PARADOXES OF DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION TRENDS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

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The world's latest history has unequivocally demonstrated that most states have opted for democracy, at least for the foreseeable future. Indeed, democracy proved to be the most tempting, and the most successful of all the utopias offered to mankind throughout its history. It seems that unlike many other political systems, democracy which relies on the support of the majority will survive. After all, most states across the world have already accepted the idea: the democratic conception, in fact, stems from democratic choice.

Much has been already written about democracy: classical philosophers and thinkers of later ages were attracted to it; political scientists, politicians, journalists, and sociologists of our time display an inordinate interest in democracy and democratization. It is lauded from all sides; political theories, such as transitology, based on the study of the waves and processes of democratization, have added fire to the heated discussions about democracy. In fact, democratization is moving ahead much slower than the discussions about it. This is one of the many paradoxes of democracy.

Paradoxes of Democracy

The Soviet Union's disintegration was accompanied by deliberations about democracy; all the changes across the post-Soviet expanse are likewise peppered with slogans on democratization. The Soviet conception of democratic centralism, a "special type of democracy" of sorts, is being replaced in the CIS countries with "special types" of democracy tailored to the specific needs of each country. This is a sure sign that democracy has no uniform interpretation which completely fits the idea of pluralism as one of the democratic products. In fact, the greater the variety of models of democracy,

the more fruitful is the conception itself: there is no uniform democracy—each and every country has its own idea about it. Which of them should be chosen as the beacon of democracy? This is one of democracy's paradoxes.

The idea of democracy can be described as an axiological process; in the course of time, this unique phenomenon has acquired both high values and base ideas. When going back to the sources of the idea's contradictory nature (this can be said about many other similar key concepts), we cannot help but ask what was meant by "democracy" from the very beginning and how its content changed depending on how related ideas were interpreted and realized. "This word could mean the triumph of a rebellious mob, the domination of the lower classes, or equal involvement of all citizens in the affairs of the polis (that is, in politics), the decisive role of the people's assembly, or the rule of those empowered to rule by the demos through formal procedures.

"Since that time, the concept has developed into an even more complicated idea. Today the word 'democracy' is applied to a certain political principle, a certain type of political regime, a certain political culture, a fairly loose set of ideas, and even a philosophy and a lifestyle."[1]

The highly varied axiological content of democracy as a concept and a phenomenon stems not only from the extremely fluid realities of its sociopolitical, economic, cultural, ethnic and, in the final analysis, civilizational context and perception, but also from its different interpretations rooted in the system of axiological-teleological and ideologically varied political trends/philosophies and the corresponding organizations/institutions. On the one hand, democracy has the "potential of a political myth as an obvious principle."[2] On the other, its interpretations are brought together by civilizational considerations (the causes behind its own development coupled with the possibilities and types of its admissible and inadmissible, effective and ineffective manifestations, their pluses and minuses) and the ideological aspects of democracy.

Opinions about one and the same democracy (that is, about what is described by the term within the framework of one and the same political system with fairly sustainable development and consistent trends) differ. For example, while political scientists agree about American democracy as the originally typical, ideal type of contemporary democracy, they fail to agree about its axiological descriptions. Alexis de Tocqueville, who, after discovering American democracy for himself, offered his discovery to all other generations, represented one of the trends. According to him, the American democratic model was an absolute value with good development prospects.[3] Today, most of works in this sphere deal with the positive-analytical theories and studies of democracy (transitology). A large number of them directly or indirectly describe American democracy as a relatively attainable democratic ideal.

Another group of authors who are developing theories of their own are very negative or at least skeptical about democracy. Normally, they too turn to the American model as the most developed one to hurl criticism at it. Michael Parenti's *Democracy for the Few* is the most typical example. The very title suggests that there is a gap between democracy's original aim as "government by the people" and the fact that today it serves the chosen few. Mr. Parenti is very critical of the presidential power in the United States, its Congress, the Constitution (which he calls "the constitution for the few"), the entire legislative system, the social sector (health and social services, education), the media, etc. He perceives them as vehicles of the private interests of the ruling elite and the oligarchs (often united) concealed under democratic garbs.[4] This approach can be described as fruitful because it warns against worshipping certain political ideas which can be taken up as an argu-

[1] M.V. Il'in, *Slova i smysly. Opyt opisania kliuchevykh politicheskikh poniatiy,* ROSSPEN Publishers, Moscow, 1997, p. 317.

[2] Ibid., p. 319.

