

THE AUGEAN STABLES OF THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

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The campaign in Russia hasn't yet begun in full. **At the moment, the President and Prime Minister are not giving the impression that they are people who have come to a certain agreement** and that they are ready to it. To have a real campaign, you need to at least have a minimal degree of clarity.

Of course, everyone is interested in learning whether the result of their discussion will be of a cooperative or confrontational nature within this tandem. It is possible that they themselves are also interested in this very question at the moment. Nevertheless, they currently look like people who do not know exactly what they want.

Also, we should remember that, even back in 2007, Putin dragged his decision out until the very last moment. This behaviour is characteristic of him in general and in this particular situation as well. Thus, it is somewhat difficult to speak in detail about the agenda in 2012 without also implying specific personalities. **At the present time, there is nothing new in the government nor in the opposition and this also applies from the point of view of policy.**

In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev's election program was based on advancing modernisation. But the word 'modernisation' itself is something that is

non-dimensional and vague. Of course, everybody will continue to use this word in their banter, but it is unlikely to ignite people's hearts and kindle their minds, because everyone associates his own meaning with this word.

I also think that, during the campaign, there will not be any serious attention directed at environmental problems either. Our country is not quite ecological, the "greens" have never really been popular here, and that is rather understandable. Things haven't changed up to now; moreover, the Gulf of Mexico is very far from us.

With respect to Dmitry Medvedev's criticism of institutions such as state corporations, I'm not sure that anyone will seriously protest against such a position – at least not in the sphere of public politics. The Communists have been carrying out their latest campaigns rather sluggishly. Gennady Zyuganov will say something about the anti-national regime, about the unity of national patriotic powers, and also bring up the issue of social problems. But I don't expect that he will be engaged in the discussion about state corporations.

As for lobbyist groups and the representatives of those state enterprises themselves, I think that all of these problems will be settled behind-the-scenes, rather than publicly.

I also don't think that there is going to be a serious change in terms of Russia's foreign policy priorities. Relations with Europe have been con-

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sidered as a first priority for a long time, while relations with the United States have not for some time now. Our country's relations with Europe have improved, and this can largely be seen as an assertion of the notion that relations with Europe are of paramount importance for Russia.

In regards to the issue of Russian-American relations, they reached their lowest point during the Bush presidency. Thus, at present, it makes sense that any possible movement is likely to be directed upwards. Nobody knows how long this situation will last. In actuality, the United States' relations with both the USSR and the Russian Federation have always witnessed ups and downs.

Furthermore, I would even say that the USA is preoccupied with other issues at the moment. Bush handed down a very complicated legacy, so the Americans are now facing a large number of problems. Now the Americans may have good reason to carry out a somewhat isolationist policy. If pursued, this policy should endeavour to avoid interfering into the affairs of other countries. And, if possible, not to create new problems, because they have enough of their own already. It is a dangerous and perilous policy to settle the internal problems of a state by creating global chaos. However, at present, no such direction in the USA's current policies can be observed.

In my opinion, Barack Obama has not yet completely performed the rough work that was entrusted to him by the people, and he still has yet to carry out a number of unpopular policies. It seems that the Republicans are not eager to take residence in the White House for this reason, realising that life is not going to be sweet in that seat over the next few years.

Coming back to the theme of our elections, I can say that, **as a first priority, I personally would expect the future president to sort out the mess that has been created over the last ten years.** ■

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