little that we can do. The other point is that the old policy under the Bush administration of sort of confrontational approach obviously wasn't working, so it makes sense to try a new approach.

But clearly, the goals are the same. The people working with – you know, maybe the atmospherics have changed a little bit at the top. But the people working with Obama are interested in promoting democratic goals and democratic values just as the people under Bush were. And if you look at overall American response, including civil society and, say, response, there's no shortage of criticisms of human rights abuses in Russia in America today. So I think that there's still a lot of pressure coming from this country not only at the top levels of the government but also from all – you know, from the academic community, from human rights observers in America. So there is still that pressure there.

MR. MOTYL: Okay, thank you. I've seen two hands raised, three, four, okay, five. Okay, one, two, three, four, five, six – very quickly and then we'll move finally to our panelists.

Q: Michael Allen with the National Endowment for Democracy. Oleg and Vladimir are both involved with Solidarity, the democratic opposition. And as you know, the opposition in Russia is often criticized for being elitist, have been too concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg and so on. We have the same old names – Alekseeva (ph), Kasparov. I wonder to what extent you are making outreach to and engaging with these opposition elements in the provinces? In the labor unions, for example, we've seen independent labor militancy recently. And how do you respond to those criticisms?

MR. MOTYL: Thank you. There was a hand over there, I believe, just behind the camera?

Q: Hi, my name is Franek (ph) Vichorka (ph). I'm from Belarusian Popular Front, oppositional organization, Tulokashenka (ph). Thank you very much for guests from Russia. First, I want to say that I was three times in prison. I just one months ago I was released from the army where I passed 15 months, where I was jailed for 15 months. Actually, I remind my colleagues that – I remind Belarus five years ago. We all spoke to all the world that there are oppressions. But generally, finally the world closed their eyes to repressions inside of Belarus. And now, Belarus and repressions just changed the – (inaudible) – but no improvement. I generally not agree with the facts selected in the report. I think that no improvement of democracy in Belarus, the same as in Russia.

I think that deepened authoritarianism in Russia going together with deepened authoritarianism in Ukraine and in Belarus. And it is connected with closing eyes by European Union and U.S. to this repressions. And I want to ask my colleagues from Russia, how do you think – what way is to improve situation with democracy in our countries? How foreign countries, the West, can influence by their collaboration with our states' government, Putin, Medvedev, or Lukashenko, or by sanctions? What way is better? Thank you very much.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you. I believe there was a hand over here, two hands over here. Okay.

Q: Hi, Richard Solash (ph) from Radio Free Europe. I have a bit of a practical question for you. I believe I probably already know the rather grim answer but I wanted to get some ground truth from Oleg and Vladimir about what happens to a report like this, which is so damning, once it gets to Russia? There is a Russian version that is put out of the report, as we all know. Does it evaporate? How is it used by your groups? Does it have any appearance in the media? Just some insight from the ground in Russia would be helpful.

MR. MOTYL: Well, no, let's cluster them as much as possible because they're all kind of related. There was a hand over here?

Q: Yeah, okay, I'm back. Second question – this is for all of you. I'd like to get your assessment of Medvedev himself, simply because the relationship with Obama appears to be evolving very quickly. And as you know, the history of American-Russian relations often turns on individuals, individual personalities. Very often it comes down to two or three people. And while we may be cynical about Medvedev, I think it's time to really take stock of what we're dealing with or what we're faced with. And I think this is for all of us, but particularly for Professor Orttung.

MR. MOTYL: All right, so same question? Anybody else? Okay, Ms. McConnell. Can you just pass that down? And then we'll close the session on – no, we'll close the round and them move to the panel.

Q: What, if any, cooperation or support do you have with other human rights groups, neighboring countries in the region?

MR. MOTYL: Okay, thank you. Let's just go the other way then, Bob, and then Oleg and Vladimir.

MR. ORTTUNG: Okay. Maybe take the questions quickly backwards – what's the assessment of Medvedev? If you look at – Medvedev has a record now. He's been in office for two years. If you look at the things that Freedom House measures in terms of democratization, the record is that he's done nothing to improve the situation created under Putin. There's no free elections. In fact, the situation with elections is getting worse.

