

# MEDVEDEV NEEDS TO HAVE NO FEAR IN REFUTING MYTHS

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is a well-known Russian economist, political scientist, and public intellectual. He has a Doctor of Economics and is a director at the Research centre of postindustrial society as well as a publisher and chief editor of the Free

Thought. He also serves as a councilor for the external and defensive policy (SVOP), and is the author of more than three hundred published works that have been released in Russia, France, Great Britain, US and China. Among his large body of work, he has published thirteen monographs, four of which are translated into English, French, Japanese, and Chinese, including *The Splintered civilization* (1999)

**RJ** Dear Vladislav Leonidovich, is it appropriate to view the campaign for the 2012 elections as having already begun? If so, is it possible at such an early stage to determine the questions and concerns that will come to define this campaign?

Often, political scientists describe that which is desirable as reality.

Allow me to continue in this way. The 2012 Russian elections will only occur if President Dmitry Medvedev and former president Vladimir Putin compete with each other. While the probability of such a scenario is extremely low (given the current conditions of Russian 'managed democracy'), such competition would nevertheless help to improve the overall image of Russian politics. However, since the Russian elite's logic prevents them from admitting to such a collision, the campaign will not really be an election but rather a plebiscite. Moreover, the campaign will probably not start at any time that suits the mass media, political experts, or even the potential candidates, but rather at a time when one of the two most likely candidates, having discussed all options with the other, declares his intention to stand for election. In reality, the day this campaign begins will effectively be the same day it ends, and the questions that usually define the relationship between voters and the candidates will not have any value. The public voice will be divided into two camps: one that supports the model generated in Russia in 2000-2008, and another one that opposes it. The opponents will form a minority regardless of how much or how little tampering is involved in the election results.

**RJ** Nowadays the environmental question is one of the main concerns in Russia, America, and Europe. Does this indicate that the public is tired of talking about the economy and that America and Russia are more responsive towards environmental issues?

with environmental issues. To a lesser degree, Russians still take interest in energy issues. However, **the economy will remain at the centre of any election in every country of the world for at least the next three years, or until the consequences of the recent financial crisis are fully resolved.** In Russia, environmentalism holds the same prominence as it did in Germany during the first half of the 1980s. That is to say that presently, sewage drains into rivers where people swim, and the pollution of fresh water and factory exhausts in local communities are a cause of great concern. The sense of a national environmental consciousness in Russia is not present, whereas in America the situation is approaching a new level of development where the concern for the environment is becoming increasingly prominent. Nevertheless, this does not deter Americans from buying the most powerful cars in the world and from using twice as much energy as leading European countries. Moreover, America has also refused to sign international agreements that limit the emission of greenhouse gasses.

**RJ** Barak Obama's campaign slogan focused on 'change,' while Dmitry Medvedev's focused on 'modernization.' In your opinion, what themes are likely to dominate in 2012, and how will they measure up against the slogans of 2008?

I am not sure that Medvedev's modernization slogan represented the same trend as Obama's campaign for change. Unlike Obama, who immediately started 'dismantling' the Bush legacy, Medvedev has never claimed

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In regards to what you are saying, Russia is definitely an exception, as its citizens do not concern themselves

to break with Putin's policy. The modernization concept was issued later and, in many ways, was a reac-



tion to the financial crisis and to growing insecurity as an unstable 'energy superpower.' Although a supporter of modernization, Medvedev will only adhere to such a slogan as far as it proves to be beneficial by 2012.

Without a doubt, Obama is more radical than Medvedev. His new team came to power in America and essentially changed how the American social state functioned. They created entirely new conditions for financiers and encouraged greater openness towards the rest of the world. Yet Obama is in a situation similar to that of Medvedev. Both leaders have begun a series of changes that will be tested in 2012 for public support. **In America, the most popular slogan for the Democrats will focus on allowing the President to finish his reforms, while Republicans will most likely cry out for the need to rescue the country from socialism.** At the present moment, it is difficult to determine what side will be more convincing. This scenario most likely will not happen in Russia, since the reformer will probably give way to Putin who is not associated with any reforms.

However, no one will completely discredit Medvedev's term, and there may yet be slogans that appear, and the main candidate will prefer the attitude of 'working, instead of wasting time on conducting a campaign.'

