

# Medvedev, Putin, and Perestroika 2.0

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**Abstract:** There was a consensus among professional Russia watchers that the rise of Dmitry Medvedev to the Russian presidency would bring no change and that the new president was a puppet completely controlled by his predecessor, current Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. This consensus is proving to be palpably incorrect, as predicted by the author of the article below. A “thaw” in Russia’s domestic politics, economics and foreign policy has started. There has been significant liberalization in the style of Russian leadership. There also have been minor changes to the political system with the promise of more, major reforms of key institutions such as the MVD have been initiated, a fight against corruption has begun, and other rule-of-law initiatives are being instituted. Likewise, a “reset” in Russian foreign policy is emerging to meet the Obama administration’s own “reset” with Moscow.

**Keywords:** liberalization, Medvedev, Putin, tandem, thaw

Very few Russia observers have supported the view that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, either alone or in tandem with Prime Minister and former president Vladimir Putin, intends or will be able to initiate a serious political thaw or “Perestroika 2.0” in the country. The present author, however, has been arguing for nearly two years that the Medvedev-Putin tandem is ushering in a new era of reform and that Putin will very gradually hand power to Medvedev if political stability is preserved.<sup>1</sup> Over time, Medvedev is being unleashed from the confines of the “tandem” (or duumvirate), and

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could take the lead in launching badly needed economic and political reforms. This does not require a political split of the ruling duumvirate.

Even before Medvedev's inauguration as president, it was clear that a thaw would come during his administration, as various signals, Russian historical precedents and contemporary imperatives discussed further below suggest. A month after the inauguration, I reiterated that in the absence of any unexpected upheavals there would be a political thaw: "Medvedev is on a leash. If he learns to stay on the sidewalk and not wander into the traffic, Putin will gradually lengthen and very gradually remove that leash, fade into the premiership and perhaps leave it in a second Medvedev term. Barring a major jihadist attack, an assassination, or an overly aggressive Western Russia policy, an economic and political thaw will likely develop at the pace with which Medvedev takes control. Such a thaw will be very gradual—like watching an iceberg melt—but it will melt."<sup>2</sup>

This view has been roundly rejected by almost all Western and most native Russia watchers—journalists, analysts, and academics alike. They have argued that Medvedev is nothing more than Putin's puppet, and the tandem no more than a vehicle for Putin to keep his supposedly neo-totalitarian hands on the helm until his return to the presidency in 2012. For example, Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, without even waiting for sufficient time to pass or evidence to appear that might mitigate the early signals of a thaw, argued: "Clearly Medvedev either cannot or will not diverge significantly from the path on which Putin set his country in 2000."<sup>3</sup> Daniel Klimm, in a Freedom House-Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report, claimed Russia would become more authoritarian under the tandem: "The leadership has no discernable desire or incentive to alter its policies." "Expect things to get worse before they get better." The Russian elite "will likely respond by tightening the screws at home, stoking anti-Western sentiment, and provoking conflicts they feel they can exploit."<sup>4</sup> Similar analyses were reiterated across virtually the entire community of what might be called "Rusologists."<sup>5</sup> Except for two defections and a few waiverers, this consensus has held. More recently, my view has been endorsed by a very few analysts.<sup>6</sup>

The claim that a liberalizing thaw has begun cannot be confounded by those who protest that authoritarian excesses persist at this time. The obvious fact that reforms take time, and the tandem's goal of a slow, transitional mode of regime-transition rather than a revolutionary one ensure that such excesses will persist for a time but begin to abate. All immediate protests that Mikhail Khodorkovsky remains in prison, that another person has died in detention, or that a demonstration permit was not granted by the authorities hold no water for the present. Should authoritarian excesses persist for many years, however, then we can reasonably reject the reality or significance of the thaw.

I will demonstrate in this article that even as Putin's second term wound down, he and his future successor were signaling their intent to reverse some of the counter-reforms instituted during his presidential tenure and begin new reforms. Indeed, the first two years of Medvedev's presidency have seen a serious "reset" of Russian domestic policy and several reform initiatives—some more advanced than others, but nevertheless real reforms—in the social, economic, and political systems. Moreover, it appears that this will not be a passing Khrushchevan political thaw, but rather a major liberalization that will perhaps lead toward a more democratic structure. A new era of great reforms may have begun; one that could rival and complete those of the Perestroika era. It is likely to be of longer duration and could see the tandem rotate in power for a decade or more before a

transitional regime transformation, marked by the handover of power to a new leadership in fully free and fair elections.

### Early Signals

Well before Putin selected his successor, he was signaling the need to change—even reverse—some of his policies. He began to acknowledge the need to move away from an economy dominated by commodity exports and from the hyper-centralization his anti-federative counter-reforms had generated.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Putin charged Medvedev to lead a precursor of the modernization scheme that would later be put front and center during the latter's presidency. Medvedev began championing the development of “four i's” (innovation, investment, infrastructure and, most importantly, institutions), the general modernization of Russian society, and the strengthening of civil society and the individual vis-à-vis the state. Medvedev's modernization goals were expressed in policy by the so-called “national programs” for modernizing the housing, agricultural, medical, and educational sectors. These within-system reforms were implied, if not fleshed out, in the pro-Kremlin Yedinaya Rossiya party's 2007 Duma election campaign platform known as “Putin's Plan,” and were made more concrete in Putin's “Strategy 2020” for Russia's modernization, unveiled the same year.<sup>8</sup>

Putin's choice of successor was in itself an indicator of more liberal changes to come. The Western mainstream media and Washington think-tank commentariat were not prepared for this choice. When Putin appointed his two close friends and protégés, then presidential administration head Medvedev and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, to the government as vice premiers under interim prime minister Viktor Zubkov in 2006, it became clear that the short list of Putin successors had been whittled down to two candidates. Nevertheless, the mainstream media and commentariat only discussed numerous hardliners as the leading contenders for “the one vote that counts” in Russian politics: Putin's. Soviet-style *apparatchiks* with Federal Security Service (FSB) ties and “nationalist” credentials, like Sergei Ivanov, Vladimir Yakunin, Sergei Naryshkin and Viktor Zubkov, were paraded before the Western public. Medvedev was rarely focused upon as a serious contender before, and little more after, his appointment as deputy prime minister.<sup>9</sup> When Medvedev and Ivanov emerged as the two top candidates, only Ivanov could be regarded as the non-liberal, hardline nationalist with FSB ties. Contrary to the Washington consensus's expectations, the liberal Medvedev was selected instead of Ivanov. There was no *mea culpa* from the Western commentariat's dire warnings about Russia being caught between two negative options: a hardline successor from the FSB or Putin remaining president.

Putin's choice of Medvedev, perhaps the most truly liberal official in his inner circle, reflected a conscious choice to move away from the hardline stance fostered by the more reactionary within the Kremlin clan of *siloviki* (the various power ministries—security, military, internal affairs, and other law enforcement agencies), led by Igor Sechin and Viktor Ivanov, and to free up the liberalization option.

There is reason to believe that the pre-election war between the various *siloviki* clans in 2007 pushed Putin to forego a dangerous continuation of monopoly *siloviki* rule and of unstable interregnum in which a weak, temporary prime minister like Zubkov or some other interim leader would have to control the unruly *siloviki*. Instead, Putin backtracked and developed a transformational modality in which he could keep his hands on the helm and gradually allow a less hard-line, even liberal successor to take over. His successor

would have to have no ties to either of the *siloviki* clans; would be able to enlist the support of moderate civilian jurists, economists, and financiers in the Petersburg clan; and would, like Putin, balance the interests of Moscow's competing clans. Not surprisingly, then, Putin decided to appoint Medvedev, a longtime Petersburg associate and the more independent, less conservative option. Life for the *siloviki* was immediately changed. Within days, the General Prosecutor's office announced an inspection by the Investigative Committee, conducting the criminal investigations that led to arrests in the war between *siloviki* clans.<sup>10</sup> The new configuration of power was established after Medvedev and Putin took their new offices and appointed a new presidential administration and government, leaving the *siloviki*, as a whole, further removed from the apex of power.<sup>11</sup>

Putin's choice should not have been a surprise, based on more than just the prior signals of an impending thaw. Two things should be remembered about Putin: first, he is an adherent of longterm policy-planning and strategic flexibility so as to provide the greatest leeway possible for maneuvering and policy-adjustment in response to unforeseen circumstances. His 1997 dissertation, "Strategic Planning in the Reproduction of the Mineral Resource Base of a Region in Conditions in of the Formation of Market Relations: St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast," drew on Western sources that conceptualized strategic planning as "adaptive mechanisms that should permit the organization to confidently face an uncertain environment."<sup>12</sup> This approach is what likely gave birth to Putin's Stabilization Fund, which set aside tens of billions of dollars for a rainy day—like the global economic crisis. It may also be the genesis of Medvedev's realization, even before the present crisis, of the danger posed to Russia's modernization by a possible US recession (discussed further below).