There's the media. Again, TV is controlled by the state. If you look at the Internet, the content of the Internet is free in Russia. You can find all kinds of anti-Putin manifestos and anything you want, you can read in the Russian Internet. But you know, businessmen affiliated with the Russian state are buying up some of the key Russian sites. So they're putting in place sort of an infrastructure that they could use to eventually control it. There's also a previous Freedom House report that shows a very sophisticated system of manipulating what the content is on the Internet and how that impacts political processes in Russia.

You look at the situation with corruption, there's been a lot of talk but absolutely no impact on the actual level of corruption in Russia. So I think at the end of the day, you have to conclude Medvedev is basically not doing anything that Putin wouldn't have done. It's just an

extension of Putin. And all this discussion of differences between the two of them, you know, maybe there's some stylistic differences. Medvedev seems better able to eat hamburgers with Obama than Putin enjoyed eating them with Bush. But beyond that, there's no real difference.

But at the end of the day, Putin has set up a system. That system is going to be in place as long as Putin is there. So it doesn't matter if Putin or Medvedev is the president or the prime minister or maybe some other arrangement they come up with. As long as that system is in place – and presumably with Putin himself involved in it in some way – nothing is really going to change in Russia.

Just a quick observation on the Russian opposition, since I'm not a participant in it; I'm just an observer from the outside. You know, for observers of the Russian opposition who have been looking at this since the late 1980s when there was the Soviet opposition, it is obviously frustrating to look at the groups that come and go and coalesce and decoalesce and it's all fractionated.

And so obviously, there's questions of tactics. Should you be more radical? Should you be less radical? There's questions of personalities. Some people are pleasant. Some people are less pleasant. Let me put it that way.

But I think, you know, so why don't you have a coalesced, coherent opposition in Russia? I think the answer is more structural than tactics or personality in that there's no chance that the opposition is going to win in the current system. The current system is controlled. And they can turn it on; they can turn it off. You know, in the local elections that took place in October last year, there was more state control so fewer people won. In the elections that took place in March of this year, 2010, there was less state control, so a few more opposition people were able to go through and win. But you know, that's not free elections. That's just turning on and off the resources that you use to control the elections.

And so, I think when there's a clear signal that there's some sort of split at the elite level at the top in Moscow and that there's a space for the opposition and that there's a serious possibility that they can gain political power, that's when you'll see the opposition organize into a coherent force. But until then, you are going to continue to see the kind of personality and tactical problems that we have today.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you. Oleg?

MR. KOZLOVSKY: To the question of Michael on the opposition. Well, of course, it is fractured. But I think it is not the worst curse of the Russian opposition. Perhaps what's worse – and that's what you mentioned – is the lack of new names and new leaders because all the leaders we have, have appeared thanks to the times when we had access to the television. So everybody from Gasparov to Kasyanov to Limonov to Alekseeva, whoever. They are all known to the public because they had access to the television in the past.

And since for the last five or six years, no opposition figure has appeared on TV – well, at least not in a positive context – it's very difficult to expect that somebody will simply just pop up and become an opposition leader. But I think this is a process that will take time. People will

be more hardened and become more well known as time goes by and as the struggle goes on. This is a problem still.

And the other problem is the ability to cooperate between and among the opposition groups. And this is also something that we are dealing with and we've seen a lot of protests in the past year or two that a lot of different groups manage to come together and organize, join forces, sometimes even the ones that are very different and don't even want to talk to each other. For instance, when the national Bolsheviks co-organized their protests on the 31st of each month when there is the 31st day, the so-called Campaign 31. People who are very different from them with liberal views and democratic views come to those protests and come with the same slogan because the ideas behind those protests are the same and those ideas are acceptable for the whole opposition, like the right to freedom of assembly.

So I think it's not necessary to unite all the opposition into one big group, although having some kind of an umbrella coalition could make some use. But it's not necessary at this point. At this point, it's important that we are able to coordinate our efforts with each other.

To the question of Franek, absolutely. The regimes of Putin and Lukashenko are doing almost the same things. Putin was catching up in his first term or first two terms after Lukashenko because Lukashenko came to power in 1995. And Putin came in 2000. And now, it appears like they are learning from each other. And a lot of things that have appeared first in Belarus now exist in Russia like the preemptive arrests of protestors before anything happens. And some things that appear first in Russia, that happened in Belarus like what happened to Franek when he was drafted into the army to isolate him. I myself was drafted into the army illegally to isolate me for the period of presidential elections in 2007.

