

# THE HARRIMAN REVIEW



Alexander J. Motyl  
RUSSIA'S SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS SINCE  
PERESTROIKA: FROM TOTALITARIANISM TO  
AUTHORITARIANISM TO DEMOCRACY—  
TO FASCISM?

Maria Sonevytsky  
THREE PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNOGRAPHY  
FROM UKRAINE

AT THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE  
Three Meeting Reports

*March 2010*

# THE HARRIMAN REVIEW

Volume 17, Number 2

March 2010

Alexander J. Motyl

RUSSIA'S SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS SINCE PERESTROIKA:  
From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism to Democracy —  
to Fascism? 1

Maria Sonevytsky

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNOGRAPHY FROM UKRAINE:  
The Mysterious Tale of a Lost Hutsul Manuscript, Its Recovery, and the  
Dialogues that Ensued 15

## AT THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE

- Three Meeting Reports (*Prepared by Masha Udensiva-Brenner*)
- I. Kimberly Marten, "Overcoming Warlords and State Failure:  
Lessons from Post-Soviet Georgia" 22
- II. Elmar Mammadyarov, "The Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan:  
Affecting Factors and Priorities" 25
- III. Ian C. Kelly, "An Overview of U.S.-Russia Relations" 28

*Front Cover: Petro Shekeryk-Donykiw*

*THE HARRIMAN REVIEW, successor to The Harriman Institute Forum, is published quarterly by the Harriman Institute, Columbia University. Copyright ©2010 by the Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any kind without written permission is strictly forbidden. Annual subscription rates: U.S. and Canada: \$35.00 (1 year), \$60.00 (2 years); elsewhere: \$45.00 (1 year), \$85.00 (2 years). Back issues: \$10.00 (includes postage). Check or money order should be made payable to Columbia University. U.S. funds only. Send all orders, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to: The Harriman Review, 1216 International Affairs Building, Columbia University, 420 West 118th Street, New York, New York 10027. FAX: (212) 666-3481. The Harriman Review is indexed by PAIS and ABSEES.*

Harriman Institute

<http://www.harriman.columbia.edu/>

420 West 118th Street, MC 3345, Columbia University, New York, New York 10027

# Russia's Systemic Transformations since Perestroika: From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism to Democracy—to Fascism?

Alexander J. Motyl

## Introduction

All the post-Communist states of the former Soviet empire have experienced significant change in the last twenty years, but Russia's systemic transformations since Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika may be most dramatic. Most of the East Central European satellite states and the Baltic republics moved from some form of decayed totalitarianism through generally brief interludes of authoritarianism to democracy—and have stayed there. Serbia, Croatia, Albania, Macedonia, and Ukraine had longer authoritarian interludes, but in the end appear to have adopted democratic forms of government. Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan ended their transitions at different stages of authoritarianism; Turkmenistan has arguably remained totalitarian; and Kyrgyzstan rushed toward democracy, but then fell back to a weak form of authoritarianism.

In contrast to the above, Russia passed from totalitarianism to several years of both authoritarianism and democracy—only to abandon democracy completely and embark on a transition to what is arguably fascism. In using this term, I am suggesting both the magnitude of Russia's change in recent years and the direction in which it has changed. No less important, I am also suggesting that the terms scholars have developed for Russia—such as patrimonial or tsarist—are inadequate, primarily because they fail to place Russia on a spectrum of comparative political-system types. This paper therefore examines fascism as a system type within a typology of political systems. It also suggests why Vladimir Putin's Russia has enough of the defining characteristics of fascism to qualify as *fascistoid*—that is, as moving toward fascism—and why Russia alone moved along so exceptionally turbulent a systemic path. Finally, the paper examines whether a fascistoid or fascist Russia is likely to be stable.<sup>1</sup>

A final point about political sensibilities needs making. Fascism is often used as an epithet, especially by the left, but it actually is, or at least can be, a perfectly respectable social-science term that refers to a particular

type of political system. Some Russians may find it objectionable that their country, which waged the “Great Patriotic War” against fascism, should now be called fascist. That is certainly an irony of history, but there is no reason that such a reversal of roles should not be possible. Democracies (such as Weimar Germany) can become dictatorships, and dictatorships (such as Franco Spain) can become democracies. If today's Russia approximates the definition of fascism, then the fault surely lies, not with the scholars who use the term, but with the politicians who made it usable.<sup>2</sup>

## Systems and System Types

Social scientists have since Plato and Aristotle characterized countries or states according to their dominant features, as only such an exercise permits them to engage in comparisons and produce theoretical generalizations. A *political system*—a term that I shall, despite their conceptual differences, use interchangeably with *state* in this paper—consists of those characteristics that define the politics, broadly conceived, of a country.<sup>3</sup> Those characteristics concern established institutions, structures, relations, and attitudes—and not individuals or policies. The disassociation of policies from systems means that, for instance, democratic systems may conduct non-democratic policies and still be democratic systems, while authoritarian systems may pursue democratic policies and still be authoritarian systems.

The system types that social scientists employ are ideal types: that is, few countries or states ever match all their requirements exactly. No less important, system types, however plausible they may seem at a macro level, always break down upon closer inspection of the myriad details that comprise the real life of real societies and real countries. In other words, system typologies are useful only at a fairly high, and thus abstract, level of generality (and it is small wonder that they rarely appeal to social

1. Many thanks to Michael Bernhard, Thomas Bernstein, Yitzhak Brudny, Richard Langhorne, Jerzy Mackow, Rajan Menon, and George Schöpflin for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2. There have been self-styled Russian fascists in the twentieth century. See John Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

3. For extended discussions of political systems, see Anton Bebler and Jim Seroka, eds., *Contemporary Political Systems* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990).

historians, anthropologists, and other scholars similarly inclined to examine micro events<sup>4</sup>). But because system types are at such a high level of generality, they enable us to outline the contours of systems, trace how they are changing, and suggest, however imperfectly, just what their future trajectories are likely to be. Plato thus argues that his ideal republic will eventually break down, while Aristotle believes that democracy as he defines it necessarily results in dictatorship. There is no “correct” typology or classification. Typologies and classifications are “good” as long as they are internally consistent and theoretically fruitful.

The three dominant system types encountered in modern social-science literature are totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy, which differ, to put it over-simply, from one another in the degree to which the ruling authorities exert control and the society enjoys political and economic freedom. Totalitarian systems are most controlling and their populations enjoy least freedom; democratic systems are least controlling and their populations enjoy most freedom; and authoritarian systems are somewhere between the two. Obviously, there is no system that exerts total control over everything, just as there is no system that is perfectly democratic—which may mean, ironically, that authoritarianism is the least ideal of the system types. Soviet studies employed all three categories until about the mid-1960s, when totalitarianism was, in an excessive fit of social-historical revisionism, consigned to the ash heap of history. It was only in the mid- to-late-1980s that totalitarianism again became respectable among western Sovietologists, in no small measure because Soviet analysts began reviving it in order to understand the impact of Gorbachev’s perestroika on the USSR.<sup>5</sup>

The systemic types, and their features, that I employ in this paper are presented in table 1 (see page 12). The categories of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy are relatively straightforward and, I trust, uncontroversial and require no further elaboration. The fifth column, however, which describes the features of fascism, does require a closer look, if only because there is little scholarly consensus on what fascism is.<sup>6</sup> It is important to appreciate that this condition of disagreement is hardly unique to fascism. Scholars have yet to find common and uncontroversial definitions for any number of terms—from state to totalitarianism to culture to genocide to revolution to democracy. We still use them,

because they strike us as important; and we can use them well, if we define them well. Others may disagree, but that is their prerogative. Obviously, if unanimity of meaning were a precondition of a term’s being used, then social science would cease activity immediately.

## Fascism as a Political System

Let us start our investigation of fascism by examining five definitions, which nicely illustrate both the diversity of opinions and approaches regarding fascism and the weaknesses of existing definitions.

- Juan Linz defines fascism as “a hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical, or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized; with a distinctive style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation to gain power with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics. The ideology and above all the rhetoric appeals for the incorporation of a national cultural tradition selectively in the new synthesis in response to new social classes, new social and economic problems, and with new organizational conceptions of mobilization and participation, differentiate them from conservative parties.”<sup>7</sup>
- According to Robert O. Paxton, “Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victim-hood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elite groups, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.”<sup>8</sup>
- Michael Mann says that “fascism is the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism

4. See R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini’s Italy: Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006), p. 566.

5. Giovanni Sartori, “Totalitarianism, Model Mania and Learning from Error,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1993, pp. 5-22.

6. For an indication of the diversity of views, see Adrian Lyttelton, “What Was Fascism?” *New York Review of Books*, vol. 51, no. 16, October 21, 2004; Antonio Costa Pinto, “Back to European Fascism,” *Contemporary European History*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2006, pp. 103-115.

7. Juan J. Linz, “Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective,” in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader’s Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 12-13.

8. Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p. 218.

through paramilitarism.”<sup>9</sup>

- Stanley G. Payne writes that “fascism may be defined as a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilization, and the *Führerprinzip*, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normalize war and/or the military virtues.”<sup>10</sup>
- According to Roger Scruton, “Fascism is characterized by the following features (not all of which need to be present in any of its recognized instances): nationalism; hostility to democracy, to egalitarianism, and to the values of the liberal enlightenment; the cult of the leader, and admiration for his special qualities; a respect for collective organization, and a love of the symbols associated with it, such as uniforms, parades, and army discipline.”<sup>11</sup>

Linz’s and Paxton’s definitions are, in reality, historically-grounded descriptions of movements, and not definitions of a system type. Although Linz has a point in emphasizing the “anti” character of fascism—if only because the definition of any object necessarily entails stating what it is not—he underplays the no less important part of any definitional exercise—stating what an object *is*. Paxton is surely right to suggest that fascism is a “form of political behavior” (what is *not* a form of political behavior?), but that form appears to be primarily rooted in a psychological condition characterized by obsessive and compensatory attitudes and only secondarily in political phenomena. Mann’s definition actually is a definition, but its emphasis on “pursuit” reduces fascism to an activity with a set of goals—a characterization that, like Paxton’s, applies to most human endeavors and has the effect of removing fascism from the realm of movements or regimes or systems or, for that matter, even politics. Like Mann, Payne provides an actual definition, but his differs from the others in reducing fascism to an ideology—ultra-nationalism—which tells us little about fascism as a system of rule. Scruton’s is a list of family characteristics that sidesteps the question of whether fascism is an ideology, movement, or system, but it does have the advantage of being pithy and clear.

Despite these definitional difficulties and

disagreements, it is noteworthy that Payne’s and Scruton’s defining characteristics overlap, while also resonating with many of the points made by Linz, Mann, and Paxton. All five scholars more or less agree that fascism is hyper-nationalist; anti-democratic; elitist; leader-centered; mass-oriented or collectivist; and vitalist. They disagree about violence and mass mobilization, with Payne and Paxton regarding both as central, and Scruton disregarding the former altogether and only hinting at the latter with his reference to collective organization and parades. Note also their points of disagreement with Linz. Payne, Paxton, Mann, and Scruton say nothing about fascism’s supposedly anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois, anti-communist, or anti-proletarian qualities.

These definitions point to three conclusions. First, we need to differentiate between fascist systems and fascist movements. Although they may share similar ideological goals and aspirations, political systems are established sets of institutions, structures, relations, and attitudes, while movements are mass organizations that are “on the move.” Since fascist movements are far more numerous than fascist systems, most scholars defining fascism are actually defining fascist movements and not fascist systems.<sup>12</sup> But, obviously, there is no reason for the two political formations to share the same exact characteristics. Violence and mass mobilization, for instance, can easily be defining features of movements, especially of revolutionary movements committed to overthrowing an established order. Indeed, one could argue that such movements, whether on the right or on the left, have to be violent and have to mobilize their followers if they want to achieve their goals. Systems, in contrast, even highly repressive systems, generally employ violence and mass mobilization only in spurts, if only because violence and mobilization are, by their very nature, too disruptive of the institutionalized quality of all systems, even repressive ones. Thus, Stalin’s, Hitler’s, and Mao Zedong’s versions of totalitarianism employed violence and mobilized populations only at particular times. Eventually terror and mobilization had to be reined in, because they threatened to destroy their initiators and upend institution-building. In that sense, real totalitarianism is totalitarianism *without* terror and *without* mass mobilization—or what the Soviet Union and China became after, respectively, Stalin’s death and the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Second, we must appreciate that why fascist systems emerge is a question of causality and that the origins of things should not be confused with the characteristics, or definitions, of those things. In other words, it is perfectly possible for similar or identical fascist systems to be “caused” by different factors at different times. The

9. Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 13.

10. Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p. 14.

11. Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 169.

12. See Ernst Nolte, *Die faschistischen Bewegungen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1966).

“anti” qualities emphasized by Linz reflect the historical origins of inter-war fascisms and tell us more about causation than about system type. There is thus no reason to expect early-twenty-first century fascisms to have the same causes as twentieth-century fascisms. Just as there are many causes of nationalism, war, revolution, empire, and so on, so too there may be many causes of fascism.

And third, we need to dissociate the particular characteristics of particular historical fascisms from the defining characteristics of fascism as a system type. In the first case, there is no need to be especially rigorous about how systemic categories vary across systems (such as totalitarianism, authoritarianism, democracy, and fascism) because the focus is on some country at some time; in the latter case, that kind of rigorous, controlled, cross-systemic comparison is the very point of the whole exercise. We cannot expect every example of fascism to be identical in every single respect to every other example of fascism. Nor should we think that every case of fascism must be identical to the Italian variant.<sup>13</sup> (Surely, fascist leaders need not all be named Benito Mussolini, and fascists need not speak Italian.) Our goal should be to grasp those defining and associated features of fascism that define it on its own terms and in relation to other system types. And that means that we can only define fascism as a system type in comparison to other political system types, such as totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy. It is only through a sustained and rigorous across-the-board comparison of the defining characteristics of these systems that we can begin to distinguish fascism from the others and get a better grasp of what it is. Table 1 attempts to do just that.

## Totalitarianism, Authoritarianism, and Fascism

Unlike democracies, fascist systems lack meaningful parliaments, judiciaries, parties, political contestation, and elections. The key word here is *meaningful*: in fascist systems, as in all authoritarian or totalitarian systems, parliaments are rubber-stamp institutions, judiciaries do what the leader tells them, opposition parties are marginal, and electoral outcomes are preordained. Unlike totalitarian states, fascist states do not penetrate into every dimension of a country’s political, economic, social, and cultural life; fascist states do not propound all-embracing

ideologies that purport to answer all of life’s questions. Instead, like all authoritarian states, fascist states attempt only to influence and control these dimensions of life and they prefer to espouse limited worldviews.