Secondly, and consistent with this strategic approach, Putin has maintained ideological amorphousness and flexibility. He has always lacked any clear ideological orientation and appealed to many different groups in Russian society, while shifting from liberal to statist and now back to liberal economic (and political) policies. Putin's career-path exemplifies this. His early career in the KGB was followed by one as top aide to the liberal Leningrad City Soviet Chairman and then to St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak. He retained close ties to democratic parties like Yegor Gaidar's and Anatoly Chubais's Russia's Choice as late as the December 1999 Duma elections, and the party supported Putin's presidential campaign in 2000. Putin's first term included liberal economic reforms like the flat tax and energy and pension reforms. His second term saw a turn to state domination of the economy, with the creation of massive state corporations and an increase in state intervention in the economy overall. Thus, Putin's choice of a more liberal line after a distinctly statist phase is not out of character for him. To the contrary, this is consistent with his non-ideological approach; one that has allowed him and his party Yedinaya Rossiya to appeal to almost all sectors of the Russian political spectrum.<sup>13</sup>

Putin's final months in the Kremlin saw several subtle signs of a political thaw in the offing. He met with the democratic Yabloko party's leader Grigory Yavlinsky, who later would not deny rumors that he had been offered a position in the future Putin cabinet. Putin promised Yavlinsky that he would look into the clearly unjust arrest by police of the chairman of Yabloko's St. Petersburg branch, and days later a Petersburg court dropped all charges against him.<sup>14</sup> Days later, authorities announced the reopening of the official investigation into the death of prominent Yabloko member and *Novaya gazeta* journalist Yuri Shchekochikhin.<sup>15</sup> Also in the tandem's native city, the pro-democratic European University, closed down weeks earlier on the pretext of alleged fire code violations, was

allowed to re-open. In addition, the pro-Kremlin youth group “Nashi” announced it was ceasing street activism such as counter-demonstrations against opposition meetings and pickets of Western embassies. Finally, authorities in Ingushetia reversed a decision to close the local branch of the independent pro-democracy REN-TV station.<sup>16</sup>

In Putin’s last major speech before Medvedev’s election and his own appointment as premier, he called for political, social, and economic change. Specifically, he supported moving away from the economy’s dependence on energy and commodity exports, the decentralization of state management, and the reduction of bureaucratic interference in small businesses. Putin focused on virtually all of the “four ‘I’s” as well as the four spheres

of Medvedev’s national projects in a call for Russia’s modernization, the core slogan of Medvedev’s presidency. Western media outlets stressed his strong foreign policy statements and admonition of NGOs that illegally took foreign grants to conduct political activity, but they ignored Putin’s announcement of upcoming democratic political reforms that would “unfold over a period of years”:

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The desire of millions of our citizens for individual freedom and social justice is what defines the future of Russia’s political system. The democratic state should become an effective instrument for civil society’s self-organisation. This is work that will unfold over a period of years, work that will continue with the help of educational activity and the cultivation of a culture of civic spirit. Raising the role of non-governmental organisations, human rights ombudsmen and public councils will contribute to this work, as will the development of a multiparty system in Russia. Russia’s future political system will be centred on several large political parties that will have to work hard to maintain or affirm their leading positions, be open to change and broaden their dialogue with the voters.<sup>17</sup>

### **Medvedev and Glasnost 2.0**

After his election, Medvedev became more strident in his criticism of Russia’s present condition, which carried with it implicit criticism of the past eight years and a call for liberalist change. However, he stopped short of criticizing Putin outright. Good examples of this stance can be found in a series of interviews that Medvedev gave to journalists Nikolai and Marina Svanidze, published in book-form in summer 2008.<sup>18</sup> The Svanidze interviews kicked off what could be termed a “Glasnost 2.0,” a new version of Mikhail Gorbachev’s openness in the context of the present-day post-Soviet Russia’s political and economic challenges. Medvedev clearly indicated reforms were on the horizon, and displayed a more liberal orientation than had Putin. The book also provides revealing details about Medvedev’s view of Russian history and law and his economic and governmental philosophy. They show a leader with a distinctly different view of Russian history and much better understanding of what is meant by liberal democracy and a market economy than that of his predecessor. Indeed,

Russia has never had a leader with such an intimate knowledge of what the rule of law, the free market, and liberal democracy really are.

When asked which periods of Russian history were most interesting to him, Medvedev mentioned the periods of Peter the Great, Paul I, Alexander I, Alexander II, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the present. He did not elaborate on the period of Peter the Great, but its mention is almost perfunctory and mandatory for a Petersburger. His mention of Pavel I seems driven by new historiography of recent years that has overturned the “the official Soviet history” which “made of him a sort of half-wit.” More significant is his interest in the first two Alexanders. Alexander I defeated Napoleon and “brought Russia closer to Europe.” Alexander II and his “reforms” “moved Russia forward. And much was done regarding those issues with which I was earlier considerably closely occupied: jurisprudence, property law, and legal system development.” The early 20<sup>th</sup> century, for Medvedev, is interesting for “those opportunities which state and society had, and for how they were foolishly lost and replaced by revolutionary romanticism and a sea of blood.” The present is “very important. We can either move essentially forward as we could have at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or, alas, we can begin to run in place.” Two dangers—one internal, another external—according to Medvedev, threaten Russia’s modernization: “a conservative scenario of development” and “if, for example, a several year recession takes hold of America.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, it seems that Medvedev prefers Russia’s reformers to its revolutionaries and reactionaries, values Russia’s movement toward Europe, and understands that US and Russian interests can not fundamentally diverge and ought not be juxtaposed with one another.

Medvedev’s answers to several impressionistic questions were particularly revealing of his economic philosophy. Although he mentioned the Theodore and Franklin Delano Roosevelt when asked to name statesmen he admired, he emphasized the modern West’s “new model” developed by the “new Right” and specifically mentioned by Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan. Medvedev was even somewhat Reaganesque when he described the function of the state in fairly limited terms: “The task of authorities is in a sophisticated way to regulate social processes, create the conditions for development of business and civic activeness, resolve conflicts that arise, and arrange for the country’s defense and security.”<sup>20</sup> Specifically, Medvedev argued that the Russian state’s intervention in the economy should not grow and “in certain circumstances, to the contrary, be reduced.” He noted said the presence of state corporations, a core economic instrument under Putin, should be temporary.<sup>21</sup>

Medvedev’s more liberal orientation regarding democracy was somewhat known from the early Putin era when he criticized prosecutors’ 2003 decision to freeze Yukos shares in the wake of Khodorkovsky’s arrest (though he ultimately oversaw the state’s takeover of the company later) and stated several times that the word “democracy” did not need any qualifiers.<sup>22</sup> Here, he diverged from Vladislav Surkov’s slogan “sovereign democracy,” which seemed more about reducing American influence in Russia and the post-Soviet space than about building democracy. Medvedev repeated his critique in the Svanidze interviews, declaring democracy a “universal value” and lamenting the weakness of not only the state but also of civil society as a whole.<sup>23</sup> Medvedev, in effect, rejected Putin’s view that Russia’s political system is democratic, and criticized the system implicitly: “I never lived in an effective democratic society. I have read about it. I have been in countries

which are accepted as effective democracies (This is always a question of one's evaluation.) But I have never lived in such a society, and Russia was never and has still not become such a country. We are only on the way...and we are moving in the right direction."<sup>24</sup> He also criticized the electoral system: "I do not idealize either our party system or even the situation with elections of the president." "Our elections—both parliamentary and presidential—although they are not perfect, the same as our society, but they are already fully representative. They are based on freely expressed will (of the people)."<sup>25</sup> Although the this second excerpt appears to put an overly positive spin on Russia's elections, much Western research on Russian elections supports the view that Russian election results reflect the will of the people.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, long before Medvedev began to institute any reforms, both he and Putin had signaled upcoming fundamental changes, not only to the economic and social system but to the political system. At least to some degree, then, the gradual, evolutionary thaw Medvedev had touted years ago is nothing less than a joint Medvedev-Putin project and forms the foundation of the tandem at present. The entire US mainstream media and Russia-watching expert and academic community largely missed, ignored, or denied all the signals.

After Medvedev's May 2008 inauguration, Glasnost 2.0 expanded the rhetorical field further. As in the Perestroika era, a few select media became the vehicles for the new Glasnost. Given the new technological context, it is no surprise that Medvedev chose the Internet; he also chose the newspaper *Vremya novostei*, which has been leading the print media in publicizing Medvedev's reform moves. On July 10, 2008, *Vremya novostei* published an article by the Kremlin-connected director of the Effective Policy Institute Gleb Pavlovsky, who called for more glasnost:

Medvedev is insisting on deep renewal of politics in a political union with Putin. Are the mass media prepared for the same deep reassessment of their own policy...?

Apparently many people do not understand the extent to which the next era is different. This is least of all tied to the differences between Putin and Medvedev. Medvedev is developing political common sense within a framework of a new political agenda. The tasks set by the Medvedev-Putin government set tough conditions for their feasibility. These conditions include the formation of new, mobile coalitions, often temporary, in support of the new course; the incorporation of new, pressing social milieus into real politics; intellectual mobilization of an innovative nature; and European compatibility of the instruments of state-building.<sup>27</sup>

Pavlovsky, a longtime Kremlin advisor, had transformed himself from a democratic activist in the late 1980s and 1990s into a near reactionary in the early Putin era, enthusiastically supporting Putin's counter-reforms. Now, he was signaling that a new era was approaching, and that he was prepared to support change.

At the very same time, the Center for Contemporary Development, the chairman of the board of trustees of which is Medvedev himself, commissioned the Center for Political Technologies (CPT) to issue a study on the development of Russian democracy. The report "Democracy: the Development of the Russian Model," must have been commissioned before or soon after Medvedev's May inauguration, since it was released in July. The report was highly critical of Putin's model of "manual control" or managed democracy which, it asserted, had "exhausted itself." However, the report's chief author, CPT director Igor Bunin, noted this model had never been seen by Putin as a permanent state of affairs:

First, ‘manual control’ has never been seen by either Putin or Medvedev as an alternative to the universal model. Throughout recent years, alongside the utilization of ‘manual methods,’ the Kremlin has systematically attempted (admittedly with variable success) to create universal rules of the game. Both Putin and Medvedev have always stressed that democracy does not require additional adjectives. Democracy and its institutions and operating mechanisms are universal. In recent years it has been possible to observe a conflict between long-term tasks (the building of a stable democratic system) and short-term tasks (the solution of political problems)—a conflict that is traditional for any regime.<sup>28</sup>

Second, in the last year or two the political authorities have changed their priorities.

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The majority of political tasks have been resolved: The vertical axis of power has been built, the state is free from the pressure of the “oligarchy,” and there is no threat of “revolution.” The time has come when the Kremlin, possibly for the first time in many years—if not decades—can allow itself to opt for the modernization of the country in all spheres of activity.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, just as during Glasnost 1.0, the leaders of Glasnost 2.0 refrained from calls for political or radical reform in public, while the media and intellectual elite signaled the coming reforms.

### **Significant Small Deeds: The Tandem’s First Year**

The stridency of the tandem’s new glasnost initially was not matched by an equally ambitious set of reform initiatives. Medvedev’s first year as president was confined to small steps and a narrow liberalization. Words predominated over and prepared the groundwork for small deeds; the words and small deeds set the stage for the second year’s bolder reforms. This pattern is true in many reform episodes, including Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika in 1985-1991.

Initially, the “thaw” was limited to some liberalization, including major changes in the presidential style and some minor policy adjustments. The new president exhibited a style very distinct from that of his predecessor, especially with regard to elements within the liberal opposition. In January 2009, Medvedev met with *Novaya gazeta*’s chief editor Dmitry Muratov and the father of Perestroika 1.0, Gorbachev himself, and expressed his condolences regarding the killing earlier that month of *Novaya gazeta* journalist Anastasia Baburova and human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov. In April, he gave an interview to the opposition newspaper *Novaya gazeta*, which has had a relationship with Putin that can only be characterized as highly antagonistic.<sup>30</sup> Medvedev also sent a letter of condolence to the human rights organization “Memorial” after the July murder of Natalya Estemirova.<sup>31</sup> This style marks a radical departure from the more indifferent approach of his predecessor.