[3] See: A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* New York, 1954.

[4] See: M. Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 6th ed., St. Martin's, New York, 1995.

ment in favor of opposite actions. Indeed, many of the antidemocratic decisions were made under the aegis of democracy.

I am convinced that the anti-democratic, aggressive actions and use of force to which democratic states resort is another paradox of democracy. If the old rule, "democracies do not fight against each other," is true, we are tempted to ask, "so they do fight, but not against each other?" Indeed, the legitimate right of a democratic state to wage a war sounds like nonsense: democracy spells civilization, which means the ability to avoid the use of force and to settle all conflicts by peaceful means. Meanwhile, it is democratic states, primarily the United States, which are involved in the major conflicts in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The most democratic state is the most belligerent one—here is another paradox of democracy for you.

Specific Features of Democratization in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

The current age of political changes can be described as a transition from the authoritarian-totalitarian system to a system in which popular masses are involved in the political process and are even more actively included in decision-making. Translated into academic parlance, this is described as "participant administration" or as the "democratic form of political involvement" with the people playing the role of the key political entity. Mankind learned long ago that people cannot directly rule the state (I shall not yet discuss whether people can rule at all), therefore there is only one, widely used form of democracy—representative democracy.

People are represented in power by small groups or individuals "speaking in the name of the people and for the people." In representative democracy, the political elite is expected to be an intermediary of sorts between the political mechanism and the people, rather than an independent political entity. Those elected by the people are expected to use this mechanism in the interests of the people (it turns out that the most common and the most important interests seen as an integral system can be protected and realized only with the help of a political mechanism). This means, among other things, that the people should elect the most skilful of the "mechanics" able not only to operate the mechanism, but also maintain it in working order, preserve it, and ensure its stable functioning. This is what the political leaders and all those involved in the political process are expected to do.

From this it follows that people have to elect individuals to rule the country—otherwise they would be unable to contribute to the country's administration. This creates the problem of social control over those whom society entrusted to represent itself.

At first glance, in democratic societies the problem of control looks rather straightforward and easily realized. This is a delusion. For example, if a deputy failed to justify the expectations of his constituency, he stands no chance of being re-elected. The logic of practical marketing suggests that a rational voter mistaken once will not repeat the same mistake: once disappointed, nobody will buy the same shoddy product again.

The theory of political marketing patterned on the theory of economic marketing says that the voter (like the shopper) is not inclined to "buy" a shoddy politician: he will not vote for him for the simple reason that he will be forced to tolerate him throughout the deputy's term in office. The rational voter, like the rational shopper, prefers to pay the minimum price to receive the maximum profit. Each voter has his/her reasons for voting for a particular candidate: each expects to gain something (in

the material, legal, moral, or even aesthetical sphere) for his/her choice. Not infrequently men and especially women base their choice on the candidates' good looks to then enjoy them on their TV screens. This is what normally happens, this is the normal logic and psychology of the voters; this is what I have deduced from the theory of political marketing.

The experience of our "freshly baked" CIS democracies has revealed a paradox: our voters refuse to behave like rational shoppers: they go on electing people they do not trust to parliaments for several consecutive terms. This also fully applies to presidential elections. For this reason, those who have already discredited themselves as deputies or who did nothing to win the confidence and respect of their constituencies are re-elected to the representative bodies of power again and again. After a while the nation grows accustomed to the same faces on their TV screens even though they have discredited themselves to the extent that they should be banned from power forever (this can be called "the Chubais phenomenon"). This breeds apathy among the electorate: it looks as if the nation's political choice, on the one hand, and power and administration, on the other, are two different and unrelated phenomena.

The experience of post-Soviet democratization has demonstrated that if all formally necessary mechanisms for setting up democratic bodies of power are present in the newly democratized societies, their political elite is capable of self-reproduction to the same extent as in monarchies or totalitarian regimes. The electorate at best is invited to watch how the ruling party reproduces itself by "playing democracy." It sets up an obedient opposition; it readjusts its ideology ostensibly to meet the nation's interests while changing nothing in its political course, etc. This is done under the aegis of democracy.