Like authoritarian systems, fascist systems are highly centralized and hierarchical, they give pride of place within the authority structure to soldiers and policemen, usually secret policemen, and they always have a domineering party that, in contrast to the single hegemonic party of totalitarian systems, may tolerate other parties but that, in contrast to the dominant parties characteristic of authoritarian systems, brooks no interference in its running of the political system. Like authoritarian states, fascist states limit freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. Like authoritarian states, fascist states also reject socialism and embrace capitalism—which means that they tacitly acknowledge private property and the autonomy of capitalists. But this autonomy is circumscribed by substantial state intervention—ranging from simple *dirigisme* to occupation of the strategic heights to corporatism. And like authoritarian states, fascist states generally espouse some form of hyper-nationalism glorifying their nation and its fabulous past, present, and future. But fascist states also go further than authoritarian states in fetishizing the state and its glory and power.

Like totalitarian systems, fascist systems always have a supreme leader enjoying cult-like status. Run-of-the-mill authoritarian states typically connote images of dour old men ruling a sullen population. Totalitarian states generally connote images of wise patriarchs. Fascist leaders, in contrast, exude vigor and want to appear youthful, manly, and active. These qualities of hyper-masculinity are most starkly evident in such fascist and fascistoid leaders as Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Juan Peron, and Hugo Chavez, but they are lacking in such totalitarian and authoritarian autocrats as Joseph Stalin, Francisco Franco, Augusto Pinochet, Nicolae Ceausescu, or the Ayatollah Khomeini. A fascist leader may, like Mussolini, fit the historical stereotype and be hyper-masculine and histrionic or, like Putin, he may not and instead be hyper-masculine and cool.<sup>14</sup>

Fascist leaders also evoke and appeal to vitalism and vigor in the population and usually coopt the young into their movements or parties. No less important, fascist states are popular and they always implicate the population in its own repression. Fascist states incorporate the population into the system of rule, promising it a grand and glorious future in exchange for its enthusiasm and support. Fascist leaders are especially popular, presenting themselves as the embodiments of a nation’s best

13. Consider Zeev Sternhell’s comment: “Fascism in power was something to which fascist parties made remarkably different contributions, depending on the country concerned. Every country where there was a fascist party had peculiarities duly reflected in its local political organizations; nevertheless, where a so-called fascist regime came into being, these national features usually became even more exaggerated. Thus movements have much more in common than regimes.” (“Fascist Ideology,” in Laqueur, *Fascism A Reader’s Guide*, p. 318.)

14. This point does raise the question of whether fascist leaders can be women and, if so, just what sort of leader style they would have to adopt to meet the definitional requirement.

**Table 1**  
**Political Systems and Their Features**

<i>Defining Characteristics</i>	<i>Totalitarianism</i>	<i>Authoritarianism</i>	<i>Democracy</i>	<i>Fascism</i>
Politics	Single hegemonic party; staged elections; rubber-stamp parliament	Dominant party; rigged elections; subordinate parliament	Multiple parties; genuine elections; autonomous parliament	Domineering party; rigged elections; rubber-stamp parliament
Leader	Cult of supreme leader	Strong man	President, premier	Hyper-masculine cult of supreme leader
Ideology	All-embracing	Statism and hyper-nationalism	Popular sovereignty	Statism and hyper-nationalism
Popular attitude to regime	Widespread support	Acquiescence	Support	Widespread support
Economy	Central planning of non-market economy	State alliance with dominant forces in market economy	Market economy	State control of commanding heights of market economy
<i>Associated Characteristics</i>				
Pro-leader movement	Yes	No	No	Yes
Police/Army	Subordinate to party	Part of ruling elite	Subordinate to government	Part of ruling elite
Media/Society	Complete control	Domination	Free	Domination
Violence	Widespread	Selective	Minimal	Selective

qualities and as the only hopes for its future. It is small wonder, therefore, that fascist and totalitarian systems are often characterized by parades and flag-waving. (Russia’s decision in January 2008 to revive the May 9<sup>th</sup> military parades on Red Square was therefore quite significant.) But *pace* Scruton, parades are not defining characteristics of either system—indeed, it would be bizarre if something that ephemeral were—but associated characteristics of such systems’ populist nature.

The above similarities to and differences from totalitarianism and authoritarianism suggest that we may hazard a definition. I therefore define fascism as a *non-democratic, non-socialist political system with a domineering party, a supreme leader, a hyper-masculine leader cult, a hyper-nationalist, statist ideology, and an enthusiastically supportive population.*<sup>15</sup> The elements

of the typology in table 1 that are not found in my definition—such as pro-regime movement, police/army, media/society, and violence—can be dealt with in one of three complementary ways. The presence of a pro-regime movement, the prominence of police and army cadres, and the employment of violence may be more appropriately considered the defining characteristics of fascist movements that are carried over into fascist systems. Alternatively, these elements may be considered associated characteristics that can logically be derived from the central defining characteristics. Thus, the quality

---

authoritarian regimes in later times and other regions, even the profile of the new groups is on balance distinct from the generic European fascisms.” These features are: “(1) permanent nationalistic one-party authoritarianism, neither temporary nor a prelude to internationalism; (2) the charismatic leadership principle, incorporated by many communist and other regimes as well; (3) the search for a synthetic ethnicist ideology, distinct from liberalism and Marxism; (4) an authoritarian state system and political economy of corporatism or syndicalism or partial socialism, more limited and pluralistic than the communist model; (5) the philosophical principle of voluntaristic activism, unbounded by any philosophical determinism.”

15. Note how similar this definition is to one developed by Payne in 1980, when he concluded *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p. 211, with a list of the “key features” that “reemerge in radical movements and national

of being non-democratic implies some dominance by the army and police, the domination by the state of the media and society, and the willingness to employ violence. And a leader cult combined with popular support implies a pro-leader movement. Last, as already noted above, violence—whether selective or widespread—may be considered a policy stance and not a system characteristic, a claim that clearly contradicts the view that war is the “essence” of fascism.

As this definition suggests, fascism appears to share some characteristics of totalitarianism and some of authoritarianism. Like totalitarian systems, fascist systems have cults of the leader, enjoy widespread popular support, and have pro-regime movements. Like authoritarian systems, fascist systems have dominant parties, rigged elections, and rubber-stamp parliaments, promote ideologies of statism and hyper-nationalism, control market economies, incorporate the army and secret police within the ruling elite, and dominate the media and society. At the same time, fascism differs from both totalitarianism and from authoritarianism in significant ways. By virtue of being non-socialist, fascist systems will always fall short of fully totalitarian systems. And by virtue of having hyper-masculine cults of supreme leaders and domineering parties, fascist systems differ from authoritarian systems.

Is fascism therefore a separate system type? Is it a cross-between authoritarianism and totalitarianism? Is it a peculiar form of authoritarianism—one with a specific type of leader, leader cult, and party? Or is it a peculiar form of totalitarianism—one without socialist aspirations? There is no correct answer to these questions. I treat fascism as a separate system type, but one could just as easily adopt any of the alternatives.<sup>16</sup> Scholars yearning for certitude will be unhappy with this conclusion and may decide that conceptual clarity is therefore pointless, but they would be failing to appreciate that all theorizing, while unavoidably linked to and enriched by conceptual distinctions, is also, and always, limited by those same distinctions.

## Russia’s Systemic Transformations

Russia has experienced at least three systemic transformations in the last two decades. It moved from totalitarianism to authoritarianism in the late 1980s and from authoritarianism to democracy in the early 1990s. It then remained a weakly democratic state until the early 2000s, when, under President Putin’s tutelage, it began to move toward fascism—a process that, for all its progress, has not yet culminated in a full-fledged,

consolidated fascism. As I suggest later in this paper, a fourth transformation may soon be in store, as fascism contains within it several disintegrative tendencies that are likely to produce system breakdown in the not too distant future.

The story begins in 1985, when Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The country had just emerged from over three decades of post-Stalinist change. State terror had been abandoned in the early 1950s, but the system of total control built by Stalin remained essentially in place.<sup>17</sup> That it began to malfunction seriously by the 1970s bespoke a weakening, or decay, of the totalitarian system, but not its replacement by something else.<sup>18</sup> Totalitarianism’s decay appears to have been the inevitable consequence of over-centralization; totalitarianism’s collapse, as Karl Deutsch suggested in the 1950s, would probably have been inevitable as well.<sup>19</sup> What Gorbachev effectively did by introducing glasnost and perestroika was to determine the timing of that collapse

Perestroika aimed to revive the Soviet Union but succeeded in liberating the media and society from total Party domination, destroying the centrally planned economy and Communist Party hegemony, and ushering in, by 1989-1990, an unstable authoritarian system of rule in the USSR. The Party remained the dominant force even after its constitutionally-enshrined “leading role” was abandoned in early 1990, although the 1989 elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies and the 1990 elections to the republic Supreme Soviets were more or less competitive and the resultant legislatures became more than rubber-stamp institutions. Gorbachev was still the strong man, though getting increasingly weaker by the day as Boris Yeltsin increased his power base in Russia; the population acquiesced in, without being enthusiastic about, Gorbachev’s rule; the media and society, though strikingly freer, were still dominated by the Party and state; repression had become decidedly selective; and the army and KGB still played a large role in the ruling elites. With the Soviet economy and Communist ideology in shambles, it would be hard to speak of anything resembling a state alliance with dominant market forces or of an overarching ideology of statism or hyper-nationalism.

This imperfect form of authoritarianism lasted in Russia for about two to three years, until the failed coup

17. See Jerzy Maćków, *Totalitarismus und danach* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005).

18. János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 360-378.

19. See Karl Deutsch, “Cracks in the Monolith: Possibilities and Patterns of Disintegration in Totalitarian Systems,” in Harry Eckstein and David E. Apter, eds., *Comparative Politics: A Reader* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 497-508.

16. One difference is clear, however: namely, that fascism, at least as I have defined it, is necessarily different from communist totalitarianism.

attempt of August 19-21, 1991 and Yeltsin's subsequent accession to power, when Russia's political system began moving more decisively toward democracy. The system built by Yeltsin was deeply flawed—the bombing of the Duma in late 1993 was anything but democratic and the manipulation of the presidential elections of 1996 was scandalous—but it was democratic. Russia did have multiple parties, genuine elections, and an autonomous parliament. Its leader was the president, and not some charismatic man on horseback. The dominant ideology rested on notions of popular sovereignty, and not on statism or hyper-nationalism. The economy was becoming increasingly market-oriented and state control was weakening, not increasing. Popular support was at best lukewarm; pro-regime mass movements were absent; representatives of the military and secret police—the notorious *siloviki*—were only just beginning to seep into the ruling structures; the media and society were more or less free; and repression was minimal. Crime, corruption, and violence from below were rampant, but those were not features of the system per se. Yeltsin's system also had elements of authoritarianism, and it was characterized by an extensive blurring of lines of authority between and among ministries and regions, thereby creating the impression, if not reality, of chaos. But, in the final analysis, Yeltsin's Russia was not quite hybrid—if by that is meant a system that is equally democratic and equally authoritarian—but rather imperfectly democratic, that is, a democracy with substantial elements of authoritarianism.<sup>20</sup>

As soon as Putin became president in 2000, a move away from Yeltsin-style democracy quickly became evident. In Lilia Shevtsova's words, "In 2000-2001 the new Russian leader practically began refashioning the Yeltsin regime by taking apart its most important building blocks. Instead of the Yeltsin principle of mutual connivance, shadowy checks and balances, tolerance for opposition, and the maintenance of power by redistributing and decentralizing it and provoking constant revolutionary shocks, Putin turned to the principle of subordination, hierarchical submission, quelling opposition, control over alternative ways of thinking of the elite, and centralization of the federation. In essence, Putin began to build a 'conveyor belt' political regime."<sup>21</sup>

Eight years later, Russia had moved decisively

away from any reputable definition of democracy ("managed" or "sovereign" democracy obviously does not count) and toward what I term fascism. By late 2008, democratic institutions were at best moribund, having been transformed into pliant tools of the Kremlin; the party of power, United Russia, dominated the political scene, even if its members were rarely fanatics of the kind often encountered in fascist movements; civil society and the press were severely circumscribed; the *siloviki* dominated all ruling elites and suffused them with their antidemocratic ethos; the state promoted capitalism while making sure to command its strategic heights by means of controlling key industries, especially in energy, defense, mining, and manufacturing; the Russian state was unabashedly glorified to the point of representing a genuine fetish; despite the election of Dmitri Medvedev as president in the spring of 2008, Prime Minister Putin remained the undisputed "national leader," and his image exuded vigor, youth, and manliness<sup>22</sup>; a variety of rabidly pro-Putin youth groups—with *Nashi* as the most celebrated example—acted as the vanguard of the leader; the population overwhelmingly supported Putin, and had done so since he assumed the presidency; a growing mistrust of both internal and external foreigners and a corresponding glorification of Russia's past (including its criminal Stalinist period) and present were the official worldview.

## Is Putin's Russia Fascist?

Of all these factors, the defining characteristics of fascism—the non-democratic and non-socialist nature of Russia's political system, the hyper-nationalist, statist ideology, the hyper-masculine cult of the supreme leader, and the enthusiastically supportive population—are central to our enquiry. I consider these briefly in turn.

- *Non-democratic and non-socialist political system:* Elections to the Duma and presidency are generally regarded as unfair and unfree—even though almost everyone agrees that Putin and his allies would win even if elections were fair and free. (This seeming paradox is resolved easily enough when one remembers that Putin and his comrades are not democrats and have no need of democracy.) By the same token, the Duma has been effectively transformed into a rubber-stamp parliament, partly as a result of changes to its structure and procedures and mostly as a result of the dominance within it, and the larger political system, of the pro-presidential

20. There is another reason, at least in retrospect, to consider Yeltsin's Russia more democratic than authoritarian. If Yeltsin's Russia is the former, then Putin's changes represent systemic discontinuity; if Yeltsin's Russia is the latter, then Putin's changes represent systemic continuity.

21. Lilia Shevtsova, "Political Leadership in Russia's Transformation," in Alexander J. Motyl, Blair A. Ruble, and Lilia Shevtsova, eds., *Russia's Engagement with the West* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p. 100.

22. For an analysis of Putin's relationship with Medvedev, see Amy Knight, "The Truth about Putin and Medvedev," *New York Review of Books*, May 15, 2008, pp. 11-14.

party of power, United Russia. To be sure, United Russia does not resemble twentieth-century fascist movements striving for power. The former is a loose agglomeration of mostly opportunists who boarded a regime-sponsored political band wagon; the latter were, like the Bolsheviks, cadre parties of true believers. A more apposite comparison would be with the Nazis or Fascists *in* power, by which time their ranks had been swelled by hangers-on and careerists and both had become popular container parties that only slightly resembled the militant movements from which they had sprung. At the same time, United Russia clearly does not—or does not yet—dominate all of Russia’s political, social, economic, and cultural institutions and, in that sense, falls far short of the reality in Hitler’s Germany or Mussolini’s Italy. The claim that post-Soviet Russia is non-socialist requires, I trust, no elaboration.