Early signs of a legal thaw began within a week of Medvedev’s inauguration, when Judge Yelena Valyavina openly accused bureaucrats of interfering in an important court case. Valyavina is first deputy of the Supreme Court of Arbitration chairman Anton Ivanov,

a longtime close friend and political ally of Medvedev. A few weeks later, the Constitutional Court found a law used to charge the head of a liberal media NGO unconstitutional, and soon the charges were dropped. In terrorism trials in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan, acquittals freed defendants being tried on rather weak, if not trumped up charges. Medvedev also adopted a decree establishing a network of regional commissions in tandem with the Public Chamber and Russia's Human Rights Ombudsman's office to monitor violations of prisoners' rights, and he rejected draft amendments to the media law that would have made it easier to bring charges against journalists for slander. Medvedev also met with the chairman of the oppositional Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ), the democratic opponent of the official Media Union created under Putin. According to the RUJ chairman, Medvedev agreed in the meeting to protect the media so that it could cover corruption with impunity. In response to the new climate, Chechnya's prosecutor demanded that order be brought to the prisoners' colonies in the republic. In some cases, the above shifts in court conduct and apparat style may have been the result of anticipation rather than a consequence of the more liberal style emanating from Medvedev.

Medvedev's domestic reforms kicked off with his first presidential address on November 5, 2008, which led to a year of legislation instituting the minor but not insignificant political, legal and judicial reforms. The minimal nature of the first year's reforms suggested that Perestroika 2.0 was destined for a snail-like progression. Medvedev then began by tackling perhaps the most difficult problems—the political system, in particular the election system, corruption and the rule of law.

### **The Political System**

Regarding the political system, Medvedev took a small step toward reforming the election and party system, promoting the opportunities of opposition and smaller political parties for political participation. According to Medvedev, parties garnering more than 3 percent of the vote but failing to meet the 7 percent threshold should now be granted several seats in the State Duma and regional legislatures. The amendments, adopted in spring 2009, stipulated that parties winning more than 5 percent but less than 6 percent get one seat each, while parties with more than 6 percent but less than 7 percent get two seats each. The seats to parties garnering these levels of electoral support are allocated before distribution of the remaining seats to parties that exceed the 7 percent threshold to ensure that the low threshold parties get their share of seats. The number of members needed for registering political parties was reduced as well. The 2009 amendments require that through 2011, the minimum number of members needed for a party to be registered will be 45,000, with at least 450 members in more than half of its branches in Russia's 83 regions and no less than 200 members in the remaining regional branches. Beginning in 2012, the minimum number for overall membership will be 40,000, with at least 400 members in more than half the regional branches and no less 150 members in the remaining branches. Finally, parties that win seats in parliament are now guaranteed equal access to state media. If other administrative resources used to rig electoral outcomes in Russia are removed, these changes will allow opposition parties, over time, to enter the State Duma in numbers commensurate with Russian public opinion.

Outside the electoral and party systems, Medvedev took more small steps to decentralize power by transferring more powers to regional legislatures and local councils and away from governors. The Federation Council, the upper house of the federal parliament, would henceforth be composed of regional representatives from among

those elected to regional legislatures and local councils, instead of just one representative chosen by a region's governor (or republic's president) and the regional assembly. This reform puts an end to executive branch representation in the Federation Council, which clearly violated the principle of the separation of powers stipulated in Russia's constitution. In another decentralizing reform, those political parties winning regional elections, rather than the federal district presidential envoys and the presidential administration, would now propose candidates for governor in the regions; regional legislatures were also empowered to remove regional governors and republic presidents.

These small democratic gains are for some time likely to be mitigated by the authorities' continuing use of "administrative resources"—that is state resources to hinder election opponents—and by Medvedev's lengthening of the presidential term to six years. The latter step could allow the tandem to remain in power in one combination or another for decades, even if popular opinion turns against it. This would pose the threat of full political and developmental stagnation. Only an end to the use of all forms of administrative resources can ensure full democratization.

### **Politics and Civil Society**

Medvedev also began to meet regularly with representatives of opposition-tied NGOs, setting up a special presidential advisory council composed of many of the most oppositional and dissident NGO leaders, and pushed reforms through the Duma easing registration and reporting rules for NGOs. On June 17, 2009, Medvedev followed through on a promise to NGO representatives he made in May to lighten the bureaucratic burden and pressures on their organizations. He proposed periodic notification of continued functioning in place of regular detailed reports, reduction of the list of documents allowed to be requested by government agencies involved in regulation and registering NGOs, reduction in the number of inspections by regulators and the establishment of time limits for the authorities' examination of NGOs' registration documents so that errors in their document preparation will not so easily end in the loss the right to refile for registration.<sup>32</sup> By early 2010 the legal amendments incorporating Medvedev's proposals were still being worked out by his presidential joint NGO-government committee on NGO reform created in April 2009. According to some reports, the committee had badly split during the drafting process.<sup>33</sup>

Medvedev adopted a very gradualist approach to expanding freedom of speech and information, which can be summed up as "let the technology do it." He proposes that technological innovation, in particular extending Internet access, should be the driving force that expands these freedoms. However, only 40 percent of Russians have regular access to the Internet.<sup>34</sup> The majority in Moscow and St. Petersburg use the Internet, and reports show that Internet use in Russia grew by 20 percent in 2009 and now involves 24 million citizens or 21 percent of the adult population.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Russian mass media have exhibited a more open style of late, including state television, which has introduced several new politics-oriented talk shows.

### **Rule of Law and Corruption**

Most importantly, Medvedev took on the rule of law and Russia's most vexing problem: corruption. He took a series of steps in his first year, including the adoption of a new

law on corruption; an amendment to the civil service law requiring officials and selected relatives to report their income and property holdings; and adoption of an anti-corruption action plan to be updated every two years. These changes were described as first steps; a promise of further anti-corruption measures to follow that was institutionalized in the renewable action plan. In May 2010, by which time Russian officials should have posted their income and property statements on their respective institutions' websites, they had done so, for the most part. However, prosecutors and the MVD responded to the failure of 23 State Duma deputies to do so on time by calling for legislation that would establish fines or other sanctions for such failure in the future.<sup>36</sup>

Many argued that the anti-corruption policy was minimalist and failed to deter corruption. But there are indications that even these small steps have yielded some results. First, the signal that the administration is bent on fighting corruption has changed the calculus made at least by some law enforcement agencies and courts. Thus, the anti-corruption campaign, combined with the actual legal amendments, seem to have led to an increase in indictments and convictions for corruption. In October, Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika told a coordinating conference of the chiefs of law enforcement agencies reviewing the first results of measures taken under the national corruption resistance action plan that in the first half of 2009, courts issued 4,500 convictions—a 20 percent increase over the same period in 2008.<sup>37</sup> In December, Russia's Deputy Prosecutor General Aleksandr Buksman argued that law enforcement was making headway against corruption, that all would be treated equally before the law, and that agencies were guided by Medvedev's designation of corruption as "enemy number one" in his annual state-of-the-federation address in November.<sup>38</sup> He reported that the number of crimes exposed involving corruption increased by 11 percent, and those involving bribe-taking by 6 percent in the first nine months of 2009. Specifically, 38,000 corruption-related crimes were exposed. The courts heard 806 criminal cases against federal and local officials, including 128 cases against municipal heads, 179 against local administration heads, and 21 against heads and deputy heads of executive bodies, including the speaker of the Stavropol Krai's legislature, deputy governors of the Kurgan and Orel oblasts, the chairs of the governments of the Amur and Novosibirsk oblasts, several municipality heads in Adygeya, Stavropol, Kaliningrad, Moscow, Orenburg and Rostov.<sup>39</sup> Typically, these higher figures are mistakenly interpreted as evidence of growing corruption rather than better law enforcement. However, several major corruption convictions involving for the first time high-ranking federal officials attest to a serious and unprecedented battle with corruption in Russia. For example, seven of eleven high-ranking officials of the Federal Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund (FFOMS) were found guilty by a jury and sentenced to a total of 47 years for taking bribes and carrying out illegal operations with regard to supply of crucial medicines.

For his part, Putin returned to and escalated his past criticism of the bureaucracy's pressure on small businesses and the frequent inspections that facilitate corruption. In a July 2008 televised government session, he decried the multiple inspections of small- and medium-sized businesses and constant demands for documentation made by the MVD, tax police, and numerous other government agencies. He declared that "it is impossible to take the existing regime anymore" and ordered reducing the number of permitted inspections of companies to one every three years.<sup>40</sup> This reform and others requiring prosecutors' approval to carry out inspections, time limits on the duration of inspections, streamlined documentation requirements and e-registration were adopted later in the year and came

into force in May 2009. According to Deputy Prosecutor General Yevgeny Zbarsky, these and previous changes in legislation have led to a twenty-fold decrease in the number of inspections from more than 20 million in 2006 to 1.2 million in 2009.<sup>41</sup>

Another measure that should help reduce corruption is the removal of state officials from boards of those state corporations that survive on a temporary basis; another reversal by the tandem of a core Putin policy. According to the Economic Development Ministry, the number of large state enterprises run by non-state professional directors had doubled by May 2010 and reached a figure of 36 out of Russia's 48 major state companies. By June, this figure will reach 40, and professional directors on such enterprises boards will outnumber state officials 188 to 183. The replacement of state officials on the boards of defense industry enterprises has not yet begun, according to the ministry.<sup>42</sup>

Medvedev is now honoring his pledge for more anti-corruption measures. On May 21, 2010, the Kremlin announced that it would be strengthening Russia's anti-corruption legislation as part of Russia's compliance with recommendations made by the Council of Europe's anti-corruption regime, the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), that Russia signed on to in Medvedev's first year and is required to address by July 1. According to Kremlin spokesman Alexei Pavlov, the presidential administration's chief Sergei Naryshkin has ordered the Justice Ministry to draft legal amendments that will ban bureaucrats from accepting gifts, even those under the value of \$100 allowed under current law. They will also deprive all officials of immunity from prosecution for corruption and permit the seizure of assets from those who take bribes. A Duma deputy claimed that the new legislation would meet not just these three but twelve of the twenty-six GRECO recommendations.<sup>43</sup>

