In more than ten years of activity, Reset DOC has been able to inspire dialogue across cultural divides and the exchange of ideas through seminars, conferences, publications, and international events. The synergy emerged from networks of intellectuals with different cultural, religious, political backgrounds all around the Mediterranean, American and Asian regions gave impressive results and encouraged us to go ahead.

In the aftermath of the 2014 Crimean crisis, the Western world realized a general lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of a country that had historically been a key protagonist of European culture and that suddenly appeared as an unknown entity: Russia, a huge state that we are still trying to understand in its post-Soviet essence. In this era of tensions, instability and tougher relations between West and Moscow, Reset DOC launched in 2015 – under the scientific coordination of the Italian historian Andrea Graziosi – the Russia Workshop, an initiative aimed at attracting some of the foremost international scholars, intellectuals and experts on Russian studies.

The first test of the Russia Workshop was the international workshop The Evolution of Russian Political Thought After 1991 held in Berlin at the Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) on June 22-23, 2015. This occasion was the initial stage in a much longer journey and its core significance was in the fact that it unlocked a number of subsequent events, such as...
as the concomitant roundtable entitled *The Political Culture of Today’s Russia. The Power State Is Back?* that was held at DGAP on June 25, 2015. This meeting offered the direct testimony of some prominent European policy makers in approaching Russia’s power policy issues. After the Berlin conferences, the Russia Workshop initiative had further accreditations, attracting the attention of additional partners and sponsors and the participation of prestigious research institutes. The most relevant results of the first Berliner workshop had been collected in a homonym volume that we have published in the spring of 2016.¹

Therefore, Reset DOC organized in collaboration with the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) the second workshop *Locating ‘Conservative Ideology’ in Today’s Russia* at George Washington University (March 31-April 1, 2016). This event focused on Russian ‘conservatism,’ defining its language, values and connotations in order to explain its influence on the Russian political system. On that occasion, the debate analyzed the diversity and plurality within the Russian ‘conservative’ spectrum, its representatives in literature, art, social life and in the Orthodox Church, its geopolitical-ideological dimension (as Eurasianism), its statist approach and its vision of the world order. The Washington workshop gave new impetus to further develop a platform analyzing the Russian political discourse, its features and its cultural influence. Hence, in less than a year, Reset DOC organized a third event of the Russia Workshop in a place that has highly represented a bridge between West and East: on June 17-18, 2016 the conference *The State and Political Discourse in Today’s Russia* was held in Venice at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini.

This two-day workshop had a great participation in terms of speakers, discussants and audience, involving more dozens of international scholars, experts and students in a context of freedom and open dialogue. The debate focused on the multiplicity of the Russian state political discourses within its various organs, administration, media and party, so as to analyze those concepts and ‘sacred’ ideological references which are sponsored by Moscow. Finally, the event launched a discussion on the demise of liberalism and its pluralistic approach in Russia, bearing in mind the impact of the Soviet legacy, the expectation and influence of perestroika, in order to discuss the limits and the potentials for the future of democracy in Russia. This second volume aims at collecting a part of the conference proceedings and presenting some of the most relevant debates emerged in that framework.

The intellectual spillovers emerged in Venice encouraged us to go ahead with the Russia Workshop, an initiative that keeps getting further accreditations and attracting the attention of additional partners and sponsors, extending its ambitions, increasing the frequency of events and creating an effectively permanent platform on Russian political studies. In fact, in 2017 Reset DOC has already scheduled in Moscow several exploratory meetings aimed at creating greater synergy with Russian partners and a greater involvement of the National Academy, while in October 2017 the conference *Russian Liberalisms and their challenges* will be organized in collaboration with the University of Turin.

The growing participation in these workshops gives us great hope for the future of such events. This ambitious project could evolve so fast because of its dynamic format that inclusively involves partners and respectfully considers every idea and perspective. Our goal is to overcome prejudices and divisions between ‘we’ and the ‘others,’ and we still have a great deal of difficult ground to cover. However, the Russia Workshop success is definite by the intentional desire for dialogue that has been shown by all the players involved in a game. Right now, the feedback we have had bodes well for future successes.

The conference has been organized by Reset DOC in cooperation with Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice with the contribution of Nomis Foundation – Zürich and of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The organization of the event involved international partners: Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES), George Washington University; the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University; the Cold War Studies Program, Harvard University; the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE); the Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies, College of William and Mary; National Research University Higher School of Economics (NRU-HSE), Moscow. The Russia Workshop project is directed by Giancarlo Bosetti (Reset DOC) with the scientific coordination of Andrea Graziosi (Anvur, University of Naples Federico II) and a scientific committee composed of Alexey Barabashev (NRU-HSE), Stephen E. Hanson (Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies, College of William and Mary), Mark Kramer (Cold War Studies and Davis Center), Marlene Laruelle (European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University); Andrei Melville (NRU-HSE), Alexandra Vacroux (Davis Center), Vladislav M. Zubok (LSE). After the welcoming addresses of Giancarlo Corò (Ca’ Foscari University) and Pasquale Gagliardi (Fondazione Cini), the conference had been divided in four session: the first session The State’s Political Discourse was chaired by Giancarlo Corò (Università Ca’ Foscari) and involved Alexey Barabashev (NRU-HSE), Anton Barbashin (Intersection) and Olga Malinova (NRU-HSE) as speaker and Mark Kramer (Cold War Studies and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University) as discussant. The second session Concepts and Ideological References was chaired by Daniela Rizzi (Università Ca’ Foscari) and involved Maria Engström (Uppsala Universität), Marlene Laruelle (IERES, George Washington University), Andrei Melville (NRU-HSE), Nikolay Mitrokhin (Center for East-European Studies, University of Bremen) as speakers and Stephen Hanson (Wendy and Emery Reves Center for International Studies, College of William and Mary) as discussant. The third session The Demise of Liberalism: Testing the Waters on the Subject was chaired by Andrea Graziosi (Anvur, University of Naples Federico II) and involved Nadezhda Azhgikhina (Russian Union of Journalists and Vice president of European Federation of Journalists), Nina Khrushcheva (Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy, The New School), Andrey Kortunov (Russian Council of International Relations), Kirill Rogov (Liberal Mission Foundation) and Vladislav Zubok (LSE) as speakers. The fourth session was the roundtable Politics and Culture. The Future of Democracy in Russia chaired by Giancarlo Bosetti (Reset DOC) and involved Giuliano Amato (Judge of the Italian Constitutional Court and Former Prime Minister of Italy), Nina Khrushcheva (Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy, The New School), Marlene Laruelle (IERES, George Washington University), Andrei Melville (NRU-HSE), Adam Michnik (Gazeta Wyborcza), Sergio Romano (Former Italian Ambassador in Moscow) and Roberto Toscano (Former Italian Ambassador in Teheran and New Delhi). The event has been organized by the Reset DOC’s structure: Chiara Galbersanini (Project Manager), Letizia Durante (Project Administrator), Cristina Sala (Event Management) in collaboration with Riccardo Mario Cucciolla (IMT Lucca).