- *Statism and hyper-nationalism*: Although Russia lacks a coherent ideology of the sort encountered in the Soviet Union, fascist Italy, or Nazi Germany, the prevailing ideological currents, or discourse, clearly promote and glorify both the Russian state and the Russian people. The concept of “sovereign democracy”, for instance, is about a strong Russian state, and not about democracy. Especially emblematic of this discourse is Putin’s 2007 “Speech at the Reception on the Occasion of National Unity Day”, in which he emphasized the indivisible relationship between national unity, national greatness, and state strength.<sup>23</sup> Unlike Mussolini and Hitler, whose style was histrionic and whose language was often bombastic, Putin usually comes across as cool and collected. Notwithstanding the style,

23. “On this very day a long time ago, in 1612, at the foot of the Kremlin’s walls we celebrated more than simply a victory over foreign invaders. Thanks to the unity displayed by the multinational people of Russia we managed to end the many years of troubles and internal strife. It was the way Russian society rallied together and the responsibility it took for the country’s destiny that allowed us to defend our independence and renew Russian statehood. We created the conditions to construct and establish an enormous great power, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean. Without a doubt, authentic patriotic actions by Russian citizens have constituted the might and power of our people over many centuries. They have promoted unflinching spiritual values that are transferred to generation from generation.... Modern Russia is strong not only because of its new economic successes or its growing influence in international affairs. Russia was and remains powerful thanks to national unity and, of course, thanks to the tremendous intellectual and creative potential of our people, talented, qualified people who sincerely desire to act for the benefit of their nation. This is the best bridge to the successful future of Russia, to reviving and strengthening our country’s historic role.” <[http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/11/04/0924\\_type127286\\_150361.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/11/04/0924_type127286_150361.shtml)>.

Putin’s message of state greatness differs little from that of other fascist leaders. Russia’s official ideology of nationalism, meanwhile, does fall short of the style and substance of Mussolini’s or Hitler’s extreme claims. Accordingly, Russians are great, as are their past and present and future, but—aside from official toleration and encouragement of Russian superciliousness toward other non-Russians—that greatness does not yet entail racism and overt ethnocentrism.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Russia’s unofficial discourse of nationalism has witnessed the mainstreaming of such ultranationalists and fascists as Aleksandr Dugin, Aleksandr Prokhanov, Dmitri Rogozin, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.<sup>25</sup> It is surely indicative of both great-power and ultra-nationalist rhetoric that Putin on March 8, 2008 called Medvedev a “Russian nationalist”—in the presence of, of all people, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Even though Putin insisted that he meant that “in the good sense of the word,” he could not have not known that his use of the term was a slap in the face of German discursive sensibilities.<sup>26</sup>

- *Hyper-masculine cult of supreme leader*: Like Mussolini, Putin favors stylish black clothing that connotes toughness and seriousness.<sup>27</sup> Like Mussolini, Putin likes being photographed in the presence of weapons and other instruments of war. And like Mussolini, Putin likes to show off his presumed physical prowess. The specially released late-2007 pre-electoral video showing Putin in a variety of manly poses—on horseback, with automatic rifles, wading through a river—and usually bare-chested deserves particular attention and arguably represents a watershed in Putin’s self-representation.<sup>28</sup> Not only is the video extraordinary in its blatant depiction of

24. Note Schöpflin’s comment: “The rise of a fairly unpleasant brand of chauvinist nationalism in Russia has two consequences. It makes all things non-Russian inherently suspect and makes the criteria of Russian-ness—language, race, a very particular version of history, Orthodoxy and territorial ambition—the sole way of interpreting the world.” George Schöpflin, “Russia’s reinvented empire,” March 5, 2007, <[www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions\\_government/russia\\_empire\\_4589.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-institutions_government/russia_empire_4589.jsp)>. See also Elfie Siegl, “Von Stalins Sieg zum Sieg Putins. Der Kreml und sein Geschichtsbild,” *Russlandanalyse*, November 9, 2007, nr. 148, pp. 2-4.

25. Charles Clover, “Invasion’s Ideologues,” *Financial Times*, September 9, 2008, p. 9.

26. “Otvety na voprosy zhurnalistov po okonchaniy peregovorov s Federal’nym kantslerom Germanii Angeloi Merkel’,” March 8, 2008, <[president.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/03/161952.shtml](http://president.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/03/161952.shtml)>.

27. See Catharine Nepomnyashchy, “Man in Black: Putin and the Power of the Image,” Unpublished paper.

28. This video may be viewed on [www.russia.ru/putin/](http://www.russia.ru/putin/).

Putin as the quintessence of virility and a man's man, but it is quite open in targeting the youngish female voter to whom, apparently, Putin's "political technologists" believed such gendered representations of masculinity would necessarily appeal.<sup>29</sup>

- *Widespread popular support:* Like Mussolini and Hitler, Putin enjoys enormous popular appeal.<sup>30</sup> Despite the many ups and downs of his years in office, Russians have consistently supported him to the tune of 70-plus percent. Like Hitler and Mussolini, Putin has restored law, order, and stability—or at least the semblance thereof.<sup>31</sup> Far more important, Putin has also restored Russians' pride in themselves, their present, and their past—in part by rehabilitating Stalin—and given Russians hope in their future. And like Hitler and Mussolini, Putin claims to be fulfilling nothing more than the people's mandate.<sup>32</sup>

29Note in this light Mussolini's claim, "Fascism desires an active man, one engaged in activity with all his energies: it desires a man virilely conscious of the difficulties that exist in action and ready to face them." Adrian Lyttleton, ed., *Italian Fascisms: From Pareto to Gentile* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 40.

30. One Russian historian who compared Putin with Hitler in a December 2007 article entitled "Putin—Our Good Hitler" became the object of official investigation. See <<http://www.kommersant.ru/region/perm/page.htm?year=2008&issue=27&id=247780&section=7272>>.

31. See David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

32. Consider the following exchange, from Putin's December 12, 2007 interview with *Time* magazine:

QUESTION: You have spoken very confidently about Russia's role in international affairs. People say that it was harder to carry out this policy at the start of your presidency, but now that you have become a very strong president, I want to ask you: when did you become a national leader? What determines this position? When were you able to say to yourself, "Yes, now I have become a true leader"?

VLADIMIR PUTIN: First of all, this is something I never thought about, just as I never thought that I would one day be President. And now, to be honest, I try not to think about it because I think that when people start to think they are somehow exceptional, some kind of exceptional leader, they start to lose touch with reality.

I never called myself a national leader. It is others who have called me this. I did not think up this term and have never sought it. When I became President the country found itself unwillingly plunged into the chaos of civil war in the Caucasus and faced enormous economic difficulties, the collapse of the social sphere and a huge number of people living below the poverty line.

I can say to you with all certainty that I did not just take this job, step into this office, as it were, but I decided for myself that I was ready to do everything I could, to make any sacrifice, in order to restore the country. I made this the main purpose of my life and I decided that my own life in the broad sense, my personal life and interests, therefore ended.

Destiny has given me the chance to play a positive role in the history of my people, and I see myself as a part of this people and feel very strongly my connection to them. I have always felt this and I feel it now, and from the moment I made my decision I have subjugated my entire life to this goal.

I think that these goals have been reached to a large extent. We now

The following quotation, from Putin's last press conference as president in February 2008, is an excellent example of his discourse of statism, hyper-nationalism, cult of personality, and popular support and needs no commentary. According to the *Financial Times* correspondent, Putin "poured scorn on speculation in the western press that he had built up an enormous personal fortune while in power, saying the reports had been 'picked out of their noses and then smeared all over the papers.' He said: 'I am the richest person not only in Europe but also in the world. I collect emotions. And I am rich because the Russian people twice entrusted me with the leadership of such a great country as Russia. I think this is my greatest fortune.'"<sup>33</sup>

Is, then, Putin's Russia fascist? As this checklist suggests, Russia is rather more than a simple authoritarian state. Some scholars have tried to capture this difference by employing such terms as patrimonial or tsarist. Anne Applebaum speaks of "Putinism."<sup>34</sup> Although these terms are fine as descriptive designations, they fail to locate today's Russia on a spectrum of political systems and, thus, to convey the magnitude of the changes wrought by Putin. I suggest that the term fascism can therefore tell us just how much, as well as the direction in which, Russia has changed.

To be sure, although Putin's Russia possesses many of the defining characteristics of fascism, it does so only to a greater or lesser extent. Having emerged haphazardly only in the last few years, these characteristics have not yet assumed the form of a consolidated political system; nor is it clear that they are here to stay. In that sense, Russia today resembles Germany in 1933 or Italy in the early-to-mid-1920s. Russia could follow in their footsteps, or it could falter and find its way back to some form of democracy or authoritarianism. Located somewhere between authoritarianism and fascism, today's Russia may therefore be termed *fascistoid*. If the system remains as is, or even hardens during Medvedev's presidency, then one will be able to say that Russia has moved even further toward a full-fledged fascism. If the system breaks down, or undergoes significant change in the direction of democracy or authoritarianism, then the

---

have other problems, just as big, that we must address, but these are already problems of a different kind, and we have every opportunity for making progress.

So when you ask me when I first had this feeling of being a leader, I can say that I haven't had this feeling and I don't have it now. I feel like a work horse that is hauling along a cart filled with a heavy load, and I can tell you that the satisfaction I feel from my work depends on how rapidly and effectively I manage to make progress along this road. <[http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/12/19/1618\\_type82916\\_154779.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/12/19/1618_type82916_154779.shtml)>.

33. Catherine Belton, "Putin maps out strategy to retain powerful role," *Financial Times*, February 14, 2008, p. 4.

34. Anne Applebaum, "Putinism: Democracy, the Russian Way," *The Berlin Journal*, spring 2008, no. 16, pp. 43-47.

transition toward fascism will have proven unsuccessful. For the first few months of Medvedev's tenure, the verdict seemed unclear, as both he and Prime Minister Putin appeared to be jockeying for power. The August war against Georgia saw Putin return to prominence—in exactly the kind of hyper-masculine role he had crafted as president—and suggested that Russia was moving toward fascism.<sup>35</sup> Medvedev's "Go, Russia!" article of September 2009, on the other hand, seemed to suggest that he was pushing back and that a return toward simple authoritarianism might still be possible.<sup>36</sup> In sum, Russia remains mired in the fascistoid no-man's land between authoritarianism and fascism. And it may stay there until the next presidential elections. If, at that point, Putin runs and wins, the verdict should be clearer.

## Theoretical Approaches to Systemic Change

One may explain Russia's, or any country's, systemic transformations as the product of 1) political culture, 2) structural or institutional forces, or 3) elite decisions—with the first two approaches reflecting "structure" and the third reflecting "agency" in the structure vs. agency debate. Cultural explanations that assume the persistence of cultural norms, attitudes, or discourses are best at explaining systemic continuities or reversions to past forms; they are generally weak when it comes to explaining breaks with the past. Structural and institutional explanations can explain persistence and change, but they cannot account for timing. Elite explanations can explain persistence, change, and timing, but in being able to account for everything, they easily run the risk of being trivially true.

In explaining the shift from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, a cultural explanation would focus on the growing gap that developed in the last two decades of Leonid Brezhnev's rule between official Soviet ideology, discourse, and norms on the one hand and popular ideology, discourse, and norms on the other. Such an explanation would then emphasize how the notion of systemic failure was "constructed" by opposition elites—in particular the non-Russian popular fronts that emerged during perestroika<sup>37</sup>—who managed to delegitimize the

authorities, mobilize their own discursive constituencies, and create systemic collapse. A cultural explanation would then emphasize the emergence of a democratic discourse of popular sovereignty in the late-perestroika years, Yeltsin's appropriation of democratic rhetoric in the aftermath of the failed August 1991 coup, and the resultant discursive momentum toward a democratic form of government. Seen in this light, democracy could never really have taken hold because, despite the temporary emergence of a democratic discourse, Russian political culture, as it developed in the course of hundreds of years, is non-democratic and imperial and Russians like strong rule by strong men—a point the Marquis de Custine would probably have endorsed.<sup>38</sup> The drift away from democracy was therefore inevitable. Russians were therefore grateful to Putin for having restored both stability, which they supposedly value above all else, and their sense of pride, in themselves and in their formerly humiliated country, great Mother Russia.

In explaining the shift from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, a structural/institutional explanation would focus on the internal systemic contradictions and inefficiencies of totalitarianism and argue that totalitarianism was fated, as in Karl Marx's understanding of capitalism, to collapse.<sup>39</sup> That it collapsed at the time it did was due to Gorbachev's institutionally induced inability to appreciate—indeed, to *see*—the importance to the USSR's stability of the nationality factor and unwillingness to stop perestroika from eviscerating the Soviet body politic. A structural/institutional explanation would then highlight the collapse of the Communist Party, as an all-embracing institution that defined the nature of the political system, and its replacement by a plethora of parties, movements, and groupings that began competing for power in a manner that approximated competition and democracy. Finally, democracy had to fail from this perspective because the construction of stable democratic institutions was incompatible with Russia's inheritance of the institutional legacies of totalitarian and imperial collapse.

An elite explanation of the shift from totalitarianism to authoritarianism would focus on Gorbachev's decisions, first, to implement glasnost and perestroika and, second, not to rein them in once disintegrative processes had been unleashed. The rise of Yeltsin as president of Russia and the emergence with him of a counterforce to Gorbachev, the gradual transformation of the Communist bosses of the non-Russian republics into national Communists supporting sovereignty and then independence, and the

35. See Stephen Blank, "Russia's War on Georgia: The Domestic Conflict," *Perspective*, October 2008, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 1-5. According to Blank, "Apart from the enshrinement of a condition of permanent threat and the predisposition to adventurism, the other domestic context of this invasion is the extension of Putin's primacy. Even if we concede that the war's motives and origins lie largely in the realm of geopolitical considerations, it is clear that it has served to extend Putin's leadership."

36. Dmitrii Medvedev, "Rossiya, vpered!" September 10, 2009. <<http://news.kremlin.ru/news/5413>>

37. See Thomas Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

38. See also Edward Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," *Russian Review*, vol. 45, 1986, pp. 158-181.

39. For a structural argument along these lines, see Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

inability of Gorbachev to meet the challenge they posed to him and his authority would round out the picture through 1991. Yeltsin's ability to outflank his opponents by employing force against the recalcitrant parliament in late 1993, his decision to hold more or less fair and free presidential elections in 1996, tolerate party competition, and refrain from pursuing unlimited presidential power would be the key factors behind the emergence in the 1990s of a weak form of democracy. Finally, an elite explanation would focus on Putin the ex-KGB officer who packed the ruling elites with his allies from among the *siloviki*, emasculated the regions, and progressively dismantled the country's democratic structures and replaced them with fascist-like ones.<sup>40</sup>

Although these approaches are different, the fact that they all do an adequate job of explaining Russia's systemic transformations suggests, first, that Russia's move toward fascism may have been over-determined and, second, that we may therefore employ all three in explaining Russia's fall from totalitarianism and drift through authoritarianism and democracy toward fascism. The next section will attempt to craft a coherent account of Russia's systemic transformations that draws on all three approaches within a framework that employs two key concepts—totalitarianism and empire.