Medvedev has been much more responsive than Putin to public concerns over the MVD's rampant decline. In April 2009, then-Moscow district police head Denis Yevsyukov went into a rage and killed three people and wounded seven in a supermarket.<sup>44</sup> A series of similar incidents occurred in summer and fall in the Republic of Tyva and one in St. Petersburg involving police torturing teenagers. In August, Medvedev fired the head of the Tyva MVD and ordered the federal ministry to take several measures, including toughening its internal systems for access and control of weapons of the police and for selecting personnel. He also ordered MVD chief Rashid Nurgaliev to develop a badly needed re-education program for police that will include instructing them on ethnic and religious toleration and proper conduct in dealing with citizens.<sup>45</sup>

On September 25, Nurgaliev gave a nationwide television interview in which he detailed police crimes and high-profile corruption cases uncovered by the MVD; a possible sign that Nurgaliev was beginning to act on Medvedev's orders. In particular, he noted that 2009 had seen the arrest of Rostov policemen involved in a major protection racket who launched false criminal cases against companies refusing to pay bribes and the firing of high-ranking police officials in Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Khabarovsk Krai, the Republic of Karachai-Cherkessia, and Yaroslavl, Irkutsk, Bryansk, Pskov, Orenburg and Tula Oblasts. He reported 18 violations of the law in the MVD's central apparatus, 10 of which were crimes, including 4 involving corruption. Nurgaliev also cited a number of serious prison sentences and punishments meted out to corrupt policemen and detailed a case in which two employees of the MVD's Economic Security Department tried to blackmail a Moscow firm for a sum of 2.42 million rubles. He promised that reforms heightening the requirements for police employees regarding "their professional qualities,

moral qualities and...disciplinary and ethical activities” would be carried out completely.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps because he got wind of footdragging, or simply wanted to put the full force of presidential authority behind these reforms, Medvedev would expand on these measures in a January 2010 decree ordering a comprehensive reform of the entire MVD system.

### Judicial Reform

Seemingly in response to the tandem’s new line and in particular to Medvedev’s focus on court reform, Russian courts began to adjudicate more liberally. On March 17, 2009, Russia’s Constitutional Court struck down Paragraph 10, Article 89 of the Tax Code as unconstitutional, thus prohibiting tax authorities from carrying out repeat inspections of taxpayers if a court ruling on results of a previous inspection is already in force. On May 6, 2009, a St. Petersburg court rejected the prosecutors’ appeal to overturn a previous court decision ruling that a search of the human rights organization Memorial’s St. Petersburg office, and the confiscation of its computers, was illegal. On November 20, the Constitutional Court finally abolished the death penalty in Russia, moving beyond the moratorium that had existed for years in compliance with a pledge to the European Union. Also in 2009, Russian courts also released two high-profile detainees facing trial as a result of the rough-and-tumble nature of Russian politics and corrupt courts. Alexander Bulbov, a lieutenant general in the Russian Federal Service for Drug Control, arrested in October 2007 at the height of the Putin succession struggle’s *siloviki* wars, was released in November on the condition that he not leave the country.<sup>47</sup> In a shift that is difficult to characterize as positive or negative at present, in February 2009 the Moscow district’s military court acquitted the alleged murderers of journalist Anna Politkovskaya, and in September the Supreme Court ordered the court to return the case materials to investigators for review.<sup>48</sup> Investigators will now merge the case of the alleged co-conspirators Ibragim and Dzhabrail Makhmudov and Sergei Khadzhiburbanov with those of the alleged hitman Rustam Makhmudov and unidentified organizers of the crime.

Russia’s courts have apparently responded to Medvedev’s preferences by showing a new leniency, in at least the higher-profile, white-collar cases. Investigators released the former head of the perfume giant Arbat Prestizh, Vladimir Nekrasov, from pre-trial detention, and he remained free as his trial for tax evasion began. In March 2009, pregnant former Yukos lawyer Svetlana Bakhmina—who had been arrested in 2004 and sentenced in 2006 to six and a half years in jail—was released on her fourth parole attempt. On January 27, 2010, in another case involving a pregnant woman (arrested for growing marijuana), the Moscow City Court released her under house arrest—the first time any Russian court made use of a new house arrest law initiated by Medvedev and that came into effect on January 1, 2010.<sup>49</sup> On the down side, the trial opened in the questionable second criminal case against the former heads of Yukos and Menatep, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, who are now accused of embezzling state-owned securities and the theft of 350 metric tons of oil. However, in December 2009, Russia’s Supreme Court issued a related, unprecedented and potentially far-reaching decision that Lebedev’s original arrest was illegal.<sup>50</sup> The European Court of Human Rights has agreed to hear a petition by Khodorkovsky and Lebedev jointly for a ruling against the legality of their arrest. In time, reforms of Russian laws on white-collar crime could provide the legal basis for Khodorkovsky’s and Lebedev’s acquittal or early release from prison.

The Medvedev administration also started to take a fresh look at white-collar crime, prompting the courts to do the same. Medvedev called for an end to imprisonment for some white-collar crimes and an end to pre-trial detention for all such indictments. He also has ordered amendments to Russia's Civil Code. Along with other factors, this helped bring his subsequent termination of pre-trial detention and post-conviction imprisonment for white-collar crimes such as tax evasion. Pennsylvania State University Professor of Law William Butler has argued that the committee formed by Medvedev to prepare Civil Code reforms under the "Conception of Reform of Civil Legislation" has been guided by "international legal concepts" and the WTO and EU; the reforms will touch on land reform, subsoil resources like oil and gas, and state companies and state corporations, which Medvedev seeks to phase out of existence. The Committee has also proposed the introduction of the concept of "good faith" into Russian law for the first time.<sup>51</sup> These amendments will likely be finalized and submitted to parliament in 2010.

Medvedev's agenda of judicial independence has involved seeking to improve judicial transparency, increasing the budgets for the courts and for judges' and bailiffs' salaries, and giving judges lifetime appointments rather than subjecting them to repeated reconfirmation. These measures could protect judges from the influence of government officials, bureaucrats, powerful entrepreneurs, and the *siloviki*. In addition, Supreme Arbitration Court Chairman Ivanov has proposed that examinations for judges be administered by lawyers. Medvedev has suggested panels of retired judges control the vetting of judges. As a first step, on January 4, 2010, Medvedev issued a decree to create, and ensure presidential control over, the judicial qualification collegium established to define and vet judges' qualifications.<sup>52</sup>

Medvedev also amended the system by which the Russian Constitutional Court's chair is selected. This move was almost universally interpreted as an illiberal move, "unmasking" his increasingly liberal image and policies. The real picture, however, is much less sinister and perhaps a step toward further reforms. Under the previous system, all 19 of the Constitutional Court's judges were appointed by the Federation Council upon presidential nomination. After the court was formed, the judges elected their chair, a deputy chair and court secretary by secret ballot, and these posts are held by the winners for three years. Under Medvedev's amendments the chair and two deputy chairs (eliminating the court secretary position) will be elected for three years by the Federation Council upon presidential nomination. Under the previous system, the president appointed the judges who elected the chairman, giving the president indirect control over the selection of the chairman but relieving him of some of the responsibility for the chair's actions. Under the new system, the president's power becomes more direct, but it is balanced by the Federation Council (assuming free and fair elections).

Also according to Medvedev's amendments, the president's power remains balanced by the Constitutional Court. Its judges retain the power to dismiss by a majority of two-thirds both the chair and his deputies if five or more judges censure them for failing to carry out their responsibilities or abusing their powers. In addition, the system introduced by Medvedev for the Constitutional Court has been in practice for years in the Supreme and Arbitration Courts.

### **Summing Up the Tandem's First Year**

The first year of the tandem's reforms signaled an approach toward democratization and the rule of law, though their initial results were not significantly felt. However, each minor

reform counteracted aspects of the more authoritarian political and centralized administrative systems that evolved under Putin's leadership, and several of these reforms have actually produced positive results. The anti-corruption campaign, combined with the necessary legal amendments, seems to have led to an increase in indictments and convictions for corruption. Medvedev's pronouncements supporting the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and a more modern legal code have induced the courts to rule more judiciously. More important changes have occurred in his presidential style and the tandem's relations with opposition forces and civil society. In addition, some of the more unruly and authoritarian of the state's institutions were put on notice that former practices would no longer be tolerated.

### Year Two of the Tandem

#### Medvedev's Glasnost 2.1

Glasnost 2.1 was fully instigated with the publication of Medvedev's groundbreaking September 10, 2009 article, "Forward Russia!" ("Rossiya Vpered!"), published on Gazeta.ru, an opposition website. "Forward Russia!" addressed to his "co-citizens," is Medvedev's Perestroika manifesto. Appropriately, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* characterized the article as the most important event of 2009, noting that "something intangible is changing in the country."<sup>53</sup>

Medvedev's missive began with a series of questions, among them: "What must be done so that the quality of life of citizens of Russia both today and in the future rises steadily? So that our society becomes richer, freer, more humane, more attractive?" Then, in stark fashion, Medvedev laid out all the problems plaguing the development of Russian democracy and the market, identified forces intent on blocking reforms, and called on the Russian people to back his reform agenda. Again without criticizing Putin, Medvedev was straightforward: "An ineffective economy, half-Soviet social sphere, unconsolidated democracy, negative demographic trends, and an unstable Caucasus. These are big problems even for such a state as Russia." Regarding democracy, he specified: "Democratic institutions have, on the whole, been formed and stabilized, but their quality is very far from ideal. Civil society is weak and the level of self-organization and self-government is low." On the North Caucasus, where Putin long ago claimed victory over jihadi terrorists, Medvedev was especially frank: "The terrorist attacks on Russia continue. The inhabitants of the republics of the North Caucasus simply know no peace. The military, agents of the law enforcement agencies, state and municipal employees, and civilians are being killed. Of course, these crimes are committed with the support of international bandit groups. But let us acknowledge: The situation would not be so acute if the socioeconomic development of southern Russia was truly productive."<sup>54</sup>