So they are learning from each other. And of course, the nations also look at what happens to each other. And the same applies to Ukraine. And of course, if democracy wins or is defeated in one of those countries, it will have a huge impact on the other two because of the historical connections and because of a lot of connections that still exist. Many people have relatives there in other countries.

So I think that we should now look very closely at what happens in Ukraine and we should also look at what's happening in Belarus and vice-versa. And this is a part of the reply on what human rights organizations in the region can do to help each other.

I think one thing is that we should also share experience and exchange our knowledge and our strategies and tactics, learn from each other because this is what the dictators are doing and we shouldn't let them talk alone. So this is one thing.

And the second one is, of course, helping bring more attention to the problems of each other is also important because, for instance, in Ukraine, media are freer so far than they are in Russia or Belarus. And sometimes, it's easier to be heard in Ukraine than in Russia. Or on some issues, it's vice-versa. So I think that coordinating and learning from each other is something that we can help one another.

And the question on Medvedev's personality, well, I'm not an expert on this. And I never wanted to be one. I think that looking into somebody's very, very deep traits of his

personality is not the way political struggles should be done. But judging by Medvedev's career, he is not a person who has ever been in charge of anything important. He has always been the second man, the man who was executing the orders of Putin. And he looks – feels quite comfortable doing that.

So two years ago, I didn't expect Medvedev to start some kind of riot, rebellion against Putin's supremacy and it didn't happen. And I don't think it's going to happen.

MR. MOTYL: Thank you very much.

MR. MILOV: I'd also pick up on this Medvedev issue. He is already more than two years in service now as president. So you can make some judgments already. He has shown himself as a completely dependent person. He was not even able to change the head of his own administration in the Kremlin, which he attempted many times but failed because Mr. Putin didn't let him. And so it happened with the minister of interior or mayor of Moscow, which he also attempted to replace but unsuccessfully. So presidential powers are de facto limited in Russia these days.

And also, I have to say that there has been a lot of allusion about potential change after Putin stepping down and Medvedev taking over. But we can see right now we are already approaching the next formal election cycle. There are no free and fair elections left in Russia. But basically still it's just year and a half away from the official beginning of the next election cycle. This is not the very pre-electionary period. This is not the time when you really do certain changes and reforms, which can have some kind of painful or difficult consequences.

So if you want to change something in the country, you normally use your two first years of presidency to do it. So if this two years of presidency have been completely wasted and nothing have been done, it means please don't expect from Medvedev any serious movements in terms of severe changes in Russian economics or politics for the remaining period because the overall policy will rather turn to be more populist.

In terms of his personality, well, I am also struck. But I don't agree with Oleg when he says that Medvedev was not responsible for anything serious in his life. He was. When he was the head of presidential administration back in 2004, he was responsible for assistance with falsifying Ukrainian presidential elections. There was this Medvedev-Medvedchuk commission, if you will. Medvedchuk was the head of Kuchma administration in Ukraine. Medvedev was directly involved in falsifying Ukrainian elections. And actually it was his favorite at this attempt was not successful.

As a head of presidential administration, Medvedev was responsible for submitting to the state дума the most restrictive legislation on political parties, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, which has been adopted in the course of 2004, 2005. So he has been involved in some serious issues in his previous life. And I suggest that President Obama and his team remember that while he shake his hands and so on.

I'd say Medvedev to me represents, you know, a new breed of Russian nationalist bureaucrats. Putin described him as the same kind of Russian nationalist as he is when Medvedev was still president-elect two years ago at a meeting with Ms. Merkel of Germany.

And I think this is very much true. Although these guys, they wear Western-tailored suits and ties and they know how to handle iPhones and iPads. But still, they are obsessed with the idea of Greater Russia much better than with the idea of building up a free, open society in my country unfortunately. This is also worth being remembered.

An important question about the opposition, I'd say there are many clichés about the opposition, which go back to the previous experiences. I think in the recent couple of years, Russian opposition have shown that it can really achieve certain breakthroughs. We really did reach out to the regions. I'd say I visited about 40 in the recent couple of years. Something I'm experienced for the democratic leaders in the past, and I'd say I'm not alone in this. My colleagues, Boris Nimitsov and – (inaudible) – basically can show similar numbers to demonstrate.