## Explaining Russian Exceptionalism

Russia's exceptional trajectory—from totalitarianism to authoritarianism to democracy to fascism—is the result of its exceptional status within the Soviet system of rule. In contrast to all the other post-Communist states, Russia was the core of both the totalitarian system and the Soviet empire. That is, although the Russian population suffered enormously from the misrule of the Communist Party, the Soviet secret police, and their leaders, the institutions that ran the totalitarian and imperial systems were lodged in Russia, were run by Russian cadres, and employed Russian language and culture as instruments of rule. Russians also viewed these institutions and the Soviet state and empire as fundamentally theirs.

The collapse of totalitarianism and empire thus had different implications for non-Russians and Russians. First, collapse meant expanded freedom for all the peoples of the former Soviet empire, but for Russians it also, if not primarily, meant strategic defeat and intense national humiliation.<sup>41</sup> Second, while collapse forced non-Russians to embark on ideologically legitimated positive projects of nation- and state-building, it forced Russians

to salvage what remained of a superpower and great state. Third, collapse bequeathed weak and underdeveloped institutions and armies to the formerly Soviet non-Russian states in the “near abroad,” and relatively coherent, experienced, and well-staffed governing institutions, a secret police, and a powerful army to the Russians.

In other words, collapse stacked the cards against democracy in Russia. The population, whose political culture was anti-democratic to start with, viewed nation-building as being primarily about reestablishing its lost position of glory as a “great people” and state-building as being primarily about reestablishing the “great Russian state.” No other population in the former Soviet space was encumbered with such a mind-set. Worse, the Russian Federation inherited the very institutions—still powerful central ministries and a strong and powerful secret police and army—that were least inclined to support democratic projects. Further complicating things was the economic collapse and breakdown in law and order that afflicted Russia and every other post-Communist state in the 1990s. All elites and populations in all the states had to cope with the resulting disorder and many were tempted to adopt or prolong authoritarian solutions, but only in Russia did this time of troubles become transformed into a discursive mantra that blamed democracy for all of Russia's ills and seemed to justify a widespread systemic transformation toward dictatorial rule.

Putin's ability to assume power in 1999-2000, to consolidate his rule quickly, and to attain the status of a popular “national leader” therefore had as much to do with the condition of post-Soviet Russia as with any personal talents he may have possessed. Putin the career KGB officer represented the ideal “man on horseback” who would end the *besporyadok* and *khaos* (disorder and chaos) that was created by the collapse of empire and totalitarianism and that was so repugnant to an authoritarian political culture. That same background also provided him with invaluable contacts with the already large percentage of *siloviki* who had managed to infiltrate the establishment in the 1990s. Unlike Mussolini and Hitler, Putin was an insider who neither had to march on the capital nor wage street battles and sit in jail. And because Putin emerged from within the system, he did not need—or have—a full-fledged ideological program for storming the citadels of power. Instead, he could proceed to construct a fascistoid state without declaring that he would do so—and, perhaps, without even knowing that he would do so.

Unsurprisingly, post-Soviet Russia's developmental path resembles that of post-World War I Germany. Both countries lost empires and experienced profound humiliation. Both countries then experienced extreme economic hardship under the stewardship of weak and corrupt democratic regimes. Both countries blamed

40. See Andrew Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

41. See Alexander J. Motyl, “Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 31, no. 2, January 1999, pp. 127-145.

democracy and its internal and external supporters for their ills. Both countries turned to hyper-nationalism, state fetishization, and strong-man rule. In both countries strong men seized power—by legitimate means, by the way—and exploited popular willingness to submit to domination to establish their dictatorial rule. Seen in this light, fascism, *pace* Marxist theories thereof, is not so much the product of the “crisis of capitalism,” as of the “crisis of democracy” in weakened and humiliated states with nondemocratic political cultures. Linz’s explanation of inter-war fascism is strikingly relevant to post-Soviet Russia: “Fascism was the novel response to the crisis—profound or temporary—of the pre-war social structure and party system and to the emergence of new institutional arrangements as a result of war and post-war dislocations. It would be particularly acute in defeated nations, in those which were divided about entry into the war and disappointed with the fruits of victory, such as Italy, and those countries where the crisis led to unsuccessful revolutionary attempts. Fascism would be a counter-revolutionary response led by a revolutionary elite.”<sup>42</sup>

### Challenges for Fascistoid Russia

Although totalitarianism decays in the long run, it tends to be stable in the short to medium term, as all its components reinforce total control—until they do not, at which point the slide toward breakdown may be inevitable. Authoritarian systems are stable as long as they can repress populations—which becomes increasingly hard to do over time, as the costs of repression mount and revenues usually decline. Democracies may be the most stable, especially in the long term, as they are generally able to enjoy some degree of popular support, minimize the costs of compliance, and promote economic growth. Fascism may be least stable in the short, medium, and long terms, generating three contradictions, or weaknesses, relating to the supreme leader, the willingness of the population to obey, and the effect of fascist rhetoric and behavior on neighboring states.

(1) Cults of vigorous leaders cannot be sustained as leaders inevitably grow old or decrepit. A continual rejuvenation of the supreme leader might solve the problem were it not for the fact that fascist leaders do not want to give up power. Sooner or later, fascist leaders lose their core legitimacy, and when they do, both their followers and the submissive population begin to look for alternative idols. Putin, although young and vigorous today, will not remain young forever. And an old and decrepit Russian leader will not be able to make the case for youth, vigor, and manliness in typical fascist style.

Moreover, fascist regimes are invariably fragmented. Extreme centralization of power in a supreme leader is supposed to ensure elite coordination and submission; instead, it inclines elites to compete for the leader’s favor, to amass resources and build regional or bureaucratic empires, and not to cooperate with their colleagues-turned-competitors. Fascist regimes are thus brittle, and when supreme leaders falter—as they inevitably do, especially during times of crisis—or leave the scene, successor elites engage in cutthroat competition to assume the mantle of authority. In so doing, however, they not only weaken the regime, but they also expose the system as less than the imposing monolith projected to the submissive population.

The global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and its impact on Russia’s banks, oligarchs, stock market, energy, and growth prospects are likely to intensify elite infighting and erode Putin’s aura of omnipotence, especially if popular living standards begin to decline. The next few years will be particularly difficult for Russia, as Putin tries to remain in control of a political system formally led by Medvedev without becoming the target of popular opprobrium and elite opposition. Chances are that Putin will attempt to shift the blame onto Medvedev, present himself as Russia’s only hope, and manipulate elites and publics to force Medvedev to resign—just as the economy is about to improve. Of course, Putin could fail. The *siloviki* and other elites may turn against him and the public may tire of his play-acting—especially if the economic crisis proves deeper and longer-lasting. Whatever the outcome, Russian politics will be exceedingly unsettled. And regardless of who leads the government, these tensions and uncertainties will undermine the effectiveness of the system and its capacity to retain popular support.<sup>43</sup>

(2) Popular humiliation and the willingness to submit to unconditional authority are weak foundations on which to build states. Sooner or later, Russians will not feel humiliated and, when that happens—as it surely will, once their prosperity and exposure to the world and its blandishment increases—they will be less inclined to accept leader cults and authoritarian rule by shadowy *siloviki*. To be sure, Russian political culture may be authoritarian, and, as such, it will sustain fascism. But strategic sectors of Russia society—the middle class and students—will increasingly reject that culture and prove to be a source of new thinking about Russia’s politics.

The rise of a middle class committed to private property, rule of law, and greater involvement in the political process is an obvious challenge to the longer-term stability of a fascist state. Even if official elites

43. See James Sherr, “Russia and the West: A Reassessment,” Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, *The Shrivenham Papers*, no. 6, January 2008, p. 19.

42. Linz, p. 7.

succeed in converting affluent and educated Russians to hyper-nationalism and neo-imperialism—as many elites have done in the past—a middle class could force the state to make concessions to its preferences and, over time, evolve into a milder form of authoritarian rule. The middle class could come to play a more directly destabilizing role in times of political or economic crisis, especially during periods of intense elite infighting. Ukraine’s more affluent citizens threw in their lot with the Orange revolutionaries in late 2004 and, by providing them with material support, were able to ensure their victory. Russia’s affluent citizens could just as easily follow in the Ukrainians’ footsteps, if conditions appear to favor their interests—as they just might if the financial collapse of 2008 has severe repercussions and the elites appear incapable of finding quick and painless solutions.

Students are the traditional bearers of revolution in almost all societies, and it is at first glance remarkable that Russia’s many students have thus far been quiet. Like Americans and Europeans in the 1950s, they may be responding to past economic insecurity and current economic prospects by focusing on their educations and careers. But, like their American and European counterparts in the 1960s, they may, once a certain degree of prosperity can be taken for granted while politics remains nondemocratic, have the self-assurance to translate their critical thinking and youthful enthusiasm into protest. On their own, students in developed societies are rarely able to do more than cause trouble. If their rebellions coincide with or feed off larger social unrest, economic crisis, and political infighting, however, the potential for instability can grow correspondingly.

(3) All fascist states scare their neighbors and provoke them to defend themselves against perceived threats emanating from the behavior and bluster of fascist leaders. In that sense, fascist hyper-nationalism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—effectively creating the very enemies it invokes as the reasons for its justification. The soldiers and policemen who run fascist states have a natural proclivity to toughness and weaponry. The hyper-nationalism, state fetishes, and cult of hyper-masculinity incline fascist states to see enemies everywhere. The cult-like status of leaders encourages them to pound their chests with abandon. And the population’s implication in its own repression leads it to balance its self-humiliation with attempts to humiliate others. Unsurprisingly, Russia has taken to asserting its “rightful” place in the sun by engaging in energy blackmail vis-à-vis Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states, cyber-wars against Estonia, a war against Georgia, Polar land grabs, saber-rattling in the Crimea, and other forms of aggressive behavior.

Russia will create ever more suspicious and terrified neighbors the longer it remains fascistoid.

Those neighbors—in particular Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan—will not just roll over and accept a fait accompli crafted in Moscow. Instead, they will seek existential solutions to existential threats. At a minimum, this means beefing up substantially their defense expenditures, crafting anti-Russian alliances, subordinating economic reform to the exigencies of security, and viewing their own Russian-speaking populations as potential fifth columns. More likely than not, the non-Russian states that feel most threatened by Russia will follow in Israel’s footsteps and seek security guarantees from the United States and shelter under the American nuclear umbrella. At a maximum, this means doing exactly what the Israelis have done: secretly acquiring nuclear weapons. All the ex-Soviet states have the know-how to build nuclear reactors and weapons; Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan even inherited hundreds of warheads after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And some of their leaders have openly expressed regret at having transferred them to Russia in the early 1990s.

Naturally, these defensive reactions will only succeed in persuading Russia’s ruling elites that continued power enhancement is imperative, both in defense of the fatherland and in defense of their “abandoned brethren” in the non-Russian states. A “quick, little war” might then become tempting, as a means of rallying the population around the flag, of distracting attention from economic woes, and of teaching the non-Russians a lesson. Crisis and overreach will then become likely—especially as Russia is far weaker than its elites believe<sup>44</sup>—and the resulting foreign-policy disasters will serve to expose the regime and leader as less than all-knowing and all-competent and thereby accelerate elite fragmentation and popular dissatisfaction.<sup>45</sup>

## The End of Fascistoid Russia

Russia faces an additional problem—one peculiar to its economy. Because energy resources have fueled Russia’s economic development, the centrality of energy and, thus, of easy money will transform, and perhaps already has transformed, Russia into a “petro-state” that already serves as an impediment to further economic development and political stability. Energy-generated easy money encourages state elites to engage in corruption and outright theft and to use the state as a source of patronage. Easy money therefore promotes a

44. See Allen C. Lynch, *How Russia Is Not Ruled* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rajan Menon and Alexander J. Motyl, “The Myth of Russian Resurgence,” *The American Interest*, vol. 2, no. 4, March/April 2007, pp. 96-101

45. On overreach, see Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

bloated and parasitic state apparatus whose efficiency and effectiveness decline as lines of command become blurred, elites engage in localized empire building, resources are diverted from their intended uses, and corruption gets out of control. Elite fragmentation weakens the supreme leader, while untrammelled rent-seeking both undercuts the persuasiveness of statist ideology and impedes the development of the middle class. Easy money also encourages elites to engage in saber-rattling vis-à-vis their neighbors.

The 2008-2009 economic crisis will both enhance these tendencies and create debilitating contradictions. On the one hand, capital flight, declining foreign direct investment, and the drop in energy prices will reduce the ability of the petro-state to generate easy money. On the other hand, growing state intervention in a crisis-ridden economy will inevitably increase corruption and promote further elite infighting, both over policy and over the shrinking pie. In sum, a fascistoid Russia faces the risk of decay, and perhaps even breakdown, in the not too distant future.

Which way will a destabilized Russia go—toward democracy or toward authoritarianism? A cultural approach to systemic change would suggest that authoritarianism, as being more in sync with an

authoritarian political culture, is more likely. A structural/institutional approach would probably come down on the side of some messy form of democracy as the most likely aftermath of the supreme leader's fall from power and the concomitant elite infighting. An elite approach could go either way, especially as Putin's opponents can be found among both the democratic opposition and the hard-line *siloviki*. If these calculations are correct, then the most one can say with any degree of confidence is that a post-fascist Russia will probably enter an extended time of troubles characterized by different forces pulling it in different directions—both toward and away from democracy. The only thing that seems certain is that, as *besporyadok* and *khaos* increase, Russians will curse Putin for their misfortunes.

Alexander J. Motyl is Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University-Newark.

A shortened version of this article originally appeared as "Russland: Volk, Staat und Führer: Elemente eines faschistischen Systems," *Osteuropa*, January 2009. It is printed here with the permission of *Osteuropa*.

# Three Perspectives on Ethnography from Ukraine: The Mysterious Tale of a Lost Hutsul Manuscript, Its Recovery, and the Dialogues that Ensued

Maria Sonevytsky

At the historic meeting of folklorists, ethnographers and ethnomusicologists on the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Ukrainian Folklore at Ivan Franko University in L'viv, Ukraine, old and new models of scholarship clashed, in ways both subtle and fierce. Generations of Ukrainian scholars, in addition to three representatives from the U.S. (myself included) took part in the meeting.<sup>1</sup> Papers ranged from analyses in the Soviet formalist folklore style—now reinvented as the nationalist Ukrainian style—to papers exploring the archives and biographies of founders of the discipline in Ukraine (including Filaret Kolessa, after whom the department is named). Topics discussed also revealed generational rifts in what constituted valid terrain for folklore studies: when some young scholars tackled subjects such as how mass e-mail love notes can be considered modern folklore, or explored the humorous texts of Ukrainian-Canadian *kolomyjky* (rural Western Ukrainian dance songs) that have a vibrant second life in the diaspora, their papers would often be met with pointed questions about intellectual worth from the elders of the field, accusations of irreverence or irrelevance coquettishly or ironically rebutted by younger presenters.