Conceptually, the president repudiated four Russian "traditions": "economic backwardness," "the totalitarian state machine," "age-old corruption that has drained Russia from time immemorial," and "widespread" "paternalistic attitudes"—"[t]he belief that all problems should be dealt with by the state. Or by somebody else, only not by each person in his place." In calling for a "democratic modernization" process, he took a page from Khrushchev and Gorbachev by harshly criticizing Stalinism. But he went much further by criticizing the Soviet model and Russia's historical pattern of catching up by coercive

development: “[T]he two greatest modernizations in the country’s history—Peter the Great’s and the Soviet one—were paid for with the ruin, humiliation, and annihilation of millions of our compatriots. It is not for us to judge our ancestors. But it must be admitted that the preservation of human life was not, to put it mildly, a priority for the state during those years. Unfortunately, that is a fact. Today for the first time in our history we have an opportunity to prove to ourselves and to the whole world that Russia can develop along the democratic path.”<sup>55</sup>

He reiterated his call for Russia’s modernization in the coming decades, with the goal of creating an economy defined “not so much by raw materials as by intellectual resources: a ‘smart’ economy creating unique knowledge, the export of the latest technologies and products of innovation-led activity.” Specifically, he outlined five strategic niches for Russia’s modernization: (1) “efficiency of production, transportation, and use of energy” and developing “new types of fuel” for the domestic and foreign market; (2) preservation and improvement of nuclear technologies; (3) development of information technologies and greater Russian influence on “the development of global, universally accessible information networks, using supercomputers and other elements”; (4) the creation of Russia’s “own ground and space infrastructure for the transmission of all types of information”; and (5) the attainment of a leading position “in the production of particular types of medical equipment, ultramodern diagnostic systems, and medications for the treatment of viral, cardiovascular, oncological, and neurological diseases.”<sup>56</sup>

Regarding the political system, Medvedev backed a gradual domestically-driven reform “(e)ven if this displeases the ruling class” or “disappoints the supporters of permanent revolution”:

The Russian political system will also be extremely open, flexible, and internally complex. It will be appropriate to a dynamic, mobile, transparent, and multidimensional social structure. And match the political ethos of free, prosperous, critical-minded, and self-confident people.

As in the majority of democratic states, the leaders in the political struggle will be parliamentary parties that periodically replace each other in power. Parties and coalitions thereof will form the federal and regional organs of executive power (not the other way around) and nominate candidates for the post of head of state and regional and local government leaders. They will have long experience of civilized political competition and of responsible and meaningful interaction with voters, of interparty cooperation, and of seeking compromise options for solutions to the most acute social problems ...

Russian democracy will not mechanically copy foreign models. Civil society will not be bought in exchange for foreign grants. Political culture will not be converted into the mere imitation of leading societies’ political customs. An effective judicial system cannot be imported. Freedom cannot be copied from a book, even if it is a very smart book. We will unconditionally and definitely learn from other peoples ... But nobody will live our lives for us. Nobody will become free, successful, and responsible for us. Only our own experience of building democracy will entitle us to assert: We are free, we are responsible, we are successful.

Democracy needs protection. As our citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms need protection. Protection primarily from corruption, which spawns arbitrariness, lack of freedom,

and injustice. We have only just embarked on shaping such a protective mechanism. Its central element must be the courts. We need to create modern effective courts that operate in accordance with new legislation relating to the judicial system and are based on a modern interpretation of the law.<sup>57</sup>

In closing, Medvedev warned that the bureaucracy and state oligarchs will fight reform:

Attempts will be made by influential groups of corrupt officials and 'entrepreneurs', who do nothing in the way of enterprise, to obstruct our work. They are well settled. They 'have it all.' They are happy with everything. They intend to the end of time to squeeze revenues out of the remnants of Soviet industry and sell off natural riches that belong to all of us. They create nothing new, do not want development, and are afraid of it. But the future does not belong to them. It belongs to us. People like us are the absolute majority. We will act. With patience, pragmatism, consistency, and deliberation. We are going to act right now. To act tomorrow and the day after. We will overcome the crisis, backwardness, and corruption. We will create a new Russia. Forward, Russia!<sup>58</sup>

Most Western Russia watchers argued that "Forward Russia'!" was nothing but more words from a powerless president.<sup>59</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty disparaged Medvedev's call for reform as "laughable,"<sup>60</sup> and London's *Guardian* called it "mournful."<sup>61</sup> This point of view suffers not only from a certain bias and excessive cynicism among many Russia observers about the country's leadership and political culture. In Russia, the words of the country's leader mean something; they are taken as important signals throughout the bureaucracy and cannot be used to promise important plans that the leadership has no intent of fulfilling. Often cryptic and cautious, they nevertheless provide political orientation to politicians and bureaucrats alike. Russian leaders know this and choose their prepared remarks carefully. They also know that even talking about reform poses risks of rising expectations. Such risks are not taken lightly for mere purposes of deception. Raising expectations only to disappoint them is a contributing cause of political instability and regime breakdowns, and Russian leaders know it.

Soon after the publication of Medvedev's manifesto, a round of fraudulent regional and local elections, including the Moscow City Duma elections, held on October 11 produced a controversy that allowed—or perhaps forced—Medvedev to respond in a way uncharacteristic for his predecessors. In response to the vote, the usually tame parties of the State Duma, excluding the victorious Yedinaya Rossiya, walked out of Parliament in protest. In response, Medvedev agreed to meet with the party leaders to iron out matters. The meeting produced an agreement to discuss political reform at a special State Council session in early 2010. Although in this way the scandal surrounding the October elections helped Medvedev in keeping political reform on the agenda, it also forced him to try to contain the scandal and to support the fundamental structure of the present electoral system. That effort discredited him in the eyes of many who hoped for significant change under his presidency and required that the president find a way to restore his reformist legitimacy. It should be remembered, however, that Gorbachev also had to make obeisances to the Soviet system even as he sought to fundamentally reform it. Thus, as he gradually expanded the scope and scale of the anti-Stalinist campaign in the media, Gorbachev rejected the more radical critiques that emerged only to join in them later on. All reformers come out of the system that they are determined

to change, and they must continuously define and redefine the limits of reform in order to avoid a violent shift.

### **The Tandem's Perestroika 2.1**

Medvedev was able to define and limit the agenda of the upcoming State Council meeting and to regain momentum by proposing more reforms for his second year in his second annual presidential address to the Federal Assembly on November 12, 2009.<sup>62</sup> After a year of minor political reforms, Medvedev proposed a second year of small reforms of the political system in 2010; this second wave naturally builds upon, and slightly advances, the liberalization of the first wave, producing a more robust cumulative effect. Medvedev proposed several initiatives that run counter to Putin's past agenda, and in January 2010 he would garner Putin's public support for further political reform.

First, Medvedev promised to facilitate the participation of alternative political parties in regional elections by removing the requirement of collecting signatures in order to be registered. As a first step, he offered to eliminate that requirement in regional elections for parties that had deputies in the regional legislature even if they had none in the State Duma. When the requirement to make deposits was scrapped, the opposition complained that this actually closed a path to elections because there was no longer away to avoid collecting the 200,000 signatures needed for registration. Election commissions, dominated by United Russia, often claim that mistakes in signature lists exceed 5 percent of opposition party lists in order to exclude opposition candidates from races. Opposition parties also complained about the signature requirement because they already needed to show a significant following under laws requiring a certain threshold for membership numbers and for the number of regions in which they maintain a party branch.

Similarly, Medvedev fulfilled his promise to address the Duma parties' complaints of fraud in the Moscow and other regional elections on October 11, calling for legal amendments to put a halt to illegal manipulations of Russia's leaky early voting and absentee ballot procedures. In this way, Medvedev had responded to several of the opposition's chief complaints regarding Putin's counter-reforms of the party and electoral systems. The president also took a step toward lowering the threshold of 7 percent of the vote for parties to secure seats in parliamentary elections, agreeing that the threshold of votes in regional legislatures should be no more than 5 percent. He also proposed that regions should adopt a law mirroring his earlier federal law that guaranteed equal access to state media for parties with seats in the State Duma, and, less significantly, that a new law should equalize or at least limit the disparity between the number of seats in regional legislatures. These proposals and others were discussed at a January 2010 State Council meeting, detailed below.

If augmented each year, such increments of minor reform as those implemented in each of the tandem's first two years will produce major reform and a redemocratization of Russia's political system. The most essential steps in this process will have to be the end of the state's use of administrative resources (i.e., state institutions like the courts and police) to tilt the playing field against opposition parties and the enforcement of laws that forbid cheating and falsifying election results—whether through manipulation of early and absentee voting mechanisms, vote-counting, or recording ballot tallies. Indeed, until this is done, re-democratization will remain limited, and the overall system will remain stealthily authoritarian.<sup>63</sup>

Beyond the political system, Medvedev's address to the Federal Assembly took more bold shots at two key elements of the Putin era: the state's role in the economy and

corporations and the ongoing jihadi terrorism in the North Caucasus. He ordered Putin's government to quickly prepare proposals by March 1, 2010; first, regarding the transformation of some state companies into joint stock companies and privatizing others; and, second, on guaranteeing the transparency of the few that remain. This built on his prior statements calling for the removal of state officials from the boards of state corporations and their replacement by hired professional chief executives.

It also reinforced previous announcements made by lower-ranking officials regarding an ambitious privatization plan for 2010. On September 23, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov announced the government would embark on a major privatization campaign in 2010. Shuvalov, who chairs the working group on privatization for 2010, revealed that some 5,500 state enterprises could be transformed into joint stock companies and sold off in the next year and that significant stakes in companies already publicly traded, such as Rosneft, could be sold.<sup>64</sup> Economic Development Minister Elvira Nabiullin, providing updated preliminary information on the government's 2010 privatization plan in October, said more than 450 packages of state-owned shares of various enterprises, including ports and airports, would be sold and produce about 70 billion rubles in privatization income. According to business daily *Vedomosti*, this would represent a ten-fold increase over the privatization income originally planned for the draft 2010 budget.<sup>65</sup> If carried out, this will be the largest sell-off of state-owned assets since the 1990s.

For his part, Putin endorsed the overall privatization policy, noting that as the economic recovery proceeded, the state would "systematically and pointedly decrease state interference in the economy," and "stimulate privatization."<sup>66</sup> At the same time, he invited foreign oil companies to invest in Siberia's Yamal oil fields.

With these economic policies, the tandem will be reversing a core Putin policy of nationalizing a good part of the Russian economy and its reliance on large state conglomerates. To be sure, part of the motivation for the privatization scheme is to increase budget revenues in a period of lower oil prices, ruble volatility and devaluation, global economic crisis and, for the first time in eight years, a budget deficit (of 8.3 percent) in 2009. However, Medvedev's above-mentioned pre-crisis statements in support of new right conservatism in the Svanidze interviews suggest that the crisis is a pretext not the sole reason behind the de-nationalization policy.

