

# Democratization and corruption

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



Democratization is the transition to a more democratic political system. It may be the transition from an authoritarian regime to a full democracy, a transition from an authoritarian political system to a semi-democracy or transition from a semi-authoritarian political system to a democratic political system. Democratization in a specific country can be influenced by many various factors. Russia for example has been going through the process of democratization since the early 1990's. They have been trying to transform itself from its old communist ideologies and move towards a true democracy. Russia has run into many significant social, and political problems with the major setbacks being the inability to develop a strong civil society and the widespread of corruption. The Country of Russia has tried for many years to transform its current government and country into a true democracy but have come up short each time. Looking at the Russian Political system from the outside it appears to be a Democratic style of government with the framework of a federal semi presidential republic. The country has a constitution stating that there is a president, which is the head of the state, and a multi party system with executive power exercised by the government, headed by the prime minister, who is appointed by the President. The country has a legislative branch just like many other democracies have. For years Russia's nation was at the top. It was established in 1917 and it was the first communist state. The Soviet Union served as a great example to for communists everywhere of how freedom and equality could be transformed if the working class could truly gain power. This provoked strong responses among its opponents, who saw it as a very violent and power hungry style of government. The communist

movement grew from the 1930's onward, which intensified the tension between communist believers and the people who didn't believe in it. This eventually led to a cold war between the United States which included the potential use of nuclear weapons. Oneil explains how in the 1980's The Soviet Union had a new generation of leaders, which eventually led to the end of the Soviet Union and the creation of "Russia" itself. In 1991 Boris Yeltsin seized the opportunity to ban the communist party, so in December of 1991 he dismantled the old Soviet union and became president of a new independent Russia. He held this position until 1999, when he named his prime minister Vladimir Putin, acting president. Putin stayed president until he stepped down in 2008 and he was replaced by Dimitri Medvedev. Putin has recently regained his position with the recent election. Steven Fish author of Democracy derailed in Russia explains Russia's current state when he says, A decade and a half after the collapse of the Soviet system, Russian Democracy lives in tatters. After the spectacular political breakthrough of the late 1980's and early 90's democratization slowly ground to a halt. As the 90's wore on and the new century dawned many of the gains of the late Soviet and early post Soviet periods were in jeopardy. By the time of Vladimir Putins reelection as president of Russia in 2004, Russia's experiment with open Politics was over. Fish explains that Russian citizens live in a more "open polity" than they did during the Soviet Union era. They also live in a freer political existence than do the citizens of some other lands of the former Soviet union. Fish quotes, "Russia did undergo substantial democratization but unlike many of its other post communist neighbors, Russia significantly failed to advance to democracy. Patrick Oneil author of

Cases in Comparative Politics agrees with Steven Fish's view on Russia. He quotes " Any sense that Russia could be considered a democracy has in the past few years come to an end. Certainly, the country enjoys a much higher degree of freedom than did its Soviet predecessor. But while a number of democratic structures have been built since 1991, they remain weakly institutionalized and increasingly restricted or ignored by the president. " (Oneil 256) He also explains that it's hard to even call Russia an " Illiberal" democracy because it has very few elements of democracy that in fact function to any meaningful degree. In Russia now, it is hard to hard to point to any institutions among state or society that are actually allowed to contribute to democratic activity in any meaningful way. A civil society is an organization outside of government that comes together on common interests and promotes progression toward common goals for their own good. Civil societies help contribute to promoting a democratic government in becoming effective and give it stability. A civil society helps with voluntary collectiveness, and it also can keep people together during tough times. This is key to keeping a country together because during rough times it is very common for countries with weak civil societies to be very crazy and chaotic. A civil society can teach citizens the norms and values associated with liberal democracy such as tolerance and compromise. Micheal Mcfaul author of problems and Prospects for civil society in Russia quotes; it is hard today to speak of a common and well formed civil society in Russia. Civil society exists, but it is fragmentary and divided across both horizontal and vertical sections of the population. The participants agreed that Russian civil society as it exists today is basically a collection of different groups with different

interests, different motives for participation, and varying organizational forms. It is hard for Civil societies to succeed in Russia because there government is heavily opposed to them. President Vladimir Putin has criticized civil society organizations because he claimed they were not defending the real interests of Russia's people. Russia has many state policies that appear to be designed to hinder the work of NGO and civil societies. Russia doesn't like the fact that its people can have interest groups that could potentially go against its government's actions or policies.