Observing this dynamic, along with the nationalist zeal expressed by a sizable number of career folklorists, I noted the difference from the much more neutral tone of conferences in the United States, where intellectual dialogue very rarely seems to escalate to the sputtering pitch that characterized much of the L'vivan conference. The impassioned attitudes towards the vitality of the discipline and its meaning for Ukraine as a viable country called to mind Mark von Hagen's analysis of the state of Ukrainian historiography and the re-emergence of Ukrainian history as an academic discipline when he asked "Does Ukraine Have a History?" Von Hagen argued that Ukraine will "need a civic, patriotic history of its nation-state," but that the content of that history would be ferociously debated. And furthermore, as post-socialist Ukrainian history and historiography develops, it will serve as a "laboratory" in which "the nation-state's conceptual hegemony" can be challenged (von Hagen 1995: 673). Similarly, today the

various disciplines that claim folklore in their purview—ethnomusicology, philology, ethnography, and, to a smaller extent, the institutionally marginalized fields of anthropology or "*kulturolohiia*" (culturology)—contest the common intellectual terrain they inhabit on grounds both methodological and ideological.

These epistemological debates about value came into stark relief at the conference in L'viv, where three distinct perspectives on ethnography and ethnographic authority commingled: first, that of the the professional experts in the fields of folklore in Ukraine; second, my own, U.S. anthropology-inflected perspective (with all the concomitant reflexive positioning of myself as a member of the Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S., an ethnomusicology Ph.D. student and an ethnographer studying Ukraine)<sup>2</sup>; and third, the vantage points of two Hutsul "native ethnographers," one the subject of my paper, the other, a Hutsul man studying the same subject as the one I had addressed. Before moving to the story of the remarkable manuscript that is the pivot in this schema of interacting ethnographic perspectives, I will provide a brief historical context for the divergent and sometimes contradictory ethnographic traditions that make up this triad.

## On Ethnographic Authority and Ethnomusicology in Ukraine

The disciplines of socio-cultural anthropology and, by association, ethnomusicology in the West have experienced a sea change in approaches and attitudes in recent decades, and the issue of the ethnographer's authority has been a central question in this upheaval. The post-colonial critique of anthropology and the social sciences pointed its finger at the colonialist, paternalistic, and ethnocentric origins of these disciplines, and the eruption of reactions that followed in U.S. and European academia ranged from profound to defensive, apologetic to deeply reflexive (Abu-Lughod 1991; Behar and Gordon 1995; Clifford, Marcus, and School of American Research

1. One of the US presenters took part via Skype video conference from Houston, Texas.

2. As a teenager in the mid-1990s, I began to make solo trips to Ukraine, and went on my first team ethnomusicological expedition in 1999 with a group from the L'viv Conservatory.

1986; Sanjek 1990). Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld proposed the strategy of “dialogic editing” to confront the issue of the ethnographer’s authoritative impunity (Feld 1987), when he brought his published ethnography back to the Kaluli of Papa New Guinea for their opinions and critique. Feld’s authority was subjected to the represented population’s authority, who then made their own role in the political act of constructing and representing subjects and stories (c.f. Jackson 1995). In a place like Ukraine, with its own firmly entrenched tradition of scholarship, an ethnographer dedicated to “dialogic editing” can choose to engage with the native population as well as to a third editing party: the professional experts in the local urban scholarly community.

Ukrainian ethnomusicology or folklore studies is a tradition of ethnography and analysis that has been, implicitly or explicitly, bound up in nationalist or essentialist dogma (Filenko 2001; Helbig 2005; Wanner 1996). Rooted in Herderian nostalgia and Romantic striving for the authentic “soul of the folk,” transmuted through the confusing push-and-pull of Soviet formulae for socialist folklore, and now reinvented in the first tumultuous era of Ukrainian independence, contemporary Ukrainian ethnomusicological scholarship either goes so deep into formal structural analysis that it is impenetrable to outsiders, or becomes so explicitly political that any

claims towards objectivity are sullied. With the recent resurgence of xenophobic Ukrainian nationalism in its western regions, such polemical scholarship, affirmative of old models of nationalist-essentialist thought, despite the entirely different current political reality of Ukraine, will only further cleave contemporary Ukrainian society and reinforce the overly simplistic political rhetoric that pits fervent Western Ukrainian nationalists (*Banderivsi*) against Russian chauvinists (*Moskal’i*) in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine.

In post-Soviet Ukrainian ethnomusicology, professionals train by mastering rural repertoires and developing an ability to formalize, systematize and contextualize folk music along the indigenous guidelines of village rituals and beliefs. Given the piddling budgets allocated for this kind of research, Ukrainian ethnomusicologists generally study the “ethnographic regions” closest to their urban universities: L’vivan scholars focus on the Western Ukrainian groups such as Boykos, Lemkos, and Hutsuls; Kharkivan scholars focus on Eastern Ukrainian populations; Kyivans study Podilians and other Central Ukrainian “ethnographic groups.” Expeditions into the field are generally conducted over weekends or during weeks in the summer, and usually involve teams of researchers and students setting up camp in a village and fanning out in pairs or trios to



Ruslana and her “Wild Dancers” at Eurovision.

find the eldest musicians in the community. The practice of extended fieldwork that marks ethnomusicology in the United States is not widely practiced.

In L'viv, ethnomusicologists conduct their interviews with musicians based on a checklist that runs through all of the possible ritual songs and cycles that local musicians may know. The checklist emphasizes “ancient” and “authentic” music: Soviet, contemporary or original songs do not make it onto the list. In the highly systematized task of preserving “authentic” musical repertoires and rituals that are perceived to be threatened or dying, the power of each individual researcher to interpret ethnographic data is limited by the overarching project of the collective, thereby, in some ways, skirting the question of ethnographic authority on an individual level. The all-encompassing project to salvage dying music, the central mission of Ukrainian folklore, does, however, bring an implicit set of assumptions about what kinds of music are valid and valuable (“authentic” and “forgotten” being at the top of the hierarchy, “original songs” and “Soviet era songs” at the bottom). Furthermore, formal interactions between ethnographers and song-carriers generally conform to the limited formula prescribed by the checklist and the specific question of the research—usually a variation on the question “what is the oldest and purest song of the specific sought-after genre?”

My own ethnographic research in Ukraine adhered to the model generally practiced in the United States. On a series of grants, I had the opportunity to live for extended periods in the communities that I studied. In addition to structured and systematic interviews, serendipity played a sizeable role in steering my research, and “deep hanging out” in informal gatherings resulted in some of my most compelling insights. My ethnomusicological interest in the Hutsuls centers on the ways that contemporary Ukrainian popular musicians look towards Hutsul culture as a kind of authentic folk id to the urban post-colonial Western Ukrainian superego. This stereotypical image of Hutsuls as the “wild” ethnic Ukrainians of the Carpathian mountains has had the biggest impact as a result of Ruslana’s *Wild Dances*, which won the Eurovision grand prize in 2004, though numerous lesser known bands such as Haydamaky, Perkalaba, Gutsul Kalypso, Shokolad, and Drymba da Dzyga invoke Hutsul themes and imagery that construct variations on the theme of indigenous Ukrainian “wildness” as well.

These kinds of “wildness” are articulated not only through the proliferation of music that trades on such stereotypes, but also through the marketing of DVDs such as the “Wisdom of the Carpathian Shaman (*Mol'far*)” that follows the last surviving Hutsul shaman as he heals and casts spells, and the elaborate repertoire of “*anekdoty*” (jokes) about Hutsul “wildness.” All these forms of stereotyping and marketing of “wildness”

come from outside the Hutsul community: it is a newer formation of the old urban gaze onto the rural, analogous to the tired ethnomusicological paradigm that unproblematically imposes Western classical norms of transcription and description onto a music that confounds many basic principles of mode, meter, instrument design, and arrangement. For this reason, it was exceptional to come across, during my fieldwork in Verkhovyna, the remarkable manuscript written by an early twentieth-century Hutsul “native ethnographer” and activist whose work for over fifty years had been thought lost, and who was largely unknown to the professionals in L'viv.

### The Remarkable Manuscript and the Native Ethnographer’s Voice

Summarizing the achievements of his friend and collaborator, Petro Shekeryk-Donykiv, the renowned Polish ethnographer, and writer Stanislaw Vincenz (1888-1971) commented that “he was a talented person, if not a genius, and he made a work that, if they someday dig it up, will be the pride of native writing and a monument to the old language, to which there is no parallel” (quoted by Zelenchuk 2007 and Arsenych 2009). After nearly fifty years, the work to which Vincenz had referred was finally, and quite literally, dug up—physically exhumed from the soil, dusted off, wiped clean by the author’s daughter—and presented to the editorial staff at Hutsulshchynna, the local press of the isolated Carpathian mountain town of Verkhovyna. In 2007, this small press released the forgotten magnum opus of the little-known author named Petro Shekeryk-Donykiv, who perished in the Soviet gulag in the early 1940s.

The remarkable history of this manuscript, published for the first time nearly half a century after the death of its author, is exceptional for the unlikelihood of its survival, but also disturbingly familiar as an example of the countless erasures attempted or accomplished by the Soviet regime. Three weeks after the last page of the loosely-autobiographical book was dated by Shekeryk-Donykiv (April 20, 1940), he was arrested by the NKVD and deported to Siberia, never to be heard from again. For the remainder of her life, his wife Paraska swore that his manuscripts, including the novel that was his masterpiece, had been destroyed. In truth, she and her daughter Anna buried the works, moving them occasionally, until “better times” came. Finally, in 1999, eight years after Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union, Anna brought the manuscript to the editors of the Hutsulshchynna press in Verkhovyna, and they re-assembled the novel from the partly-destroyed, partly-decayed original manuscript. The novel was finally published in 2007; the following year, the same press released the collected works of Shekeryk-Donykiv, titled



Петро Шекерик-Доників

*Petro Shekeryk-Donykiv*

“A Year in the Ritual Life of the Hutsuls” (Shekeryk-Donykiv 2009, Shekeryk-Donykiv 2007).

Due to the limited number of copies published and the obscure and antiquated dialect in which the bulk of his work is written, the recently published materials of Shekeryk-Donykiv have had a limited impact in Ukraine. His work was, however, frequently cited as an important source material by Hutsul friends and informants during my fieldwork in Verkhovyna in the winter and spring of 2009. During the January 2009 winter holidays in Verkhovyna, my hosts would read aloud from *Dido Ivanchyk* to make sure they followed the correct Christmas dining procedures according to “old-world” Hutsul ritual. When all of the guests at the holy Christmas dinner were asked to climb under the food-laden table in turn, to shake its legs and shoo away demons, it was at Shekeryk-Donykiv’s instruction. The book triggered a long-suppressed memory for the elderly matriarch, and, for the first time in decades, she carried freshly-baked loaves of braided bread into the snowy night to offer it to that year’s deceased, as her mother had done in the 1930s.

My particular interest in Shekeryk-Donykiv centers on the impact of his work in reinstating forgotten rituals and kindling contemporary pride in ancient local custom, and extends to the importance of his role as a native ethnographer in a borderland on the periphery of various colonial urban loci of scholarship. Shekeryk-Donykiv’s fundamental faith in the coherence of his native people’s culture provides a counterpoint to the many better-known exoticized and romanticized literary and ethnographic accounts of Hutsul life by colonial and Ukrainian intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Kotsiubynsky 1981, Shukhevych 1899-1908, Ukraïnka 1973, Vincenz 1955, Witwicki 1873). For anthropologists of the Western tradition who have been concerned with the fundamental crisis of ethnographic authority in the wake of post-colonial critique, the discovery of a voice such as Shekeryk-Donykiv’s is doubly interesting, because it provides an example of a “native ethnographer” from an era when “ethnography” in the United States was still in its very nascent formation. The evidence provided by a native ethnographer whose work was untouched by the Soviet censorship regime and unfiltered through contemporary post-colonial politics, offers a truly rare glimpse of the world which Shekeryk-Donykiv inhabited.

Petro Shekeryk-Donykiv was an extraordinary man born into extremely humble conditions in the mountain village of Holove near Zhab’ye (renamed Verkhovyna in the Soviet 1960s) in 1889. He completed four years of primary school education in Holove. His teacher, Luka Harmatij, encouraged Shekeryk-Donykiv, his favorite student, to document his ethnographic observations, and presented him with a copy of Taras Shevchenko’s *Kobzar* (the foundational text in Romantic Ukrainian

literature and politics), which had a big impact on the small boy. Through his teacher, Shekeryk-Donykiv became acquainted with many of the urban literati of the day—luminaries such as Ivan Franko, Hnat Khotkevych, Mykhailo Kotsiubynskij, Volodymyr Shukhevych—when they came to the mountains for respite or inspiration, and whom Shekeryk-Donykiv assisted in their folklore collecting endeavors.

During World War I, Shekeryk-Donykiv served in the Austrian army, where he agitated for the rights of Ukrainian speakers and encouraged his countrymen to take pride in the language and culture of Ukraine, despite its changing status as the colony of various shifting empires. His physical maturation came hand-in-hand with his full-bodied and outspoken nationalism, and upon returning to his native land after the war, he actively participated in numerous social, cultural and political movements: the First Hutsul Theater company in Krasnoilya, the public educational and literacy organization Prosvita (Danilenko n.d.), the Ukrainian Nationalist Party (eventually as an elected deputy to its Rada in the 1930s), etc. He also worked tirelessly to combat illiteracy among the Hutsuls and was the founder and the chief editor of the annual *Hutsul’skij Kalendar* [Hutsul Calendar] which exists to this day. He was a prolific writer who published over 106 works about the lives and beliefs of the Hutsuls in the 1920-30s, in presses as far-reaching as Warsaw.

*Dido Ivanchyk*, Shekeryk-Donykiv’s novel about the life of a Hutsul man, is written in the *starovitzkij* (lit. “old world”) Hutsul dialect. The story includes invaluable detail about the yearly rituals that marked life in the pre-Soviet Carpathian Mountains in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the complex intermarriage of pagan and animist beliefs with colonial forms of Christianity. This blurring of belief systems drives much of the action in the novel and results in a text that one reviewer referred to, anachronistically perhaps, as a self-consciously literary “magical realism.” The collected works contain short essays in a folkloric-ethnographic vein, personal memoirs (including a history of the first Hutsul theater that Shekeryk-Donykiv assisted Hnat Khotkevych in founding and running), short stories based on local lore and legend, detailed explanation of the cyclical rituals and beliefs of the Hutsuls, opinion pieces, and humorous writings. Both works also contain rich descriptions of the role of music in the daily and spiritual lives of the Hutsuls, as a force for calling together the supernatural and the terrestrial through sound. As the bridge between the alternate belief systems of paganism and Christianity, music often serves to blend and blur the distinctions between animist and religious aspects of Hutsul faith in Shekeryk-Donykiv’s work. Music is seen as a natural force that is god-given to selected (male) members of the community, special individuals who may

possess mystical powers, such as the ability to manipulate the weather or create a trance in others through melody, sound, or vibration.