At the same time, Medvedev will not immediately abandon the state sector. To drive economic modernization, Medvedev has decided to invest some \$20 million of state budget funds in several state companies as temporary "institutions of development" such as Russian Nanotechnology (Rosnano), Russian Technology (Rostekhnology), VneshEkonombank (VEB), Russian Venture Company (RVK) and others to drive innovation in the five spheres he targeted in "Forward Russia!" and his presidential address: medicine, space and telecommunications, energy conservation, atomic energy, and supercomputers.<sup>67</sup> Both the investment and privatization campaign could help co-opt hardline state oligarchs and *siloviki*, neutralizing opposition to real capitalism much as "spontaneous privatization" in the late Perestroika era removed some opposition to Gorbachev and the voucher privatization scheme did the same to the red directors' opposition to Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s.

Regarding the North Caucasus, Medvedev has referred to it as Russia's "biggest domestic problem"<sup>68</sup> despite Putin's repeated claims that Chechen separatism, then jihadi terrorism had been defeated and the region stabilized. He announced a new package of economic development funding and an administrative-territorial reform to ensure its proper

spending. Building on his \$900 million economic assistance program for Chechnya, he also announced a six-year \$1.1 billion assistance package for jihad-plagued Ingushetia to stimulate job creation,<sup>69</sup> and pledged to appoint a special federal government minister to oversee the region.<sup>70</sup> In January, Medvedev transferred Stavropol Krai and all the republics of the Southern Federal District (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia), with the exception of Adygeya, into a newly created North Caucasus Federal District and appointed a Krasnoyarsk Krai governor and businessman Aleksandr Khloponin as its simultaneous presidential envoy and deputy prime minister, respectively. The new federal district and Khloponin's high status could help ensure that federal funds aimed at promoting the North Caucasus's economic development are in fact used for that purpose.

### **Reforming the *Siloviki***

As 2009 came to a close, events facilitated a new surge of glasnost and reform in two *siloviki* departments. On November 16, lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, died in prison from maltreatment at the hands of his Russian guards and wardens.<sup>71</sup> The outcry from Western and Russian human rights activists and others prompted Medvedev's first major institution-wide reform. Magnitsky, a lawyer from hedge fund Hermitage Capital, had been arrested while investigating police crime and corruption connected with the embezzlement of \$230 million of state funds by Moscow MVD and other officials, information that he stumbled upon while researching a legal dispute between Hermitage Capital and Russian tax officials. Medvedev was aggressive in his response to this crime and used it to initiate a fundamental reform of Russia's brutal penal system. On November 24 he ordered the Prosecutor General and Justice Ministry to take charge of the probe into Magnitsky's death after local and prison authorities appeared to be dragging their feet. Hours later the prosecutor's Investigative Committee announced a criminal case had been opened, suggesting Medvedev's pressure had sparked the move.<sup>72</sup>

The investigation uncovered evidence that prison authorities had refused the lawyer badly needed medical care. Medvedev responded strongly and in unprecedented fashion by sacking numerous officials, including twenty top federal and regional officials of the Russian Federal Penal Service (FSIN) and police officials. Among those fired were the heads of the Moscow Oblast, St. Petersburg, Leningrad Oblast, and Transbaikalia Krai regional branches of the FSIN; the head of the FSIN's Personnel Administration, Prison and Detention Centers Administration, and Execution of Sentences Administration; 16 prison wardens; and the chief of Matrosskaya Tishina prison and head of the tax department of the Moscow MVD, Anatoly Mikhalkin. According to Hermitage, Mikhalkin signed several key orders in the criminal probe against Hermitage and Magnitsky, and supervised the investigator who was responsible for a \$230 million fraud committed by corrupt officials the fund says it uncovered.

As noted above, Medvedev had already ordered a reform in the MVD that required high standards in dealing with the public, respect for citizens' rights, proper personal conduct, and the combating of police corruption. The Magnitsky scandal, however, meant more serious action was necessary. Public outcry and Medvedev's leadership in the Magnitsky case prompted others to rally against the MVD. Leading member of the Yedinaya Rossiya faction in the State Duma Andrei Makarov proposed breaking up the 1.2 million-strong MVD and starting from scratch: "You can neither modernize nor reform the Interior

Ministry. You can only abolish it. The whole police force needs to be decommissioned and cleansed with help from civil society and human rights groups.”<sup>73</sup> A subsequent proposal from the Public Chamber to split the MVD into federal and local police services was shot down, however.<sup>74</sup> Even MVD chief Nurgaliev noted that citizens should be allowed to strike back at police who attack them without cause: “May a citizen hit back at a policeman who has attacked him? Yes he may; if he is not a criminal, if he is walking along quietly and breaking no rules... We are all equal, and a citizen is doubly equal... If there is an attack then there should be self-defense. When a police officer attacks, then he is a criminal in uniform who should be isolated and put in jail.”<sup>75</sup>

Medvedev first ordered a reform of the entire penal system and an immediate investigation into the treatment of detainees charged with financial crimes, and made proposals for improving their conditions. Earlier in the year, Medvedev had already sponsored a new law providing for commissions of independent observers in detention centers. Rights activist Alekseeva assessed this reform’s implementation very positively: “In the end in many regions we managed to set up commissions of independent observers—they are comprised of human rights activists and journalists who deal with prisoners’ problems. They received more rights, they received a chance to visit places of confinement, talk to prisoners and receive complaints.”<sup>76</sup> Following from Medvedev’s order, FSIN Director Aleksandr Reymer announced these reforms on Russian radio station Ekho Moskvyy in mid-December: separating prisoners according to the severity of their crimes; making all labor in prison voluntary; and reducing the number of crimes, especially financial crimes, for which pre-trial detention is allowed.<sup>77</sup> It has been announced more recently that 755 hard-labor colonies are slated for closure. More crimes, in particular petty ones, will be punished by house arrest and probation, and there will be a greater emphasis placed on the rehabilitation of prisoners.<sup>78</sup>

On December 29, Medvedev fired the deputy chief of the FSIN and signed legal amendments making it illegal to hold those charged with tax and other white collar crimes in pre-trial detention, softening sentences for such crimes, and providing a two-month grace period for fully avoiding indictment by paying delinquent tax bills. The General Prosecutor’s Office had endeavored to block the Duma’s passage of some of these amendments and to exert pressure on Medvedev to withdraw it. The Kremlin appears to have overcome this resistance by sweetening the deal with a provision that beginning on January 1, 2011, all tax crime investigations were transferred from the jurisdiction of the MVD to the Prosecutor General’s Investigative Committee.<sup>79</sup>

Reform of the MVD followed, facilitated by more signs of MVD vice. In December, an unknown policeman, Aleksei Dymovsky, emerged on the Internet leveling corruption charges against his MVD outfit in Novorossysk and requesting a meeting with the president.<sup>80</sup> A flood of similar allegations followed from other police officers. Although Medvedev never met with Dymovsky or any others, he kicked off the New Year with a robust response. In early January, he issued a decree ordering major reforms of the MVD. This represented the most ambitious reform initiative of his presidency, and his second major institution-wide reform in a month.

Medvedev’s decision is consistent with the logic of implementing great reforms. It could impart greater impetus to his plans for economic modernization and political thawing by removing a key institutional barrier to reform and the rule of law. Just as the CPSU was the main obstacle blocking Gorbachev’s Perestroika, the MVD is probably the main obstacle

to reform in today's Russia, with the possible exceptions of the FSB and the GRU (Main Administration for Intelligence or military intelligence). The move against the MVD has been long-awaited by Russians. For years, polls have shown that Russians regard the MVD as the most corrupt and dangerous force in their lives.<sup>81</sup> With the exception of terrorism emanating from the Caucasus, the MVD is the leading violator of citizens' political, civil and human rights.

Immediately, some Western observers questioned the seriousness of Medvedev's MVD reform initiative, but objective analysis suggests it is a serious and concerted effort at comprehensive reform. It has the potential to put the MVD in its place, ensure it fulfills its police functions without massive corruption and incompetence, and turn it into an organ that inspires increased trust among Russians. Medvedev's decree was strikingly outspoken about the breakdown of the MVD as a functional and reliable law enforcement body: "(I)n recent times incidents of the violation of legality and service discipline have occurred which are provoking a fundamentally negative reaction in society and diminishing the authority of government,"<sup>82</sup> he noted, adding that the MVD is judged not to be "meeting contemporary requirements" and "needing modernization." The decree also stipulated many key changes to be prepared in proposal form by March 31, 2010 and entered into force by January 1, 2012. Thus, the decree envisaged a two-year period during which the reforms will be designed and implemented. A period of such length is both necessary and sufficient for implementing a major reform in a country with a strong, reform-resistant state bureaucracy—especially one like the MVD.

The MVD reforms are ambitious and broad in scope. Two of the reforms are designed to sever regional governments' control over local departments of the MVD. The first is to hand over all organizational and appointment power to the federal executive branch. The second is to terminate all regional funding for the MVD and concentrate all budget funds for the department in Moscow. Although this strengthens an already hyper-centralized Russian state, it is necessary for undertaking any fundamental changes, which would be blocked in most regions by ambitious and corrupt governors and/or regional MVD chiefs. Central control over some of the functions carried out by the MVD—such as investigation—is common in democratic states; in the US, for example, provincial or state departments of the FBI or Justice Department are not staffed or run by governors. A third reform is designed to break the power of regional governors and MVD chiefs by requiring that the personnel comprising the top command of regional MVD departments be rotated. This could be effective in reducing regional resistance to the reforms and breaking up corrupt regional clans by limiting governor-MVD ties and preventing police cover-ups for corrupt or criminal regional clans, which are often based in, or involved with, regional MVD leaderships.

The fourth and fifth reforms are interrelated. The former consists of 20 percent reduction in MVD personnel and a reduction in the number of regional deputy chiefs, with the money saved for their upkeep devoted to increasing the salaries of remaining MVD personnel. An increase in the salaries of MVD personnel has long been recommended by international and domestic corruption watchdog NGOs as crucial for reducing bribetaking and abuse of office for profit within Russia's law enforcement organs. A sixth reform ordering a review of the way housing is provided to MVD personnel may also be related to this problem. A seventh orders changes to the MVD's structure and functions in order to streamline it by ridding it of structures that do not or should not belong to the MVD. An eighth reform targets the MVD's training academies and recruitment practices.

