

Letter From the Editors: Nov. 7-13, 2016

The Shock Felt Round the World: The Trump Victory and Its Reverberations.

America is definitely the main focus of this week's news from Russia. In our first feature, Russian commentators give their takes on how [Donald Trump achieved his surprising presidential win](#) and what it means for US democracy. Andrei Movchan argues that the sector that won Trump the election was neither the rich nor the poor, but the middle class, led by the small and medium-sized business sector. One observation shared by all of the commentators: The upset of Hillary Clinton, who represents a political dynasty, proved that democracy really does exist in America (although all of the writers acknowledge that Trump's victory was narrow and that the Electoral College in a few swing states put him over the top).

Dmitry Oreshkin writes in *Novaya gazeta* that Trump's win is part of a "global backlash" exemplified by [Brexit](#), European nationalism and the continuing popularity of Putin in Russia. However, making an implicit contrast with the latter, he concludes: "America has one distinct advantage – it isn't afraid of making mistakes, since it always has a way of rectifying them through fair elections."

Speaking of Russia, how is Trump's victory likely to affect it? Belying the sanguine tone of the analysts above, [Mikhail Fishman](#) writes: "The US political system has failed at its core. The bulwark of liberal democracy is sinking." He acknowledges that this turn of events is good for Putin (who might "start seeing himself as the first among equals on the global scene"), but laments that it's bad for Russia: "The hope for change in Russia has just been buried in the voting booths of Florida, Michigan and North Carolina." Oleg Kashin riffs sarcastically on much the same theme, pointing out similarities between the conservative heartlands of America and Russia (he even uses the term "red-necks" to describe both!). The lesson he draws from Trump's victory over the liberal Clinton is that the "creative class" – the progressive intellectuals who are numerically in the minority, in both countries – must find a way to connect with the "redneck" majority. He ends on a hopeful note: "The Americans***will likely solve [this problem], and we will look to them and solve it here, too."

Coincidentally (or not?), Russia's most notorious former political prisoner, [Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#), has just published a mission statement for his Open Russia organization that does not take any overt cues from America. In fact, the plan strictly depends on Russia's domestic trajectory: Specifically, it assumes that the Putin regime will inevitably fall (sooner or later) and that Putin's successor (no matter who) will fail to move the country forward. This impasse will set the stage for reforms, focused entirely on the domestic scene: a stronger parliament, independent courts and a demonopolized economy, to name a few.

As for the international scene, Col. Gen. Leonid Ivashov, head of the Russian Academy of Geopolitical Problems, makes his own predictions in a *Rossiiskaya gazeta* interview: "The world today is standing on the threshold of [changing from a unipolar to a multipolar world](#) order.*** And this clash between the two geopolitical projects is also evident in US society, which clearly manifested itself during the presidential election campaign." In other words, Trump's victory means the US will step back from global military dominance (a stance that Ivashov sees as represented by the Hillary Clinton establishment).

However, says military analyst Aleksandr Kanshin in an interview with *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, Trump's victory will not prompt an "immediate U-turn" in US military policy. [Will Trump disband NATO](#), given his strident criticism of the alliance during his campaign? Hard to say, Kanshin responds. "One can only hope that Russian-US relations would finally improve, including when it comes to global security issues." Paradoxically, from a Russian standpoint, America's electoral shakeup could make the world more stable. Stranger things have happened.

Laurence Bogoslaw,
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