Shekeryk-Donykiv writes with a Hutsul voice (and in the Hutsul dialect) that pre-dates the Soviet imposition of politically-charged ethnography. With its rich descriptions of musical belief systems in the Hutsul worldview, his writing provides an instructive counterpoint from these outsider perspectives, and introduces the complex belief system that urbanites practicing a state-sanctioned version of religion would have identified as regressive and “wild.” As an example of a truly “native ethnographer,” Shekeryk-Donykiv’s account of Hutsul life and ritual adds complexity to his authority as an interpreter of and expert on Hutsul life. It is a familiar conundrum for those who have reflected on the quintessential “outsiderness” of the individual who seeks to describe and interpret culture via the written word—even as a cultural insider. For an ethnographer like myself, such an authoritative voice from the past summons questions about the complex matrix of factors that Shekeryk-Donykiv must have weighed as he wrote the ethnography of his own people. How should I, the contemporary ethnographer, account for his biases as an insider with a political agenda? How does his ethnographic authority challenge or complement my own?

### **Coda: The Native Ethnographer’s Ethnographers**

In mid-October 2009, in the week following the conference, I traveled back to Verkhovyna and met with Vasyl Zelenchuk from the village of Kyvorivnia. Zelenchuk had completed his undergraduate degree in philology at Ivan Franko University in L’viv in the early 1990s, but “fled back to the mountains” because city life felt confining to him. In Verkhovyna, he stood out as the local expert on Shekeryk-Donykiv, and assembled the dictionary of Hutsul terms that accompanied the publication of *Dido Ivanchyk*. As an undergraduate, he had studied demonology in the Hutsul belief system and was captivated by the figure of Shekeryk-Donykiv. He “knew in his heart” that the manuscript of *Dido Ivanchyk* still existed, and, in the late 1990s, he was the first to make a public announcement that the manuscript had been found. Zelenchuk assisted and guided the work’s restoration through its publication in 2007. Zelenchuk’s excitement about his research was contagious as he repeatedly mentioned his joy at meeting another individual interested in Shekeryk-Donykiv (and from America!). We sat at a small cafe table as I sipped the tea that I had ordered before he arrived and an hour flew by before we realized that, in his excitement, he had not paused to order a hot beverage, despite the fact that he

had come in soaked from a rainstorm.

I asked him about popular depictions of Hutsuls in Ukraine, and he commented on the “wildness” stereotype and the multiple reactions of Hutsuls to Ruslana’s depiction (his village, Kryvorivnia, had spearheaded the attempt to boycott the album in Ukraine, expressing outrage at the term “wild” in the album title, though he was not involved). As we talked about representation of Hutsuls in popular music and ethnography, he revealed his extremely nuanced feelings about it: on the one hand, it’s good to raise awareness of our existence, on the other hand, we don’t deserve slander. He acknowledged the ambivalence of his own feelings on the subject of demonology, saying, “I know our superstitious beliefs are irrational, but some part of me still wants to and chooses to believe it.” He emphasized his commitment to speak his Hutsul dialect, though he admitted to shifting his language toward standard Ukrainian to communicate with me (though his speech was still heavily speckled with Hutsul words and his pronunciation was unmistakably Hutsul). We talked over key scenes in the recently published works of Shekeryk-Donykiv, and he offered interpretations of nuances that I had struggled to grasp.

Finally, it was time to face the rain again. As we stood up from the cafe table, Zelenchuk told me that our meeting had so energized him that he was impatient to return home to Shekeryk-Donykiv and maybe write a few pages himself. After we had parted, as I braced against the downpour with a flimsy umbrella, I considered the value of dialogue in the ethnographic process, the back-and-forth of simple conversation, the force of exchange in molding the texts that ethnographers make as we form our questions and assemble them in patterns that attempt to make some sense of the world. And in this very real, very current desire to deepen our knowledge, I marveled that an almost lost, nearly destroyed, ethnographer’s voice could still induce such momentum—contained as it may be, but kinetic nonetheless—in the world.

*I thank the Harriman Institute for their generous support of my travel to L’viv in mid-October 2009.*

[Maria Sonevytsky](#) is a Ph.D. candidate in Ethnomusicology at Columbia University. From January 2008 to July of 2009, she conducted fieldwork among Crimean Tatars in Crimea and Hutsuls in Western Ukraine for her dissertation, titled “Civilizing Wildness: Musical Practices as Economic and Social Resources in Contemporary Ukraine.” She is currently writing her dissertation and performing music in New York City.

## References

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. "Writing Against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard Fox, pp. 137-62. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Arsenych, Petro. 2009. "Hordist' Samoridnoho Pys'menstva." In *Hutsulskij Kalendar 2009*, vol. 14, edited by Kalyna Vatamaniuk, pp. 35-36. Verkhovyna: Hutsulshchyna.
- Behar, Ruth, and Deborah A. Gordon. 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clifford, James, George E. Marcus, and School of American Research (Santa Fe, NM). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: A School of American Research Advanced Seminar*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Danilenko, Vladimir. n.d. "The Prosvita Society in Kiev: The Ukrainian Struggle for Self-Identity in 1906-1920." <http://www.eastview.com/docs/Prosvita%20Review%20Eng.pdf> (accessed 11/15/2009).
- Feld, Steven. 1987. "Dialogic Editing: Interpreting How Kaluli Read *Sound and Sentiment*." *Cultural Anthropology* 2 (2): 190-210.
- Filenko, Taras and Tamara Bulat. 2001. *The World of Mykola Lysenko: Ethnic Identity, Music and Politics in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ukraine*. Edmonton: Ukraine Millennium Foundation.
- Helbig, Adriana. 2005. "Play for me, Old Gypsy: Music as Political Resource in the Roma Rights Movement in Ukraine." Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University.
- Jackson, Michael. 1995. *At Home in the World*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Kotsiubynsky, Mykhailo. 1981. *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, translated by Marco Carynnyk. Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic Press.
- Sanjek, Roger. 1990. "On Ethnographic Validity." In *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*, pp. 385-418. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Shekeryk-Donykiv, Petro. 2007. *Dido Ivanchyk*. Verkhovyna: Hutsulshchynna.
- . 2009. *Rik u Viruvanniakh Hutsuliv: Vybrani Tvory*. Verkhovyna: Hutsulshchynna.
- Shukhevych, Volodymyr. 1899-1908. *Hutsul'shchynna*. L'viv: Naukove Tovarystro im. Shevchenka.
- Ukraïinka, Lesia. 1973. *Lisova pisnia : [drama-feieria]*. Kyïv: Dnipro.
- Vincenz, Stanislaw. 1955. *On the High Uplands: Sagas, Tales and Legends of the Carpathians*, translated by H. Stevens. London: Hutchinson.
- von Hagen, Mark. 1995. "Does Ukraine Have a History?" *Slavic Review* 54 (3): 6580673.
- Wanner, Catherine. 1996. "Nationalism on Stage: Music and Change in Soviet Ukraine." In *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Mark Slobin, pp. 136-155. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Witwicki, S. 1873. *O Huculach: Rys historyczny*. L'viv.
- Zelenchuk, Vasyl. 2007. "Literaturnij Shedevr Hutsulshchynny." In *Dido Ivanchyk*. Verkhovyna: Hutsulshchynna.

AT THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE

## Overcoming Warlords and State Failure: Lessons from Post-Soviet Georgia

On Wednesday, November 11, 2009, Kimberly Marten, Professor of Political Science at Barnard College, Columbia University, spoke at the Harriman Institute about two Georgian warlords—Aslan Abashidze and Emzar Kvitsiani. Marten discussed their influence in Georgia, and the divergent approaches towards warlordism taken by the administrations of Georgian leaders Eduard Shevardnadze (1992-03) and Mikheil Saakashvili (2003-present).

Marten, who is writing a book on “Warlords, Sovereignty, and State Failure,” had just returned from Georgia, where she conducted 26 interviews with policy makers and analysts connected to these cases. Her findings were the basis for her presentation and will comprise a chapter in her book. “Until now there have been ideographic studies of warlordism, but not a body of theory about the relationships between states and warlords. There is nothing to indicate what happens when states take particular actions toward warlords.” Marten seeks to formulate this theoretical framework.

“I define warlords as individuals who control small slices of territory in defiance of state sovereignty, through the use of force and patronage.” Marten clarified that while warlords function against state interests, this does not exclude their cooperation with the state. Warlords can infiltrate the bureaucracy and often extend their patronage to the government. Warlords sometimes maintain control through clans. “The body of political science literature indicates that clans can form a parallel government structure,” but as Marten continued, “clans are not as strong as the current literature suggests.” Saakashvili demonstrated that it was “easy to peel away clan supporters with promises of better conditions.”

Cases of warlordism can be observed across the globe, for example, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, and Somalia. The political economy of warlordism is similar across cases. Marten believes that Georgia is a particularly interesting case to examine, because of how differently two of its administrations have responded to warlords. While Shevardnadze accommodated the warlords’ needs, in part because he felt intimidated and in part because he benefited from the connections, Saakashvili unseated these leaders and restored Georgia’s sovereignty over their territories. “To my knowledge this is the only case in modern history where state leaders have dealt so differently with warlordism in the same country,” Marten noted. She added that Abashidze and Kvitsiani were what

she calls “middlemen” warlords, because they remained in power with Russian or Abkhazian support, operating between two states—Russia and Georgia.

**Aslan Abashidze** was a high-ranking official in both the Georgian and the Ajarian Communist parties until the fall of the Soviet Union. “This means that he had a lot of connections with political figures emerging in the post-Soviet space,” Marten said. In 1991, Abashidze was elected chairman of the Parliament of Ajara. Marten explained that his election was semi-legal. Georgia’s first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, had pressured the chairman of the parliament to resign and then swayed the parliament to elect Abashidze. “While Abashidze’s election was technically legal, it was actually an exercise of force.” Simultaneously Abashidze became deputy chairman of Georgia’s national parliament and remained in this position for several years.

Once Abashidze became chairman he formed his own militia and created a border separating Ajara from the rest of Georgia, forcing Georgian citizens to show their passports when they crossed the border, and stamping their passports with Ajaran “visas.” Using the civil war in Georgia as an excuse, Abashidze dissolved the parliament with an emergency decree. In response, local political leaders sent an open letter to Georgian authorities, calling Abashidze’s actions illegal. Nevertheless, Shevardnadze continued to accommodate the separatist leader, treating him as an ally and helping him win elections through backdoor deals. Under Shevardnadze’s presidency Abashidze was able to establish a separate National Security Council and Interior Ministry. He used these institutions to terrorize the population of Ajara. According to the Saakashvili government, he also ran a \$100 million narcotics smuggling ring, and appropriated the national oil taxes from the Batumi oil terminal.

Marten elaborated that oil would arrive in Batumi (Ajara’s capital) via the Black Sea, where it would be transferred to rail cars. Abashidze would bribe Georgian Railway Ministry officials to say that all oil delivered through the railway was going beyond Georgian borders. Transit oil is supposed to be tax-free, but Abashidze would have customs officials collect taxes from the shippers, and then keep the money in Ajara instead of sending it to state authorities. The oil would then be distributed within Georgia, instead of beyond its borders, following Abashidze’s orders to the Railway Ministry. As a result

Georgia lost over 60 percent of its oil tax revenue to Abashidze.

Shevardnadze also made electoral deals with Abashidze's Revival Party and allowed the Abashidze clan to control all government posts in Ajara. Marten indicated that these electoral deals helped to provoke Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003. "In 2003, Shevardnadze announced that he would not run for reelection in 2005, and people were frightened," Marten recounted, since it appeared that Shevardnadze had anointed Abashidze as his chosen successor. Abashidze secured a supposedly tremendous "official" electoral victory in 2003, but as independent exit polls showed, this victory was clearly fixed. As a result, people worried that once Shevardnadze's term came to an end, there would be another engineering of elections in Abashidze's favor. "Georgians were scared that Abashidze would lead the country in Shevardnadze's place."

The efforts of the Rose Revolution demonstrators in the fall of 2003 brought down Shevardnadze and replaced him with Saakashvili, who later was elected president in the snap election of January 2004. "Saakashvili had overwhelming popular support, even in Ajara," remarked Marten. In response to the Rose Revolution, Abashidze declared a state of emergency in Ajara, lashing out against protestors in the region. This immediately created a different dynamic between Saakashvili and Abashidze than the one that had existed between the warlord and Shevardnadze. Georgian officials and analysts as well as the international community feared there might be a military clash. At one point Abashidze stationed tanks on the Choloki Bridge, which separates Ajara from the rest of Georgia along the main highway. At another point he blew up the bridge, saying that he was preventing Georgian forces from invading. Marten showed the audience a photograph of the bridge and the river below it; the river is actually quite shallow and narrow. "Standing on the bridge I realized that the majority of this situation was just theater; the Georgians could easily have sent forces and crossed the river."

Abashidze was sent into exile in May 2004. The Georgian government presented Saakashvili's victory over the warlord as a reflection of both the state's strength and the overwhelming popular support that Saakashvili and the Rose Revolution had generated. Among other pressure tactics, Saakashvili closed Ajara's airspace, blocked the Batumi Port, closed the Sarpı customs point and froze the bank accounts of Ajarian officials. Marten concluded that a full explanation for Saakashvili's success, however, also includes his ability to peel off Abashidze's supporters. "He didn't really make a clean sweep, but just dusted off the furniture and rearranged it." While the media dwelled on Saakashvili's hardliner tactics and popularity, there is more to the story. He "wooed a lot of Abashidze

supporters with promises of immunity from prosecution, allowing the wealthy to keep their wealth and political positions in exchange for donations to the state of Ajara."

Abashidze was not punished—he has lived luxuriously in Moscow since his exile. Saakashvili replaced him with Levan Varshalomidze, the son of Abashidze's former prime minister. He was installed without elections, and wields enormous power in Ajara on behalf of the Saakashvili regime. If Saakashvili had not wielded relatively authoritarian control over Ajara, he would have been unable to unseat Abashidze, since an independent judiciary might not have agreed to give immunity to his supporters and an independent electorate might not have wanted to see his supporters in political office. Furthermore, Saakashvili's tactics may not be applicable in states that lack developed bureaucracies and popular leaders, such as Afghanistan.

Marten described **Emzar Kvitsiani** as a "gang leader and jailbird" who controlled several of Abkhazia's casinos. He got his start as a separatist leader in 1993, during the Abkhazia-Georgia war, commanding a militia called the *Monadire* ("Hunter"). A number of Abkhazian refugees fled to Georgia proper through Kodori Gorge, a mountainous region in Abkhazia that extends to the northeast from Sukhumi. Militias that may have included Kvitsiani supporters destroyed the road through the gorge, forcing refugees to travel by foot and then demanding payment for their safe passage. The 1994 Moscow Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia legitimized Kvitsiani's control over Upper Kodori, referring to that small area as a demilitarized zone where "local civil authorities" would provide security. These authorities were the *Monadire*.

Shevardnadze did not try to confront Kvitsiani until 1999, when he sent a delegation from Tbilisi to Upper Kodori. "The upper part of Kodori Gorge is difficult to reach—for eight months out of the year you can only get there by helicopter on clear days," Marten explained. "Kvitsiani's militia greeted the delegation and then beat them up, shoving them back into the helicopter that brought them."