The former are to be streamlined, and the latter are to be transformed so that they will take into account recruits' "moral-ethical and psychological qualities towards the goal of promoting the level of professionalism." The ninth and a most important reform—one also related to personnel training but crucial to Medvedev's anti-corruption policy—is "the realization of anti-corruption educational programs of professional and continuing professional education for the various categories of personnel."<sup>83</sup> The fact that this decree was issued on the eve of Russia's long winter holiday season suggests that Medvedev perhaps sought to catch hardline elements off-guard.

In a year-end interview broadcast on all three Russian state television channels, Medvedev described the purpose and goals of this reform in stark and ambitious terms, noting "there will be and there are needed sufficiently harsh, serious changes."<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the comprehensive nature of the proposed reform suggests that it is anything but a PR action, as suggested by some observers, and is rather a concerted effort to resolve one of Russia's most vexing problems—the lack of rule of law in one of the country's most important and crime- and corruption-riddled institutions.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, many liberal activists warmly welcomed Medvedev's initiative. The matriarch of Russia's human rights movement, head of the Moscow Helsinki Group Lyudmila Alekseyeva, told journalists: "I am very happy that the president is dealing with this. Human rights activists have been talking about this for a long time."<sup>86</sup> As one journalist acknowledged: "If implemented, the reform... would amount to one of the most ambitious reforms of Russia's bloated bureaucracy since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union."<sup>87</sup> More than any other move by Medvedev, this reform put to rest the frequently heard assertion that his presidency is one of mere words, a feint to cover neo-totalitarian deeds with real power reserved for Putin.

Medvedev ended 2009 by signaling that 2010 could be a year of major reforms. On December 14, he sent a message to a Moscow conference commemorating late Soviet-era human rights activist Andrei Sakharov noting the relevance of Sakharov's ideas to "the challenges faced by modern Russian society"—something that Putin had never done.<sup>88</sup> He then signaled to the electoral system to clean up its act by acknowledging that the controversial October regional and local elections were plagued by "violations" and supporting a repeat of the most deeply flawed of them—the local and city elections held in Derbent, Dagestan.<sup>89</sup> In a year-end interview broadcast on all three Russian state television channels, Medvedev said that he would continue the process of "modernization of the political system."<sup>90</sup> Days later, he reiterated that there is a need to change Russia's political system: "There is a need to considerably change both our economy and the social sphere, and certainly the political system, because nothing is hardened, even the largest successes that we have recently achieved do not mean that it's time for us to relax, exhale and do nothing anymore."<sup>91</sup>

On January 22, 2010, Medvedev convened the expanded session of the State Council to discuss the general issue of political system reforms and the specifics of his second tranche of limited political reforms. The special meeting was attended by the leaders of all of Russia's registered political parties (including the liberal opposition parties Yabloko and Right Cause), regional governors and other top officials, and it highlighted both the differences and the continuing partnership between Medvedev and his predecessor. Putin accepted a cautious, albeit reform-centered, program for the Russian political system, warning against both instability and despotism: "We need to bring in necessary amendments but we need to act extremely carefully,"... "we should not allow Ukrainization of political life in Russia but we should on no account slide in the other direction towards

totalitarianism and despotism.”<sup>92</sup> He also responded to Internet complaints about electoral fraud of the variety that was pervasive in the October 2009 local elections, exclaiming: “On the Internet 50 percent is porn material. Why should we refer to the Internet?” In contrast, Medvedev, an avid Internet user, seemed to side with liberals at the meeting in lamenting “the virtually non-existent” political competition in the country and voicing his amazement over Yedinaya Rossiya’s tight grip on power at the municipal level, holding half of the seats on municipal councils countrywide.<sup>93</sup> Subsequently, Medvedev reiterated his calls for more honest elections and proposed adoption measures to ensure the enforcement of laws that forbid cheating and falsifying election results. That the tandem has not pushed for more radical reforms of the electoral system confirms the view that they intend to progress gradually in order to avoid instability and any “birch revolution.”

Journalist Fred Weir referred to the meeting as “an amazing event, the first time we’ve ever seen top leaders confronted with this kind of criticism to their faces”... “That, in itself, is an optimistic thing and gives rise to hopes of real change.”<sup>94</sup> Of course, the Kremlin’s leaders and their minions across the USSR were subject to such criticism “to their faces,” beginning as far back as the Perestroika-era October 1987 CPSU CC plenum, and certainly from the opening session of the USSR Congress of Peoples’ Deputies in May 1989 during the first Perestroika. Nevertheless, Petrov’s point about the present pertains.

The meeting and Medvedev’s new proposals had their effect. In the March 2010 regional parliamentary and mayoral elections, there was a visible reduction in the use of administrative resources. The Kremlin’s Yedinaya Rossiya party lost majorities in several regional parliaments, and opposition candidates won at least 40 mayoral elections. Nikolay Petrov, an analyst from the Carnegie Endowment’s Russia Center who previously had rejected vigorously the possibility for reform under Medvedev, now acknowledged in the wake of the March 2010 elections that “(s)ince President Dmitry Medvedev proclaimed that it was not enough to have only one or two factions represented in national elections, the authorities have opened the door to all four parties this time around. The fact that the Kremlin has gone back to the previous four-party model and has rejected the single-party sweep we saw in the elections in October is definitely a positive sign.”<sup>95</sup>

### Conclusion

In 1985, not a single published Sovietologist predicted that Gorbachev would be a great reformer, and even as major reforms in domestic and foreign policy were underway most denied they would be fully implemented, no less lead to serious change. But when the Soviet flag was lowered and replaced by the Russian tricolor over the Kremlin in December 1991, it became difficult to deny the historical nature of Perestroika’s domestic and foreign policy, in its successes and failures.

Now, a new spring has come in Moscow. It is not unusual and even typical, regardless of time, place or regime type, that a transfer of power from one leader to another brings policy change. This paper has demonstrated that under the tandem and Medvedev’s presidency, both the leadership’s approach and policies have undergone significant changes in the direction of greater rule of law, more pluralism and democracy, and less state interference in the economy. The view that change under the tandem is confined to Medvedev’s words and that no concrete policy changes have occurred is untenable.

To be sure, the bureaucracy may succeed in scuttling the tandem’s reforms, and the risk of a regime split hovers over the tandem as it did during Perestroika 1.0. The

road to real democracy is still a long one, and numerous authoritarian remnants persist. Some of the tandem's policies need to be implemented, but the promised changes have been carried out and new and expanded reforms are constantly in the pipeline. The open discussion at the January 2010 State Council session on political reforms and Putin's cautious endorsement of Medvedev's call for gradual reform of the political system, followed by the more free and fair March 2010 elections, both marked important turning points in the push for Perestroika 2.0. The MVD and penal system are set for major reforms, and some elements of the rule of law are being introduced. On July 14 of this year, Medvedev acknowledged that "for now there have not been any significant successes" in the war against corruption, but added there had been "some results," including a 10 percent increase in reporting on crimes of bribery, over 36 thousand regulatory acts containing so-called corruption risk factors were uncovered by prosecutors, and anti-corruption plans, structures, and targeted programmes were created in every Russian region.<sup>96</sup> Fighting corruption will be a gradual and longterm process, as it is almost everywhere. Indeed, Medvedev immediately proposed new anti-corruption measures, including extending income and property reporting requirements to officials at the regional and local level, vetting local laws and decrees to corruption analysis, and increasing legislative assemblies' supervisory powers over corruption through hearings and investigations.

Although foreign policy is not a central focus of this paper, the tandem's first year saw Medvedev take the lead in several new foreign policy initiatives that were also denigrated by the US commentariat. During his first trips abroad as president in June 2008, he called for both a new European energy agreement and the convening of a European-wide security conference for establishing a new security regime to be codified into law by a legally binding international treaty. Since then a new START treaty has been signed and may be ratified. A bilateral or multilateral approach that involves Russia seems to be replacing the Bush administration's unilateral approach to anti-missile defense. Moscow has settled border issues with Norway, and there are rapprochements with Poland, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. American, French, Polish, and Ukrainian troops marched on Red Square in a parade marking the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. Most recently, a new foreign policy doctrine has appeared that mandates closer relations with the West, within the context of the recent "multivectoral" policy in order to facilitate Russia's technological and economic modernization.

Medvedev is gradually gaining authority and more power, and Putin is loosening the leash. Medvedev's coverage in the media equals or surpasses that of Putin, and the former's popularity and trust ratings lag just a few percentage points behind the latter's.<sup>97</sup> More Russians think it is Putin rather than Medvedev who is in charge, but the number of such Russians is slowly declining. Indeed, except for sporadic forays into foreign policy, Putin has settled into the economic policymaking as premier and avoids involvement in the president's prerogatives, at least in public.

However, there are significant, if still only potential, threats to the tandem's unity. Medvedev could reverse policy too quickly for Putin's taste, or a new economic, sovereignty, or security crisis could emerge. In that event, Medvedev could be made Putin's scapegoat, or visa-versa. Medvedev's apparently stronger ideological commitment to economic and political liberalism could combine with power competition between the Kremlin and the White House to produce separate, even antagonistic Medvedev and Putin teams. Consequently, the

Medvedev era could see a gradual re-ideologization of Russian politics and a potentially dangerous, even destabilizing regime split between the Medvedev and Putin camps.

If a serious crisis forces Putin to seek another course reversal, to rein in or otherwise move against Medvedev, or attempt a return to the presidency by mid-2011, the outcome of any such a gambit will depend on how much authority and real power Medvedev holds. At that time, a decision will have to be made about who will run in the 2012 presidential elections and how the tandem will participate and conduct the December 2011 Duma elections. Medvedev's team—if there is one to speak of separate from Putin's—is weak relative to Putin's, but perhaps not so much as many assume. Medvedev has key allies among lawyers and *civiliki* in the Justice Ministry, the Arbitration and Supreme Court chairmen, and the chief of his presidential administration, and he has replaced one-fourth of the gubernatorial corps, making several innovative appointments from the opposition and *civiliki*, including Kirov Oblast Governor Nikita Belykh and Karachai-Cherkessia President Boris Ebzeev. In addition, as Medvedev himself notes, all officials in Putin's presidential administration are also his colleagues, and he has more contact with many of them than did Putin.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, as head of Putin's presidential administration Medvedev played a major role in many Putin-era appointees in office—some ranging far beyond the presidential administration itself.