Corruption is viewed as one of the most severe setbacks in the process of democratization. Recent research shows that the higher rate of corruption in a country is a direct effect on how democratic a nation is. Russia is considered to be one of the most corrupt nations on the planet. According to a poll in 2010 15 percent of Russians reported to have paid a bribe in the past 12 months. On 26 September 2007, Transparency International published their World corruption perception index. Russia was 143 out of 180, with the rating of 2.3. According to the head of Russian division of TI, Elena Panfilova, there is a "stabilization of corruption" tendency in Russia, where its ratings don't change (from 2.4 in 2005 or 126 out of 158, to 2.5 in 2006 or 121 out of 163). Kirill Kabanov, President of the National Anti-corruption committee of Russia, believes that there is no real fight against corruption in Russia: arrests of middle level civil servants do nothing to curb corruption, and there is no real anti-corruption policy. Roaf explains Russia's corruption when he quotes, "The prevalence of corruption in Russia is often blamed on behavioral norms inherited from the Soviet period. It is easy to find reasons why this might be so: as far as we can tell corruption was

Widespread — certainly the broad reach of the state provided myriad opportunities and cynical attitudes to the government and the law were fostered by inconsistencies and arbitrariness in the law, and the failure of the government to abide by legal norms itself. " ( Roaf 1) In Russia, the levels of corruption are higher than ever, a problem that pervades all levels of administration, from lowly traffic police officers to the country's top leaders. Property rights are not guaranteed and can easily be violated via the corrupt police, courts and other government agencies. As a result, free markets cannot function and the best competitor is not the most efficient but the one with the best connections. Most Russians have grown so accustomed to a certain lawless way of life that they have come to view corruption as " Russia's own special way. " The citizens are unsure how their country's economy, government or social atmosphere would function without it. Today all areas of the Russian government are corrupted. Areas that are mostly subject to corruption are, judicial bodies, medical organizations, and law enforcement. " To invest in a Russian company, a foreigner must bribe every agency involved in foreign investment, including the foreign investment office, the relevant industrial ministry, the finance ministry, the executive branch of the local government, the legislative branch, the central bank, the state property bureau, and so on. The obvious result is that foreigners do not invest in Russia" (Schleifer and Vishny, 1993: 615) James Roaf author of Corruption in Russia goes on to explain other effects of corruption on Russia when he quotes, Corruption may reduce investment by adding to its cost and by acting as a tax on its returns, and by adding to uncertainty. High levels of corruption are likely to have been an especially important factor behind

Russia's extremely low level of foreign direct investment, for several reasons. " (Roaf 5) The worst form of corruption in Russia preventing the country from democratizing is seen in their elections. The Election process in Russia is by no means fair and legitimate and it is destroying one of the main assets to a democratic society. One of the main key aspects to a country successfully transforming into a democracy is that there are free and fair elections present. In a free and fair election there is at least two candidates with each candidate having an equal and fair shot at winning the election. Since Vladimir Putin became Russia's president there has been much criticism of how Russia runs its elections and whether or not they are actually legitimate and give each candidate a fair chance. European institutions that observed the 2007 legislative elections concluded that these were not fair elections. Goran Lenmarker, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said that the elections failed to meet many of the commitments and standards that we have and said it was a very unfair election. Luc Van den Brande who headed a delegation from the council of Europe, referred to the "overwhelming influence of the president's office and the president on the campaign" and said there was "abuse of administrative resources" designed to influence the outcome. He also said there were "flaws in the secrecy of the vote." "Effectively, we can't say these were fair elections." In February of 2008 The human rights organization Amnesty International said that the presidential election in March would not be a fair election and concluded that there was no real opposition ahead of the election. Friederike Behr Amnesty's Russia researcher, was quoted as saying. In a report on the

elections, Amnesty said laws restricting non-government organizations; police breaking up demonstrations, and harassment from critics were all part of a systematic destruction of civil liberties in Russia. Another human rights organization, Freedom House, said that the victory of Putin's party in the 2007 elections " was achieved under patently unfair and non-competitive conditions calling into doubt the result's legitimacy. Russian elections are also unfair because the favorite party is always given some sort of political advantage. The government doesn't let all parties run in the election. They have the ability to eliminate any candidate they want for ridiculous reasons. Radio stations and television stations also don't give equal broadcast time to each candidate. Some candidates in parties get little to no time on the air to help broadcast their message. This directly goes against the democratic way of free media and speech. Through out the past forty years Russia has failed to fully go through the process of democratization. As of now Russia is has democratic shell but realistically they are fading towards an authoritarian regime. Democratization is delayed due to the countries previous and current history with attempting to establish strong civil societies. These weakly developed civil societies are not allowing the people to come together and pursuer democratization. Russia's plague with corruption is another vital factor as to why democratization has failed. Until the corruption in the elections, laws, and economy are fixed democratization will be merely