During his reign Kvitsiani led a timber smuggling operation that sent local lumber tax-free to Turkey through Abkhazia. He also had control over Tbilisi's electricity supply, holding hostage the high voltage power line that ran over Upper Kodori from Russia, and plunging Tbilisi into blackouts when he was unhappy with Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze paid Kvitsiani \$50,000 a month in "humanitarian aid" in return for the security of Tbilisi's electricity.

Saakashvili sought to change this situation. Two of his major advisors, Irakli Alasania, chairman of the Tbilisi-based Abkhazia-government-in-exile, and Irakli

Okruashvili, the defense minister, disagreed about which path to take in dealing with the region, however. Alasania wanted to reform the Monadire, while Okruashvili deemed the Monadire useless and wanted to implement armed police action and overthrow Kvitsiani.

In 2006 the Georgian government took militarized police action, sending troops into the mountains to overthrow Kvitsiani. While a few Kvitsiani supporters shot at the Georgians, it is clear that there was an agreement made between the Georgian side and the Monadire to avoid major bloodshed. For example, it took 12-13 hours for the Georgian forces to drive up the mountains to Upper Kodori; the Monadire had clear sight lines, and could have laid mines on the road, but chose not to do so. "The Monadire melted away and the Georgian troops captured 35 wanted criminals." Marten speculates that this was the result of a similar type of deal to the one with Abashidze's clan.

Unlike the Abashidze deal, the agreement with Kvitsiani did not go according to plan. "Everyone I interviewed told me that something in this deal went wrong, but no one knows what it was." Kvitsiani was supposed to have stayed in Tbilisi, but instead he went back to Kodori. There was not supposed to be shooting from Kvitsiani's side, but there was some shooting from a small number of his supporters. After the raid, Kvitsiani managed to escape, and some say the Abkhaz had agreed to jail him but did not. "My understanding is that if the deal had gone properly, Kvitsiani would be in Tbilisi or perhaps imprisoned right now." There is speculation that when the authorities could not get Kvitsiani, they captured his sister Nora and imprisoned her instead. "There were people far guiltier than Nora and this appears to have been a symbolic move, because the authorities couldn't get Kvitsiani," Marten noted.

After Georgia regained control of this small section of Abkhazia, Saakashvili moved the Abkhazia govern-

ment-in-exile from Tbilisi to Kodori Gorge, and pledged to spend \$10 million per year from the state budget on reconstruction, in order to make the area a showcase for the rest of Abkhazia and attract Abkhazians back into Georgia's fold. Reconstruction efforts had actually started in summer 2005, when Kvitsiani was living in Tbilisi, and appear to have been part of the effort to woo Kvitsiani's supporters. These expenditures would likely not have been possible if real democratic debate were allowed in Georgia, since at this time the entire social services budget of Georgia was only \$350 million per year, and the country is burdened by poverty, unemployment, and healthcare and education systems that are in great need of reform. Georgian authorities also deployed U.S.-made weapons in the region.

These gestures, alongside Saakashvili's claim that he was making the new "Upper Abkhazia" a showcase, aggravated relations with Russia and contributed to the tensions leading to the 2008 war. "Saakashvili's biggest mistake was in pulling the tail of the tiger," Marten contended. Upper Kodori was retaken by Russian-supported Abkhaz forces in the war, in a move that was clearly coordinated with actions in South Ossetia. Meanwhile Kvitsiani is rumored to be living freely in Abkhazia.

Marten concluded that "the message to learn from these cases is that warlords themselves are pretty expendable." Their supporters can be easily peeled away by a strong state, and as middlemen they may be useful for protecting realist power interests, but are not worth going to war over. "Russia was not interested in the individuals," Marten said. "What went wrong in Upper Kodori was probably that Saakashvili pushed too hard." What Saakashvili demonstrated, though, is that success in dealing with warlords may be easiest for a state that is not a liberal democracy.

*Reported by Masha Udensiva-Brenner*

## The Foreign Policy of Azerbaijan: Affecting Factors and Priorities

**A**t a forum cosponsored by Columbia University's Harriman Institute, and the Center for Energy, Marine Transportation and Public Policy, Elmar Mammadyarov stressed that the resolution of the Armenian-Azeri conflict was his first, second, and third priority as Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, "You can imagine that when you have almost 20 percent of your territory under occupation, and when you have almost a million of your people internally displaced by refugees from Armenia, it will have a very serious impact on determining foreign policy priorities," Mr. Mammadyarov remarked.

Azerbaijan and Armenia have been in dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region for several centuries. The tensions between them most recently culminated in March 2008, with a breach of the Bishkek Truce, a cease-fire agreement signed in 1994. The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) is not recognized by any country except Armenia. Although it is technically a part of Azerbaijan, the so-called NKR is essentially an extension of Armenian influence. Until recently, Azerbaijan lacked the military strength to reclaim the disputed territory, but with the rapid growth of its economy from oil revenues, the country has raised defense expenditures significantly over the past four years. A stronger military has shifted the balance of power in Azerbaijan's favor, raising tensions in the region. According to Mammadyarov, Azerbaijan's GDP, which has been increasing steadily over recent years, has grown by 4 percent, even in the midst of the international financial crisis.

In response to a question about President Ilham Aliyev's "aggressive comments about solving the conflict through military means," Mammadyarov affirmed: "I absolutely do not believe that it's a frozen conflict. If you look through internet sources, you will see that there have been soldiers and civilians killed."

The moderator, Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich, Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Professor for the Practice of International Diplomacy at Columbia University, made the comment that it was a "general view that President Aliyev has referred more frequently to the possible recourse to a military outcome in the future," and asked if the escalation of military rhetoric was "an intended effort to try to dramatize the issue," or if we were mistaken in seeing it as such. In response, Mammadyarov pointed to a document signed by Azerbaijan's President Aliyev, Armenia's President Sargsyan, and Russia's President Med-

vedev, saying that this declaration clearly demonstrates that the parties are looking for a political solution. He summed up his position as being that Azerbaijan has not "exhausted diplomatic means... but on the other hand, they cannot accept the status quo."

At the mention of President Medvedev's involvement in the peace process, Sestanovich noted that Russia has become one of the most active participants in the negotiations, although peace may not actually be on its agenda: "Over the years there have been times when the parties and other governments wondered whether Russia was really interested in a settlement of this kind," the Ambassador said, "The argument," Sestanovich continued, "was that Russia benefited from perpetuation of a conflict and particularly from a close relationship with Armenia that was the result of that. Do you believe that the Russian view is completely committed to a conflict?" he asked the Minister. Mammadyarov responded that Azerbaijan appreciates President Medvedev's involvement in the peace process, and that the President has even drafted parts of the document himself. "Well that's always a bad sign," Ambassador Sestanovich said, laughing: "I teach this in my diplomacy class, when presidents start drafting, watch out." Mammadyarov did not laugh, asserting that President Medvedev's involvement shows "dedication on the highest level to find a breakthrough in negotiations." Sestanovich nodded in agreement.

One source of skepticism regarding Russia's true interests stems from its conflict with Georgia over the separatist region South Ossetia. In February 2008, many Western countries supported Kosovo in its declaration of independence from Serbia. Russia, which did not have the West's support over South Ossetia, warned that support for Kosovo's independence would lead to unrest in other areas with breakaway regions. A conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan would validate the country's prediction, and if Nagorno-Karabakh is successful in seceding, would set another precedent for South Ossetia's independence.

Mammadyarov indicated that Azerbaijan seeks the normalization of relations with all its neighbors, and that a withdrawal of Armenian troops, along with sending displaced persons home, should be the first step. "We believe, we strongly believe, that taking into consideration the ongoing processes in the world, a higher level of autonomy within Azerbaijan, for Nagorno-Karabakh, where

both the Armenian and Azeri communities can peacefully co-exist, can be the most important factor of stability for the whole region,” he concluded.

The Minister mentioned his current negotiations with the Foreign Minister of Armenia, and said that there have already been at least six meetings between Presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan. There is to be another presidential meeting soon, where the two countries can finalize the “so-called basic principles,” a step-by step approach towards a comprehensive peace agreement.

Mammadyarov declared that a peace agreement is essential—“it will create the most important thing: predictability.” The Minister elaborated on his reference to predictability by stressing Azerbaijan’s strategic geographic location. He described the country as “the connection between East and West, North and South,” affirming Azerbaijan’s crucial role in geopolitics and the stability of the region.

Mammadyarov then took up other foreign policy issues. He focused on Azerbaijan’s ample natural resources and its involvement in various pipeline projects. Noting Sestanovich’s involvement in the negotiations of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the Minister emphasized that the participation of the United States had been key to the project’s success. This pipeline, developed in the 1990s under the Clinton Administration, and completed in 2006, has greatly increased Azerbaijan’s wealth.

A major issue for Azerbaijan has been its potential involvement with the Nabucco pipeline. If built, the Nabucco pipeline will be the longest and largest pipeline to carry gas from the Caspian Sea and the Middle East to Europe, going through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. This is another area where Russia has played a role, and where the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has affected Azerbaijan’s foreign policy decisions. Azerbaijan was geared to provide oil for the Nabucco pipeline. In January, Russian media outlets released news of a hefty arms transfer from Russia to Armenia. This move would help counterbalance Azerbaijan’s strengthening military. Russia denied transfer allegations, but there is speculation that this was a message sent in order to hinder Azerbaijan’s participation in Nabucco. If realized, Nabucco will significantly reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian gas.

Russia has made other moves to block the Nabucco project. In February, President Medvedev signed a document, entitled “Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation up to 2020,” which mentions the importance of the Caspian region for Russia’s energy security. Analysts have interpreted the appearance of this document in the midst of Nabucco negotiations as a warning of Russia’s intent to thwart the project. Azerbaijan was supposed to be one of Nabucco’s major suppliers, but in March, the country signed a “Memorandum of Mutual

Understanding” with Gazprom, committing to ship an unspecified amount of gas to Russia in 2010. Rumor suggests that Azerbaijan will not have enough gas to supply both Russia and Nabucco.

Mammadyarov observed, “Although Azerbaijan is not part of this pipeline, it’s a huge project. We are not standing for politicization of commercial projects, but political aspects are a very strong element.” In light of Mammadyarov’s comment that Azerbaijan would not be participating in Nabucco, an audience member was interested to know how the Minister felt about possibilities of Azerbaijan contributing, given the high demand for Azeri gas from both Russia and Nabucco officials. The Minister responded that from one point of view, Azerbaijan is not a part of Nabucco, “but on the other hand, we are negotiating with representatives of Nabucco, with the European Commission.” There are three issues concerning Nabucco, the Minister said: political, financial, and the matter of volume (where to obtain the gas). “Everything is up in the air,” he said, but mentioned that taking into account Azerbaijan’s offshore field Shah Deniz, they are ready to work with Nabucco, depending on the resolution of certain questions: how to finance, tariffs, and manner of transport. Dealing with gas is trickier, he said, because unlike oil, it is a product that must go directly to consumers, and they must determine a way to do that for such a large pipeline.

An audience member inquired whether Azerbaijan has any strategic preference on aligning with Russia versus the European Union. Mammadyarov responded that Azerbaijan will go with whoever provides the best price.

Sestanovich followed with a question about the possible obstacles to the Nabucco project, and what advice the Minister would give to the U.S. and the E.U. on pushing the project forward. “As usual you are asking very provocative questions,” Mammadyarov responded, “I should be last in line to give advice to the U.S. administration or the European Union,” he said. Ambassador Sestanovich jokingly replied, “If you’re not giving advice to the U.S. administration on your visit here, then you are not doing your job.”

The Minister responded by recounting the experience with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and how if the Nabucco pipeline was handled in the same manner it could be the next “Great Deal of the Century.” Sestanovich intervened, “O.K., I can translate that,” he said, “that means that the United States has to be more actively involved in promoting this, because if you ask me how to read the lesson of the nineties, it was that the American administration got behind the project and at certain points, when some people were less enthusiastic, the United States kept pushing forward.” Minister Mammadyarov responded by saying that the current administration is almost the same energy team as in the nineties, “I think

that if we move correctly and consistently in how we should build up the strategy and architecture to achieve the global delivery of gas to the European market, I cannot exclude that we can't get success."

Mammadyarov also discussed the construction of a railroad connecting Baku, Tbilisi and the Turkish city of Kars, an exciting economic project for Azerbaijan outside of the gas sphere. The Minister called this railroad "the next Silk Road," adding that there were plans to rehabilitate part of the Georgian railroad. "This will be part of an effort to strengthen Azerbaijan's sovereignty," he said. The project might be good for Azerbaijan because of the latest tensions with Turkey over its reconciliation with Armenia.

Sestanovich asked Mammadyarov about his conversations with Turkish officials concerning the reconciliation, which was announced this spring. Turkey, which has its own tensions with Armenia, and has been a supporter of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, closing its borders to Armenia from 1993 to the present day, intends to normalize relations with the country, despite Azerbaijan's apparent anxiety over the matter.

The Ambassador inquired about the Turkish Foreign Minister's recent assurance that Turkey will not disappoint Azerbaijan, and wondered what other kinds of assurances the Azeris have received from Turkey. In response, Mammadyarov stressed Azerbaijan's gratitude towards Turkey for closing its borders in '93. He said that Azerbaijan supports Turkey's reconciliation with Armenia, "We recognize the sovereign right of any country to build up relationships with other countries."

Sestanovich probed further, "As a foreign diplomat I know your job is to say only what you want to say, and my job as the moderator is to see how much I can push you. So let me push you further, have you received assurances from Turkey?" The Minister responded that Turkey has promised not to open borders to Armenia until the country withdraws its troops from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Aside from Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan's energy policy, the matter of human rights was stressed during the forum. Currently two Azeri political bloggers, arrested for an altercation in a Baku restaurant in July, are in prison on charges of hooliganism. The bloggers had become well-known for criticizing the Azeri government and there is speculation that political issues stand behind the charges of disorderly conduct. The Azeri authorities dismiss accusations that the arrest had any political motivations. However, journalists have been banned from attending the trial, which started earlier this September, on grounds of insufficient seating, and the two bloggers have not been permitted to see their families.

A representative of the organization Reporters Without Borders, asked the Minister what he thought about

freedom of press in Azerbaijan, given the context of the bloggers. "If you look at how severely I am criticized by newspapers in Azerbaijan you will see that there is freedom of press. If the court makes a bad decision, you can apply to the other court," Mr. Mammadyarov responded.

A Human Rights Watch representative commented, "The information we have is that activists were attacked unprovoked and then put in detention, this seems harsh," and asked what the Azeri government would do to make sure they got a fair trial. The Minister responded that the assumption of unfair treatment and the accusation that the trial will be unjust is a pre-judgment made by taking the issue out of the larger framework, "You are only picking one particular case from a larger context. You can find these types of cases even in more advanced democracies," he said. When asked a more specific question about the treatment of the bloggers and his plans on responding to foreign criticism, the Minister said, "Honestly speaking; I am not closely following the case."