Today "democracy" has become the catchword of political rhetoric; such concepts as terrorism, fascism, peace, globalization, integration, etc. trail behind as far as their usage (abusage) is concerned. Democracy is the weightiest of arguments regularly evoked to support any policy, even the least democratic. This is especially true of the West where political scientists and politicians alike regularly remind the public about totalitarianism and its inadmissible practices. Americans, for example, are still using totalitarianism (its Soviet variant) as a bogy. This works in the following way: totalitarianism is presented as the only alternative to democracy. This has nothing to do with world-wide political reality where there is any number of fairly smoothly functioning intermediate or alternative political systems. According to the commonly accepted opinion, the only choice is between totalitarianism (which is inadmissible) and democracy (as the inevitable option). Meanwhile, the experience of most post-Soviet states has demonstrated that rejection of totalitarianism does not mean an immediate transfer to democracy: democracy is not the absence of totalitarianism.

There is another paradox of democracy: the most democratic of voting procedures may propel the most undemocratic people into power. To be more exact, the undemocratic elite reproduces itself through the most democratic methods—created and applied in democratic states—for forming bodies of power. In the post-Soviet states, the voting procedure—universal, equal, and fair voting—has assumed even more democratic and transparent forms, ranging from transparent ballot boxes to marking those who cast their votes (to avoid repeat voting). In other words, straightforward and transparent democratic policies are replaced with primitive forms of political involvement at all levels, from top to bottom. These democratic forms (formalities) notwithstanding, democratic procedures regularly bring to power the people we would prefer not to see there (or anywhere else).

In these cases, the "raw materials" from which the local elites are made are more important than the procedures. Indeed, the end product of the cooking process depends more on the quality of the initial products than on the quality of the implements used. In this context, the phenomenon of the so-called velvet revolutions looks rather contradictory. There is the opinion that they do not fit democracy and the democratic procedures of power-forming. For example, A. Tastenov and A. Ustimenko of Kazakhstan have the following to say: "The velvet revolutions discredit democracy, since rejecting

one of its cornerstones—the election process, which usually generates a coup—is gaining momentum and spreading to wider areas."[5]

The active involvement of the ordinary people in rallies as part of the scripts of the "velvet revolutions" (such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine) may testify that electoral procedures had nothing to do with democracy and did not meet the society's need for democratic leaders and reforms. Those who went to the polls in the hope of changing something took part in a fictitious process, therefore it is correct to say: public manifestations by those who wanted to replace the people at the top were objectively needed. They replaced the discredited election system and can be described, therefore, as a form of people's democratic involvement. Experts and many of the participants, however, are convinced that their democratic message was discredited: it failed to improve their social and economic situation and merely replaced the old elite with a new one.

There is another typical feature, and a paradox, of post-Soviet democratization: after fourteen years of independence, many of the CIS countries are still ruled by members of the Soviet nomenklatura. It is stranger still that in many cases they enjoy wider popular support than the newfangled liberals (the politically ignorant sections of the public take the word "liberal" as a synonym of "bourgeois," "radical," etc.).

Viewed in the context of the CIS political culture, which is the direct outcome of the uniform Soviet political culture with ethnic overtones, this phenomenon looks absolutely logical. More likely than not, people tend to apply their own yardsticks to politicians suggested by their own everyday lives rather than political reality. This borders on political ignorance.

In Central Asia, in particular, the former Soviet apparatchiks' firm grip on power can be explained by the national tradition of venerating the older generation: the degree of respect paid to such people increases with age. The newly baked democrats cannot compete with the political heavyweights of Soviet stock, such as Nursultan Nazarbaev and Islam Karimov. The same applies to their children: the older ones (like Dariga Nazarbaeva) are more respected than their younger siblings; just as in the distant past, power can be inherited, with the older children having advantages over the younger.

Some republics, however, have freed themselves from the older leaders inherited from Soviet times to the hooting of crowds and scathing criticism. This is part of the Soviet political heritage: in the Soviet Union nearly every leader had to build up his authority by disgracing his predecessor (Stalin gradually removed Lenin from power; Khrushchev trampled on Stalin's personality cult; Brezhnev plotted to topple Khrushchev; Gorbachev was prone to criticizing all his predecessors, while Yeltsin never hesitated to criticize and humiliate Gorbachev.) The recent developments in Georgia (where Eduard Shevardnadze was removed from power), Ukraine (where the same happened to Leonid Kuchma), and Kyrgyzstan (where Askar Akaev lost his post) have amply demonstrated that the members of the former Soviet elite were removed according to the Soviet scenario (a coup organized by a small group of elite members) tinged in "democratic" hues by active involvement of the broad masses and political technologists. This shows that the politicians inherited from Soviet times are ill-suited to the new context of democratization, while the above-mentioned politicians lost their posts because of their impotence rather than their advanced age or Soviet past. Indeed, several years ago the Georgians were lauding President Shevardnadze as a politician and diplomat of European and world stature; and in Kyrgyzstan, President Akaev was respected as a member of the Soviet academic elite. This proved to be of little importance when it came to adjusting to the new conditions and rivalry over the presidency.