And we really try to appeal to grassroots, not only in Moscow but far beyond the garden ring. And I think there is a direct contribution in certain movement in the regions, certain anti-government sentiment, which has been demonstrated in the course of this mass protest earlier this year or regional municipal elections. There are brilliant young politicians developing out there in the Russian regions, be it Yekaterinburg, Irkutsk or Kaliningrad. Hopefully, I will be able to sort of bring them here to show you.

There are some very exciting characters out there, which really have certain political prospects. Frankly, if you ask my opinion, I believe that if there is going to be a change in the Russian political system and Russian society, I think rather this time, it would start out not in Moscow but probably in regions. Not in all of the 80-plus Russian regions but there are some regions which basically demonstrate a very strong dissent with the system that we have built, and the will to protest and oppose that.

This is a contrast with some apathy and pessimism, which is seemingly dominating Moscow, unfortunately, because people are too close to Kremlin. And the shade of Kremlin creates the illusion of how powerful it is. Whereas in reality, it is probably not necessarily true.

And a big question is, I am only a second day in Washington this time. But I have been I think asked this question 100 of times. What can the West do to help? Now, the enthusiasm with which these questions are asked, almost reaching for someone's magnum-44 – (laughter) – forces me to say something like, oh please, wait a second.

I think what is important now is to really understand that if the change is going to happen either in Russia or in other countries of the post-Soviet space, this would largely, almost 100 percent come from within. And I think it's time to give up. Also, this is a part of unfortunately the old model of opposition, which sits inside the garden ring. It does not appeal to grassroots, doesn't visit regions, but mostly visits Washington, D.C. appealing for U.S. to help.

Now recently, if we discuss some specific issues, for instance, I was detained several times in police custody recently because I was participating in non-sanctioned demonstrations and so on. I think at some point some statements have been used by the State Department with protest of detaining myself and my fellow colleagues. I hardly know about that. Basically, this is not what I need. And I can handle Russian police myself. It's pretty much okay.

What is important is that I would strongly encourage the West not to do any steps to repeat this word – to encourage continuation of this authoritarian regime. I can understand that pragmatic cooperation might be necessary for the sake of broader global security and other issues. But just don't fall into that trap because Russia's authoritarian leaders are very much ready to offer that tradeoff. Look, we can earn a lot of money. Just forget about human rights and whatever we do at home in Russia. Don't fall into that trap. That's important because some of the Western leaders, unfortunately, do that, particularly in Europe. And this is not helpful.

And I think what is important is that also let's forget about the old idea of direct support of opposition political movements. This is something we don't need. And this is something, which is counterproductive, referring back to the previous CIA espionage issue. We don't need direct support.

What is important rather is that the democratic infrastructure, independent media, local governance, civil society, NGOS – this is the sector, which basically is extremely vulnerable to the authoritarian practices that we have. And we try ourselves to do something to help it but there is not much capabilities that we have. And the fact is that everyone benefits from support of that particular sector because independent media does not just provide floor for us. It provides floor for United Russia Party too.

And I recently have participated in open debates with United Russia on some independent radio stations, which was quite good. I won outright all the time. But United Russia was also given floor. So an importance of this is that in this case, assistance is not provided to any particular party, no preferences. But this is just an example of how democratic infrastructure can provide floor to anyone, including those who support Vladimir Putin or Dmitri Medvedev, and which is the only way we encourage things to be. We want open debate, free political competition, and we are ready to lose if the people don't support us. But I think there is a great potential that they will.

MR. MOTYL: There was a question that no one addressed, namely once "Nations in Transit" appears in Moscow, what happens to the report? Could one of you touch on that?

MR. KOZLOVSKY: Yeah, I think that the official media will say that the United States administration is again trying to judge, to blame Russia for everything. And that it's all fake and that it's all not true – and then, well, after some one or two days discussion, it will be almost forgotten.

Well, for us, honestly, I don't think that it's going to help a lot because we know everything that's written there. But I think it's important for the people in the West to read this and to know what's going on.

MR. MOTYL: On that note, ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming. Thank you to Radio Liberty – (applause) – Freedom House and our three panelists and there you go. See you next year at the 2011 report.

(END)