

Abstracts

Karin Hilmer Pedersen and Mette Skak
Russia Towards the Third Millennium

Should pessimism or optimism guide overall assessments of Russia's future in scholarly research? This question sparks off a discussion of the prospects for Russia's political and economic development since 1990. Although the transition towards democracy and market economy was fairly bloodless, it had an unfavorable twist from day one. The transfer of power from Yeltsin to Putin is good news in terms of efficiency, but less obviously so in terms of democracy. Byzantism, corruption, crippled economic reforms, poverty, and brutality in foreign and security policy are all pertinent catchwords for contemporary Russia. Nevertheless, the change of political system and its potentials should not be underestimated.

Karin Hilmer Pedersen
Russia and the Rule of Law

The judicial and legal-sociological dimension is overlooked in research on the transition from Communist one-party rule and planned economy to democracy and market economy. The analysis of this dimension covers changes in the formal legal system as well as in the informal legal culture. For Russia the challenge is to establish a well-functioning rule of law and democratic legal culture and thus to break with Russian and notably Soviet arbitrariness ("legislative nihilism"). To assess the chances of success, the correspondence of the legal culture with the legal system is analyzed. In conclusion, the first decade of democratic government has created a "vicious circle" in which a criminalization of public opinion effectively obstructs Putin's policy declamation on the dictatorship of law.

Märta-Lisa Magnusson
Constitutional (Dis)order. Cooperation and Contradictions Between the Federal Center and the Subjects of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Putin's federal reforms have not been very effective. His attempts to strengthen the central authorities and establish a "strong executive vertical" have been blocked especially by governors in economically wealthy regions and by presidents in ethnic republics. President Putin's main problem is that the powers devolved to regional governments under his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, are not easily reversed. To obtain his goal Putin must either violate the Constitution of Russia or seek support for constitutional amendments among precisely those groups whose power he wants to reduce.

Ib Faurby

The Russian Armed Forces in Crisis and War

In 1992 Russia inherited large and inappropriately structured armed forces from the Soviet Union. However, the political and economic problems of the 1990s combined with conservatism in the military establishment impeded the necessary reforms. The first Russian-Chechen War (1994-96) illustrated in the most dramatic way the problems of the Russian armed forces. Although the militarily more successful second intervention, which began in 1999, has been interpreted as a sign of improvement in the armed forces, fundamental reforms have not yet been carried through, and the war is not yet over.

Mette Skak

The Democratic Peace and Russia

Is Russia's foreign and security policy a case of democratic peace? This is addressed on the basis of Edward Mansfield's and Jack Snyder's revision of the theory of democratic peace. Optimistic assessments of Russia's conduct highlight the centrist approach and argue that things could have gone much worse. Pessimists see the centrist course as problematic as illustrated by Russia's behavior towards its neighbors, the empirical topic of the article. President Putin is fairly pragmatic, but does not challenge the key premises of Russian foreign and security policy.

Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen

Minorities, Self-Determination and the International Society

Does national self-determination threaten international order? To answer this question it is necessary to address the correlation between international norms in the field and the conduct among groups pursuing self-determination. This is being done through an examination of the behavior of the Kosovar Albanians during their fight for self-determination in the 1990s. Their choice of strategy was indeed determined by their perception of international norms. The two strategies employed had vastly different implications for the international order. Against this background, a theory on the nexus between the nature of international norms and the conduct of such groups is formulated. According to this theory, national self-determination and order are compatible goals.