But Medvedev does not need an independent team, separate from and more powerful than Putin's team, unless he either loses Putin's support or wants to move more quickly toward further reforms than does Putin. At this point, there is little evidence that there are substantial differences within the tandem regarding the direction or pace of reform. Both Putin and Medvedev have drawn upon the lesson, as have many Russians, that rapid, simultaneous reforms and revolutions are not necessary.

If further down the road the tandem and elite do split, any weakness of the Medvedev team could leave the president with little recourse other than to reach out to civil society in order to cobble together a more broad pro-reform coalition. In a revolutionary situation with a strong opposition, he could forge a “transition pact” negotiated with opposition forces and attempt a radical reform of the political system to ensure a free and fair election battle, for both his support base and his own political survival. Should Medvedev seek to completely democratize the political and electoral systems in a battle with the *siloviki* and/or Putin, then a reformed MVD and the courts will be important allies in ensuring fair elections.

But the most likely trajectory is the Medvedev-Putin tandem moving the country through a gradual, imposed transition to Russian-style democracy. Clearly, the tandem rejects revolutionary methods, presumably whether initiated from below or above, and it—Medvedev in particular—rejects muddling through under the ineffective, backward, soft authoritarianism that characterizes Putin's eight years in the presidency. Thus, Putin, Medvedev's elder by eleven years, will gradually give way to his protégé, perhaps attempting to alternate with him in the presidency for several terms. This is likely the safest and surest path from the promise of another Moscow spring to the hoped-for Russian summer of a capitalist democracy and a solid alliance with the West.

## NOTES

1. Gordon M. Hahn, "Is A Russian Thaw Coming?," *Russia: Other Points of View*, April 18, 2008, available at [www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/2008/04/is-a-russian-th.html](http://www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/2008/04/is-a-russian-th.html). Events early in Medvedev's term confirmed that a real, if slow-moving thaw had already begun. See also Gordon M. Hahn, "More Signs of a Possible Thaw Under Medvedev," *Russia: Other Points of View*, June 2, 2008, available at [www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/2008/06/more-signs-of-a.html](http://www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/2008/06/more-signs-of-a.html) (accessed July 20, 2010).

2. Gordon M. Hahn, "The Politics of Unleashing," *Russia Profile*, July 1, 2008, available at <http://www.russiaprofile.ru/page.php?pageid=Politics&articleid=a1214911570> (accessed July 20, 2010).

3. Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "It Is Still Putin's Russia," *Current History* 107, Issue 711 (October 2008): 315-321; 320.

4. Daniel Klimages, "Russia: Selective Capitalism and Kleptocracy," in *Undermining Democracy: 21st Century Authoritarians* (Freedom House/RFE/RL/Radio Free Asia, 2009), available at <http://www.underminingdemocracy.org>.

5. For more examples, see Andrew Wilson, "Russia's economic crisis—no cue for 'Perestroika 2.0'," *Open Democracy* 4 (September 2009); Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, "Conclusion," in Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring, ed., *After Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010): 291-305; Nikolai Petrov's comments in "Medvedev Is Permitted 'Rhetoric,' Not 'Practical Decisions,'" *Svobodnaya Pressa* 28 (December 2009), in *Johnson's Russia List* 31 (December 2009); Nikolai Petrov, "The Virtual President," *The Moscow Times*, September 29, 2009; "Political Commentators Discuss 2012 Presidential Election Issue," *Svobodnaya Pressa*, January 1, 2010, in *Johnson's Russia List*, 2010-#4, January 7, 2010; and Alan Cullison, "Economic Ills Spur Russian Gestures of Openness," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 2009.

6. See Dmitri Trenin, "Kremlin two-step: modernize or marginalize," *Japan Times*, January 10, 2010 and Nikolai Petrov, "A Positive Step Toward Free Elections," *The Moscow Times*, March 23, 2010. By October 2009, the Heritage Foundation's Ariel Cohen seemed open to a Medvedevian thaw in Ariel Cohen, "Blood Brothers No More?," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2009. A month later an uncharacteristically objective *Washington Post* editorial was relatively positive regarding the significance of Medvedev's straight talk about Russia's enormous problems and challenges, even as it tried to maintain its standard line. The *Post* even adopted my own argument, applying the Perestroika model to measure expectations about the possible pace of reforms: "(I)t's worth remembering that the political transformation that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago this month began with another Kremlin leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, speaking unaccustomed truths about his country. A lot of people then believed that Mr. Gorbachev didn't mean it, or had no ability to act on his words; they were proved wrong. Let's hope that those of us who have doubted Mr. Medvedev's capacity to reverse Russia's descent into authoritarianism and aggression will be pleasantly surprised as well." "Mr. Medvedev's Glasnost," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2009. This grudging caveat, however, had all the appearances of an attempt to cover all bases.

7. On Putin's early calls for moving away from Russia's dependence on natural resource exports see, for example, his 2007 interview with *Time* magazine in which he said: "Our challenge today is not just to drill holes in the ground, extract oil and gas and sell them to the highest bidder. Our task is to diversify the economy and make it more innovative. For this purpose we are creating new institutions for development and special economic zones, which is why we are paying particular attention to the development of education and science." Interview with *Time*, December 12, 2007, in *Johnson's Russia List*, No. 260, December 20, 2007. *Time* translated and/or edited his remarks, which read differently but contain the same ideas, including: "But let us remember, during the Soviet Union, there were times when oil and gas were very expensive. Sky-high, with no benefit for the Soviet Union. We just dumbly bought some goods from the West and spent everything here. Now we pursue altogether different economic policies. We are retooling our taxation system. We've created reserve funds. We've restored and rehabilitated entire economic industries. We not only drill the earth for oil and gas, we are now diversifying our economy on the basis of innovation. We

have set up special economic zones. As a result of all of this, we are paying special attention to the development of our education and science. Going forward we would like to develop based on innovation.” “A Tsar Is Born - Person of the Year,” *Time*, December 19, 2007, available at [http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753\\_1690757\\_1695787-3,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1690757_1695787-3,00.html). On Putin’s moves away from hyper-centralization see Katherine Graney, *On Khans and Kremllins: Tatarstan and the Future of Ethno-Federalism in Russia* (Plymouth, U.K.: Lexington Books, 2009): 140-152.

8. The plan’s five basic goals and principles were laid out in several United Russia party documents and included: (1) development of Russia as a unique civilization and the protection of a common cultural space, the Russian language and traditions; (2) the building of a competitive Russian economy by way of changing over from an economy based on natural resource exports to one based on manufacturing, high technology, and innovation; (3) a new quality of life for citizens achieved by developing Medvedev’s ‘national projects’, raising salaries, pension reform, and housing assistance; (4) the establishment of the institutions of a civil society through the stimulation of social mobility and activeness, the support of social initiatives and the development of the individual’s potential and ability to defend his or hers legal rights, in particular through an effective judicial system; and (5) a foreign policy pursuing the creation of a multipolar and the security of the Russian state, its territory, its citizens through the improvement of the military’s defense capabilities, modernization of the army, and provision of the most modern weapons and technology. Many of these goals and principles obviously foreshadow Medvedev’s and the tandem’s policies. See “Reshenie sovместnogo zasedaniya Vyshego soveta i General’nogo soveta Vserossiiskoi politicheskoi partii ‘Yedinaya Rossiya’,” 29 May 29, 2007, available at <http://old.edinros.ru/news.html?id=120703> and “Boris Gryzlov: Plan Putina myobyazany realizovat’ v polnom ob’eme,” *Edinros.ru*, May 22, 2007, available at <http://old.edinros.ru/news.html?id=120703>. Putin unveiled the program “Strategy 2020” in September 2007. See also “Kontseptsiya dolgosrochnogo sotsial’no-ekonomicheskogo razvitiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” Ministry of Economic Trade and Development, Moscow, September 2007, available at [www.economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/myconnect/economylib/mert/welcome/economy/macroeconomy/administmanagementdirect/doc1202863991297](http://www.economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/myconnect/economylib/mert/welcome/economy/macroeconomy/administmanagementdirect/doc1202863991297). Although it resembled Putin’s plan and the tandem’s subsequent policies, it served a different political purpose. Rather than for a parliamentary election, the strategy led to a series of forums to be held across the country on a permanent basis beginning in Moscow in April 2008 serving the mobilization of the United Russia party and other potential supporters behind Medvedev in the March 2008 presidential elections.

9. For example, see Victor Yasmann, “Could Yakunin Be ‘First-Called’ As Putin’s Successor?,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 21, 2006, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1069345.html>; Brian Whitmore, “Dark Horses Emerge In Presidential Transition,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 9, 2007; Peter Rutland, “Post-Putin Russia: Political Rumbblings, Potential Presidents,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2, Issue 123 (June 23, 2005), available at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews%5Bany\\_of\\_the\\_words%5D=Yakunin&tx\\_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=30578&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=e773c42aa5](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=Yakunin&tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=30578&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=e773c42aa5); and Evgeni Novikov, “Putin’s Political Party and the Rise of Sergei Naryshkin,” *Jamestown Foundation Occasional Paper*, August 2007, available at <http://www.jamestown.org/docs/Jamestown-NovikovNaryshkin.pdf>.

10. See, for example, Yekaterina Karacheva and Yekaterina Butorina, “Sledstvie pod podozreniem,” *Vremya novostei*, March 31, 2008, available at [www.vremya.ru/2008/53/4/200783.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2008/53/4/200783.html) and Aleksei Ivlev and Viktor Paukov, “Zakon i neporyadok,” *Vremya novostei*, December 7, 2008, available at <http://www.vremya.ru/2007/225/46/193666.html>.

11. See Gordon M. Hahn, “Downgrading the Siloviki: Putin’s New Configuration of Power,” *Russia—Other Points of View*, July 21, 2008, available at <http://www.russiaotherpointsofview.com/2008/07/the-siloviki-do.html>.

12. William King and David Cleland, *Strategic Planning and Policy* (New York: Nostrand Reinhold, 1978): 46-47, as cited in Clifford G. Gaddy and Andrew C. Kuchins, “Putin’s Plan,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 31, no. 2, available at <http://www.gees.org/documentos/Documen-02930>.

pdf, 117-129 (accessed July 26, 2010).

13. Stephen D. White and McAllister, "Putin and His Supporters," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 3, (May 2003): 383-99; and Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000*, (Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2003).

14. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline, March 29, 2008, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144070.html>; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newline, May 9, 2008, available at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144108.html> (accessed July 26, 2010).

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