[5] A. Tastenov, A. Ustimenko, "Kontseptual'nye osnovy fenomena 'barkhatnykh revoliutsiy' na postsovetskom prostranstve," *Analytic,* No. 2, 2005, pp. 20-24.

The pragmatism of democratic and democratizing societies (the post-Soviet societies which have just begun mastering Western political values) is gradually replacing the traditional values (respect for elders, family and clan ties, etc.) with such functional qualities as the ability to cope successfully with all sorts of problems. This should not be taken to mean that politicians of Soviet stock stand no chance (Nazarbaev is the best example of this), yet young and mobile politicians of the Saakashvili type have a much better chance of succeeding.

There is a lot of talk today about the "models of democracy" adjusted to individual CIS countries. This rhetoric is closely connected with the political regimes in some of these countries. I have in mind the authoritarian democracies like Putin's regime in Russia and Nazarbaev's regime in Kazakhstan. The authoritarian leaders carry out democratic reforms; they sparingly portion out rights and freedom; while gradually delegating powers, they remain in control and keep the opposition on its tenterhooks; they let the people appreciate freedom, yet they are never too lavish with it. This is the main meaning and the main advantage of moving away from totalitarianism toward democracy via authoritarianism. Moderate and reasonable authoritarianism is a link between two extremes—totalitarianism and democracy—two antinomies that need a charismatic leader's personal power to be paired.

At the same time, authoritarianism makes the country mainly dependent on the leader's personal domestic policies, which may be both positive and negative. There is the opinion in Russia and Kazakhstan that these countries are lucky to have these outstanding leaders, powerful personalities, and masterful politicians as presidents, who know when to apply power, how to carry out reforms, who to punish and encourage, and how to rule "with stick and carrot." Some people in these countries, however, are apprehensive of their presidents' authoritarianism. (The authoritarian nature of the president's rule in Turkmenistan is a different matter: this is an example of totalitarian authoritarianism vested in elements of democracy and embellished with the illusion of civic support, promotion of national values, the president's openness, etc. This authoritarianism is not only far removed from democracy, but also from the authoritarian regimes in Russia and Kazakhstan, which in a way are moving toward democracy.)

Authoritarianism equally tends toward totalitarianism (retreat from democratization) and toward democracy, therefore much depends on the authoritarian leader's personality. This is the main problem of this political regime. I have already written about the drift toward usurping power for themselves and their family (clan) which Shevardnadze and Akaev demonstrated and which was cut short with the use of force even though this coup was called a bloodless "velvet revolution." Today everybody knows that authoritarian leaders and their families expect to profit more than others from authoritarianism. The ordinary people have finally grasped this (for example, President George W. Bush, who owns oil fields and is lobbying the interests of business partners in the name of his country's official policies); they also know that by way of compensation their security must be guaranteed lest a slide back to totalitarianism cause mass discontent and civil disobedience. Reforms, rights and freedoms, higher living standards, and ideological mechanisms should be used to preserve the nation's loyalty. This is what Putin and Nazarbaev are doing: they are knocking together civil support of their authoritarianism, thus probably rescuing the democratization processes in their countries from hasty, ill-judged, and spontaneous actions and slogans similar to Gorbachev's glasnost, which turned into chaos, or Yeltsin's privatization, which produced "robber barons." Today, the two leaders have to ward off the danger of a coup disguised as another "velvet revolution." Authoritarian power should remain within the limits of authoritativeness—this is the most reliable method for moving smoothly toward democratization, at least in some of the CIS countries.

I would like to go back to the problem of the national political cultures and democratization processes in the CIS; I would like, in particular, to investigate the family phenomenon in the cultures of the CIS members in the context of their efforts to create models of democracy of their own.

Along with national security, the family has been and remains the main value among the Central Asian and Caucasian nations which lived, and are still living, in the harsh steppe and mountain environments of Asia and the Caucasus. The clans kept together by family ties tended to live together to be sure of mutual support and assistance.