The Obama administration's announcement last week that it was changing its approach to missile defense against the possible Iranian ballistic missile threat, was one of the final points brought to the table by Ambassador Sestanovich. He asked for the Minister's feelings on the recent decision to switch from long-range missiles to focus more seriously on short- and medium-range missiles, and wondered whether Azerbaijan had been approached by the United States government to participate in such a program, and in what ways, if at all, would the country be prepared to do so.

Mammadyarov responded, "At the end of the story it's very important to find out how the United States is going to build their strategy with regard to anti-missile defense. Yes, we were informed throughout the negotiations by Russia and by the United States in regards to the Qabala Radar Station." The Qabala Radar Station was built by the Soviet Union in Azerbaijan in 1985. In light of Obama's recent missile decision, Russia and the United States have contemplated possible joint use of the radar station. The Minister said that the Azeris knew of the decision even before it was announced, and that Azerbaijan was ready to negotiate in regards to its contribution to nuclear nonproliferation.

Sestanovich asked if Azerbaijan has been approached strictly in regards to Qabala, or if the country was asked to participate in other ways, to which Mammadyarov responded that so far the discussions have been limited to Qabala.

*Reported by Masha Udensiva-Brenner*

## An Overview of U.S.-Russia Relations

“Let me say that it’s nice to be home,” pronounced Mr. Ian C. Kelly, Department Spokesman and former Director of the Office of Russian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, and an alumnus of Columbia University. “For me, the Harriman Institute was kind of a home away from home,” he expressed, recalling how he had written his Ph.D. dissertation in the basement of the library, coming up to the Institute whenever he wanted “a sense of community, and a place to unwind and have stimulating discussions.” Kelly discussed the relationship between Russia and the United States at a Harriman-sponsored lecture on September 29, 2009.

“I would like to break my remarks into three sections,” Kelly began. “Why it is that the Obama administration thinks that Russia matters; in what areas do we have good cooperation with Russia; and on what areas don’t we agree?” Kelly stressed Russia’s position as the largest country in the world, which, “sits on top of three regions vital to our interests: Europe, the Middle East, and Northeast Asia. Areas from which the Obama administration faces some of its biggest challenges,” he remarked.

### Why Russia Matters

According to Kelly, a good relationship with Russia is crucial, because it can help the United States to meet the challenges it faces. Russia has a permanent seat on the Security Council, which makes it a key player in helping to address the problems of both Iran and North Korea. Most importantly the United States needs Russia’s help on issues of non-proliferation. “Obama has made non-proliferation a signature issue for this administration, and he wants to make it the goal of not only the U.S., but also the international community, to have a world without nuclear weapons. This can’t happen without Russia’s cooperation,” Kelly affirmed, noting that together Russia and the U.S. hold 95% of the world’s nuclear weapons. Kelly articulated the Obama administration’s decision to restructure the relationship with Russia through engagement on certain issues. He also commented on the obstacles the two countries will face, “I don’t want to leave you with the impression that there won’t be challenges in the U.S.-Russia relationship—we come at issues very differently. This is because in many ways we have a different world view, different geography, different history, and a different culture, but we have to cooperate,” he urged. “From my time on the Russia desk, I know that Russia feels comfortable with a bilateral structure. It is in our interest to engage them in a sustained way on issues that are

important to us,” Kelly pronounced. He commented that this tactic is a good way to “jump-start relations” after the tension over the Georgia conflict in August 2008.

### Bilateral Presidential Commission

President Obama went to Moscow for three days in July and during this visit the two governments agreed to create a bilateral presidential commission. Presidents Obama and Medvedev will be the chairs of the commission and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (who is Mr. Kelly’s direct boss), and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov, will be the commission’s coordinators. The commission is to start in mid-October of 2009. The agenda will include: nuclear energy, nuclear security, arms control, counter terrorism, drug trafficking, business development, energy and the environment, science and technology, educational and cultural exchange, and “civil society,” Kelly explained that this latter term was “what the two countries have agreed to call matters of human rights.”

### Areas of Good Cooperation

*Afghanistan.* Moving to the second section of his talk—the issues on which Russia and the U.S. have good cooperation, Kelly communicated that “Afghanistan, more than any other issue, is where we really converge.” He indicated that “Russia wants the U.S. and the international community to succeed in Afghanistan,” mentioning Russia’s solid national interest to ensure that Afghanistan does not return to its former status as a safe haven for international terrorists and religious extremists, and its determination to curb narcotics trafficking. Kelly stated that Russia and the U.S. have good programs of cooperation to counter narcotics, with a center in Domodedovo, outside of Moscow, where they have trained Afghan police. “Russians sent trainers to locations in Central Asia,” Kelly noted, “not to Afghanistan though, there is still some sensitivity about Russians in uniform in Afghanistan,” he laughed.

*Russian Airspace.* Besides the announcement of the bilateral commission, “the other big announcement in July was the news that Russia is willing to allow the transit of lethal material through its airspace,” Kelly remarked. “They hadn’t allowed that before. They had allowed other types of material, but not weapons and ammunition,” he stated, adding that the first flight took place last week.

North Korea. “We have real solid consensus with Russia on confronting the North Korea problem,” Kelly affirmed, noting that Russia “shares our commitment to the ultimate goal of a verifiable denuclearization of North Korea.” Russia has cooperated to draft and pass “one of the most robust Security Council resolutions,” noted Kelly, referring to UN resolution 1874, which was adopted by the UN Security Council on June 12th. This resolution was passed in response to underground nuclear testing conducted by North Korea at the end of May. It imposes additional economic and commercial sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and asks UN member states to search North Korean cargo. “It has some real teeth in it in terms of non-proliferation,” Kelly said.

*Bilateral Arms Agreement.* Efforts towards a new bilateral arms agreement represent another area of cooperation. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), ratified by the United States and the former Soviet Union in 1991, is due to expire on December 5th. START I is the largest nuclear reduction treaty in history, stipulating that each country could deploy no more than 6,000 nuclear warheads and 1,600 strategic delivery vehicles. The two countries reached the stipulated goals in 2001. Currently the governments have agreed on the common goal of nuclear weapon reduction far below the numbers in the START I agreement. “It will be a real challenge for us to get a treaty ratified by December 5th,” Kelly said, “but there has been real impetus to do so.”

Kelly praised the Cooperative Threat Reduction program (CTR), noting that this bilateral working group has stayed “under the radar.” Senators Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) initiated the CTR in response to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The collapse left Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus in possession of all Soviet nuclear weapons and this program aims to help the republics dismantle or safely store the weapons in the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Kelly related that the United States has done a lot to help Russia contain its nuclear weapons and to provide a monitoring system. “When I was working on the Russia desk last year, during that really low point in U.S.-Russian relations, a lot of bilateral cooperation stopped, but the Nunn-Lugar agreement went on,” he remarked.

*Missile Defense.* “Probably the most dramatic turnaround has been in missile defense,” Kelly asserted. “It was perhaps the most contentious issue that we faced both in my time at NATO and my time on the Russia desk.” He reported that “no matter how hard we tried to convince the Russians that our plans to put radar stations in Poland weren’t a threat to them, the Russians never bought it.” Kelly speculated that the bilateral nature of the radar stations was one of the main reasons for Russia’s discomfort. “A lot of our NATO allies didn’t like

the bilateral aspect,” he said, noting that the allies would have preferred the stations to be set up in the context of NATO. He also believes that Russia was unhappy with the “permanence” of these missile stations.

Kelly expressed his opinion that Russia “could not have really been afraid of ten interceptors, given the thousands of warheads and delivery vehicles that they had.” He reasoned that the Russian government most likely felt vulnerable to the potential of a future technological breakthrough “that would undermine their strategic nuclear deterrence forces.” To ease Russia’s discomfort, “the President has decided on a more mobile and adaptive system that doesn’t target intercontinental ballistic missiles but confronts a more real problem, the threat of medium-range missiles,” remarked Kelly, explaining that the new system was designed to counter the medium-range missiles recently tested in Iran. Kelly added that the U.S. wanted to cooperate with Russia “even under the Bush administration.” He said that the United States had looked for a way the two countries can link up their systems. Kelly thinks that since “we have dealt with some of these problems of mistrust,” the two countries can strengthen cooperation efforts.

## Areas of Friction

*Georgia.* “As for the areas where we encounter friction,” Kelly continued, “they are for the most part legacy issues from previous administrations.”

To begin with, Kelly voiced the administration’s strong belief that every country should have the freedom to choose its own alliances. “No country has the right to veto security alliances of other countries,” he affirmed. Kelly also stressed American support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, “We will take every opportunity to reiterate that.” An audience member asked Kelly if he would consider the military presence in Georgia an occupation. “Occupation is a loaded term and I think I will avoid it,” said Kelly, adding that there is a process in place geared towards resolving the issue. “We are still very concerned about the potential for more conflict in the southern Caucasus,” he continued, mentioning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. “We have to keep our eye on that ball, but there are a lot of balls we need to keep our eye on,” Kelly laughed. He noted that there was a great deal of diplomatic research behind the Geneva talks this year.

*Human Rights.* Another point of contention between Russia and the U.S. has been Russia’s unfortunate human rights record. “Human rights continue to be an area where we fundamentally disagree, we’re very forthright about it,” Kelly said, noting Obama’s statements in Moscow about the Russian administration’s failure to punish violence against human rights activists and journalists. Kelly voiced the administration’s disapproval at the lack

of freedom in Russian electronic media, which he said is “if not censored, then very much controlled by the government.” He added that the United States will engage Russia on these issues in the context of the new bilateral commission on civil society. “We will offer to help where we can,” he said.

“We also have an area where our interests both converge and diverge,” Kelly said, “and that area is Iran.” Both countries agree that “it would be very destabilizing if Iran were to develop a nuclear weapon, but our points of view diverge on how to approach that,” noted Kelly. Prime Minister Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov have both criticized the economic sanctions approach, advocating instead for engagement. The Bush administration favored isolation. The Obama administration proposes a dual track; it is serious about engagement, but needs to be ready for other approaches if engagement fails.

## Question and Answer

*Strategic Partnership.* Columbia Economics Professor Padma Desai, asked Kelly if the United States was headed towards a strategic partnership with Russia, and whether he thought this partnership would survive if Putin were to become president in 2012. Kelly responded, “The term strategic partnership has a certain meaning in diplomatic parlance, we say that we have one with India, Japan, Australia, the E.U. We’re not quite there with Russia, not to say that we won’t get there. . . . Our relationship with Russia needs some remedial work. We are trying to integrate Russia into the broader community of democracies and anchor them in rules-based organizations.” As for Putin, Kelly indicated that he has done a lot for Russia: “He was a natural successor to Boris Yeltsin, because he recognized that Russia had perceived itself to be very weak and he performed a real service to his country.” Kelly feels that Putin’s choice to appoint Medvedev as his successor is an indication of his awareness that Russia needs a new kind of leader. “Whether or not [Putin] is completely comfortable with going off into the sunset, is a different matter,” Kelly concluded.

*NATO.* Kelly mentioned Russia’s perception that NATO is its antagonist, and stressed that while this was true for NATO pre-1989, “its members now see it as something very different—it is the transatlantic community where we get together to face common challenges.” Kelly contends that he has “taken every opportunity to tell Russia—that it is because of NATO that you have the most secure western borders you’ve ever had in your history,” arguing that countries which were historically Russia’s opponents, and have joined NATO, “have agreed to pool their security in a multilateral context.”

Kelly referred to the removal of the Bronze Soldier monument in Tallinn in April 2007, using the circumstances as an example of NATO’s assistance in conflict

resolution between Russia and another nation. The monument commemorated the Soviet victory in World War II, and its dislodgement caused mass protests in Estonia, intensifying the country’s tensions with Russia. Estonia, a member of NATO, allowed NATO to handle the conflict, “I think that this really diffused the situation,” Kelly said.

*Latin America.* When asked how he felt about Russia’s relationship with Latin America, Kelly answered, “At the time we saw it for what it was, a shot across our bow.” He was referring to Russia’s announcement, in the wake of the Georgia conflict last September, that it would hold joint military ventures with Venezuela, and to President Medvedev’s meeting with Hugo Chavez last November, the first visit of any Russian leader to Venezuela. These moves were seen by the United States as an attempt by Russia to revert to cold-war era tactics. Kelly observed that while there has recently been less military cooperation between Russia and Venezuela, he is concerned that “Venezuela is arming itself in a way that goes far beyond immediate arms needs.” Russia has extended a \$2.2 billion loan to the country in order to purchase tanks and advanced anti-aircraft missiles earlier this month.

*Jackson-Vanik.* When asked about the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, Kelly called it a “dinosaur and an albatross around our necks.” The amendment was signed into law in 1975 in response to the Soviet Union’s refusal to allow people, mostly Jews and other religious minorities, to emigrate to the United States. It forbids most favored nation status to non-market economies with restricted emigration, and still applies to Russia, among other nations, even though many consider emigration to be a dated issue. The amendment has been a point of tension between Russia and the United States, and Kelly voiced hopes to eradicate it. “It might be possible with this congress,” he conveyed, “but we need to wait a little while, we have other priorities with congress right now.”

*Resetting Relations.* Responding to an accusation that the administration has been willing to reset relations with Russia without Russia trying to reset its political system, Kelly alluded to engagement of Russia as “an across-the-board decision by this administration.” Kelly pronounced that the previous administration’s policies of isolation and criticism, “were leading us nowhere, not just with Russia, but with Iran and North Korea as well.” He declared that the United States will continue to speak out against policies they do not agree with, but that it can have more influence by engaging with Russia.

A student and Russian citizen made the comment, “It is not surprising to anyone that the Russian administration uses international questions to deal with internal problems, taking up issues such as missile defense to convince its people that the United States is the enemy, what do you think about this?” Kelly replied that President Obama has been trying to tackle this issue by appealing

directly to the Russian people. “One of the reasons that President Obama spent so much time in Russia,” Kelly commented, “was because he wanted to speak to universities, to appear on Russian television.”

*Kosovo.* Gordon Bardos, Assistant Director of the Harriman Institute, addressed Kelly, as “an old Balkan hand,” commenting on the United States’ decision not to cooperate with Russia about Kosovo. “I think we can agree that this was a foreign policy blunder by the United States. Two-thirds of the international community supported Moscow on this; it seems that strategically it would have been better to work out a deal with Moscow. Why did we do it?” Bardos asked. “This was a tremendously controversial decision,” replied Kelly. “It played into the Russians’ instincts that they weren’t taken seriously.” He recalled being at NATO when the decision was made, “I remember thinking that this was not going to end too well. I was also thinking we couldn’t let it fester,” adding that the best strategy for the time being was to encourage Belgrade “to see its future with the E.U.”

*Conclusion.* Kelly concluded his talk by commending Medvedev’s recent remarks, which recognized Russia’s over-reliance on extractive industries. “Russia needs to put more investment into its own people, into education and training. In order to succeed in the 20th century, you can’t rely solely on natural resources,” stated Kelly.

*Reported by Masha Udensiva-Brenner*