**RJ** *Will relations with America and Europe be at the centre of attention during the 2012 Russian election campaign? Will the opponents of the current Presidents of Russia and the USA demand a revision of the Reset policy?*

No, they won't. 'Reset' does not provide any visible results that can be used for pre-election purposes. No responsible Russian politician will criticize Obama's America after eight years of President Bush. Moreover, during the next few years, Europe will become increasingly preoccupied with itself and will not be able to take any interest in Russia. Currently, only the opposition calls for Russia to join the EU. Such an option would be too restrictive for Russian elites used to the atmosphere or the lack of restraint. In regards to the USA and Europe, Russia is a peripheral problem. 'Reset' will not be discussed during the campaign since too little

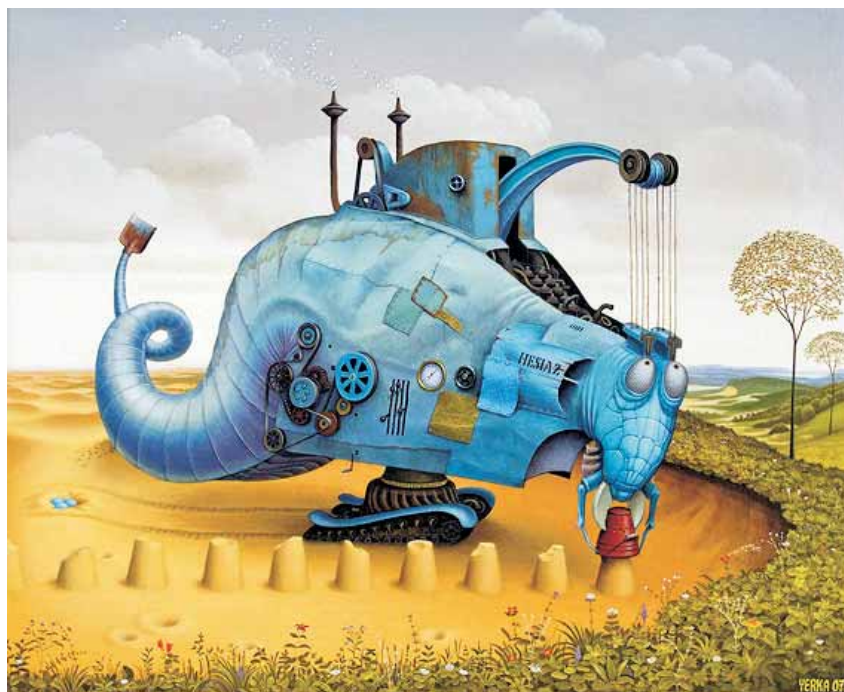
American voters actually know what it means.

**RJ** *Do you expect the political agenda to be revised in 2012? What issues do you think should be resolved? And when considering the probable candidates, who would you like to see succeed and gain public support in either the Russian or American electoral race?*

The 2012 agenda cannot be defined with the categories 'left' or 'right.' Many Americans will certainly criticize Obama's social reforms and will want to shift to the right. Nevertheless, very few individuals will be ready to openly apologize for the market elements and the financial

American society by finding causes that will rally together both the rich and poor, and Americans of all ethnicity, then he will succeed. However, if he tries to capitalize on creating opposition between different parties of society, then he will be at risk of failure.

In Russia, I support President Medvedev, and fully believe that he will be re-elected. If he is indeed nominated, then I would advise that he portray the **'strong' president, through his readiness and ability to refute the myths in regards to 'the institutes' that supposedly support his power.** Russia is strong enough today to dispel the myths of Stalin's 'genius,' and such props are no longer necessary for us. In turn, it is necessary to reform enforce-



profiteering that ultimately led to the crisis. In Europe, people will want more social guarantees, but not everyone is willing to bail out losers like Greece. Therefore, it will be the candidates who construct an agenda that deals with the contradictions between the left and the right that will emerge victorious.

Personally, I'd like to see President Obama succeed and further develop unity and solidarity amongst American society. The crisis and reforms will aggravate not only the contradictions between the economic classes in America, but also the ethnic and racial ones. If Obama manages to become the embodiment of a unified nation, and prevents division among

ment agencies more radically, making them service the people rather than working for the political elite. It is necessary to develop at the very least a 'consultative' democracy that takes the advice of expert communities and the political opposition. Medvedev needs to be himself and I am confident that if voters see his personality, as it partly appeared in his interview with the *Izvestia* newspaper on May 7th, his support will be sincere and widespread. ■

*Vladislav Inozemtsev was speaking with Nikita Kurkin*