Seventy years of Soviet power naturally affected the family cult of these peoples (I shall leave outside the scope of this article the family cult among the Slavic nations of the Soviet Union and the CIS, and of Russia in particular, which is a blend of Eurasian traditions with numerous specifics of its own). The Soviet family cult as a "cell of society" strengthened the family cult in the cultures of Central Asia and the Caucasus, which treated the family as a more important and a more reliable guarantor of security than the state. The downfall of the Soviet Union, which deprived people of their civil identity and security guarantees, strengthened the cult of the family still further. In other words, weak states have strong clan systems and vice versa. This is deeply rooted in history and culture. In the absence of adequate state protection and in the context of a centuries-old social order, the mafia or a clan plays the role of family.

The time has come to go back to the roots of the loyalty CIS citizens are demonstrating toward the involvement of the families of their leaders, presidents in particular, in the political life of their countries. This relates mostly to the Central Asian and South Caucasian republics, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, which lost patience with Akaev's family business; Armenia, where President Kocharian's family is keeping a low profile; and Georgia, where the post-revolutionary leaders, by demonstrating their affiliation with the Western political culture of individualism, obviously want to dissociate themselves from Shevardnadze and the abuses of his family. Even in post-Orange Revolution Ukraine, the family cult rose from its ashes in the form of media reports about the financial excesses of President Iushchenko's son. This means that the president's offspring, who has absolutely no role to play on the political stage, is regarded as a public figure, who is reproducing the anti-culture of political clans and hereditary power.

Why do people in most CIS countries tolerate the rule of the president's family? Why do people accept as normal that the extended family of any bureaucrat is entitled to privileges, money, and security, in other words, to a well-padded existence? Because any member of the public would have behaved similarly in his place. People get the leaders they deserve—here is another paradox of democracy.

The cult of the family and the specifics of national culture in the CIS and other nations suggest that the politician unable to procure privileges for his own family will fail his voters as well, therefore he is a bad politician not worth the public's votes. In the United States, victory in any elections depends on social, political, and financial support; all three types of support are generated as the idea of family, corporation, and party.

If democracy means freedom of choice, including the right of the people to elect the leaders they trust, then democracy has already won across the former Soviet Union. Even if they vote for an aggressor, a demagogue, or a Mafioso, this is still democracy if the electorate is aware of what it is doing. The president who looks after his family, his wife, children, grandchildren, and other relatives by showering privileges and power on them is the most adequate leader—at least within the family cult context—because he is being guided by the same principles as his compatriots. The ethical side of this is irrelevant—the main question is: Why does this happen at all?

Democracy as a system that allows people to realize their aspirations through elections has given rise to another fairly urgent problem: bribery of voters. This is typical of all the CIS republics, it is practiced in towns and villages and betrays itself during the last month of parliamentary or local election campaigns. In cities and towns, candidates buy votes for money, in the villages they go around distributing food parcels. Bribes are one of the factors affecting the nation's electoral behavior. This does not contradict the very spirit of democracy, since people are not expected to justify their choice, whereas this would make elections more democratic.

There is another aspect of the political process. I have in mind its media coverage and the way the CIS political elite uses the media to promote its decisions and actions in light of the democratic changes, while many of the newly-baked democrats look at these changes as a burden rather than their political doctrine.

Everyone knows that the democratic media are biased; they have become a mechanism for reproducing the "democratic elites," as well as an instrument these elites use to protect themselves against fluid public sentiments; the democratic elites are too smart to set themselves against the people. They have already replaced themselves with their TV and radio images, press reports, and Internet sites. Politicians use the media as a shield and remote control to channel politics without having personal contact with it.

The public nature of politics in representative democracies is a mechanism of public control and the nation's political involvement: all important decisions should be approved by the public before the politicians turn them into laws. The public and open nature of the contemporary political processes means that the nation is directly involved in decision-making.

This mechanism of public control and involvement in decision-making at the grass-root level is part of political culture. The people expect new decisions, while the politicians are prepared to explain them to the nation. S. Zapasnik has the following to say on this score: "Today, much less attention is paid to the correlation between political programs and the seemingly related ideological goals, yet the decision-making mechanisms are much more obvious. American voters, for example, kept Ronald Regan in the White House for two terms, even though his programs were internally contradictory… Today political careers are unrelated to the politician's ability to fulfill his election programs. They depend on the methods used to feed information to the public, on the politician's ability to win debates convincingly and to win the voters over to his cause… In a democratic society where the nation expresses its will through voting, the politicians marred by justified suspicions of concealing information about alternative programs or about their aims and possible difficulties stand less chance of being elected. Those who are known to use persuasion and brainwashing techniques, which the voters dismiss as 'manipulative,' have no chance of being re-elected."[6]

Today, the electorate responds to the form and presentation manner, rather than to the content of any political message. In so-called traditional democracies, the desired effect is achieved with the help of the latest media technologies, skilled speechwriting, and painstaking image-making. In budding democracies, personal contact between the politician and the crowd produces a similar effect.

It is hard to distinguish between manipulation and the politician's straightforward efforts to explain to the nation the meaning of another draft law, initiative, or decision. Indeed, public politics requires public control, which makes the politicians accountable to the nation. The experience of centuries-old pre-democratic regimes says that no politician will address the nation if he can avoid it. From this it follows that the public nature of politics and the public justification of political actions can be described as an effort by the political elite to adjust itself to its contemporary social environment.

Talking of adjustment (this is the term to be applied to most politicians in the CIS countries), it should be said that the elites will try to create conditions which are as conducive as possible to their political survival in the new system. More likely than not, they will try to alleviate the pressure of public control by manipulating mass consciousness.

If we accept the description of social manipulation as a "set of methods of ideological and socio-psychological impact applied with the aim of changing the conduct and thinking of people contrary to their interests,"[7] then we should conclude that the need to adapt the old political elite to the new po-

[6] S. Zapasnik, "Lozh v politike," *Filosofskie nauki,* No. 8, 1991, p. 95.
[7] N.E. Iatsenko, *Tolkoviy slovar obshchestvovedcheskikh terminov,* Lan Publishers, St. Petersburg, 1999.

litical environment, which includes the requirement to publicly justify all political decisions, has become part of sociopolitical manipulation.

Gorbachev's glasnost (I say Gorbachev's because it was he who launched the period of uncontrolled glasnost), which raised the banner of rights and freedoms, freedom of speech in particular, was used to protect the ruling elite. Indeed, it is much better to know what the people think in order to defend oneself (not to address long overdue problems). The politicians of the era of democracy are guided by the principle well-known to doctors: the silent patient is much worse than the complaining one. Likewise the political elite finds it easier to orientate itself in an outspoken rather than silent society, in which bottled-up discontent may damage the political class (up to injuring the politicians) or even topple the regime.

Putin's inauguration ceremony as the president of Russia, which is a democratic procedure affirming the election results, turned into his enthronization. In the context of Eurasian political culture and psychology burdened with Great Power components inherited from the past, the procedure acquired authoritarian hues and looked more like a coronation than an inauguration. Its TV coverage was obviously not Putin's personal initiative: everything was done as it should have been done. The ceremony was aimed at the Russian (post-Soviet) man in the street who admired Putin's inauguration and his power. The monarch responsible for everything is the Eurasian ideal of a leader still alive in people's hearts. In the Armenian countryside, old people still call the president a czar; this is not deliberate—they are merely convinced that the president is omnipotent.

It should be said that the independent media in democratic and democratized countries are doing a lot to help politicians survive: it is through them that the elite can control public sentiments. Those ruling CIS elites which ban independent media in their countries or interfere with their functioning are short-sighted. They have failed to grasp the media's full functional value as outlets of public discontent acting in favor of the elites themselves. By bottling up these sources, the authorities may remain ignorant of a "velvet revolution" ripening in their country.

On the other hand, the experience of post-Soviet societies has demonstrated that deliberations about democracy and the freedom of speech (glasnost) do not mean that people who are free to criticize or to complain are well protected. While in Soviet times people were not free to say what they thought and could not, therefore, influence the ruling elite, today, when saying what they think and what they do not think (many people speak without thinking), they cannot influence the elite. The ruling classes at best are guided by public opinion polls to manipulate the nation in order to ensure their greater survival.

At the same time, political leaders can exploit the public nature of contemporary policies and decision-making to shift part of their personal responsibility for the decisions they make onto their electorate. In other words, while the monarch is completely responsible (or completely free of such responsibility) for his decisions, the democratic leader is responsible for his actions as a person chosen by people. His errors can be referred to his electorate. After acquiring popular support in decision-making or when carrying out reforms, the leader makes the nation responsible for the decision and reforms. By the same token, if the program fails, he can easily channel popular indignation away from himself. The nation in general is an abstract category used by populists, therefore culprits are nearly never found. This is another paradox of democracy normally passed over in silence. It is the democratic leaders, rather than the popular masses, who profit from this shared responsibility.

I have demonstrated that the post-Soviet CIS leaders are doing their best to adjust to the need to carry out democratic reforms and adapt them to themselves. This is a normal procedure and another paradox of democracy.