

THE MODERN STATE IN SEARCH OF ITS OWN FOUNDATIONS

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1.

This year the Yaroslavl forum has become the World Political Forum. However, great ambition does not guarantee success. Similarly, the ambitious anti-nuclear summit in Washington was ironically commented upon by Medvedev as being 'a smooth summit'. The new forum in Yaroslavl will try to avoid the risk of being 'smooth'.

The world is striving to get away from the crisis as far as possible without asking about an objective. The most reputable of the models have floundered. The whims of the crisis have discouraged long-term planning. Everything is changing. But what are the trends? The Russia that had emerged from the post-soviet void and had risen with Putin with an aura of grandeur could not escape the fact that it was still characterized by underdevelopment. Poland, which had played its cards perfectly and had come close to its goal of becoming a new power of Eastern Europe, was all at once pushed back by an absurd blow that could not be compensated for. Moscow and Washington have concluded important agree-

ments triumphantly, but their weight in the chaotic world is insignificant. Nothing – neither the simultaneity of the Kyrgyz revolt with the signing of the new START Treaty nor the death of the Polish president in the Smolensk plane crash – clarify the future. Futurologists and Utopians write columns for glossy magazines.

2.

Russia is no less concerned about its future than other countries. Moreover, the actions of the Kremlin show some sort of strategy based on previous experience. The Russian leadership is searching for a way to circumvent the old Russian unluckiness that Medvedev calls '*a mark of the secular traditions*' and the tough Churchill referred to as a talent '*to sink in smooth waters when the major sacrifice has already been made*'. New Kremlin wise men are different from the previous ones in their focus on this very goal – searching for safe passage of the ship of the new nation statehood. This could be a utopia, but it is what is driving people in the government and the Kremlin. It is a goal shared by the majority of those within the government machine. It is the first time we have had such a consensus, and it is this consensus that dictated Medvedev's modernization and made it even more complicated with the focus on innovation. The political backing of the course is apparent (which the Kremlin guru Vladislav Surkov frankly admits): Russian democracy has set out on the search for a technologically reliable and modern social foundation.

3.

Russia has chosen the modern state and its democratic identity as the cross-cutting issue of the Yaroslavl forums. At the height of the crisis, when the state was the

main savior of the markets, the issue was very hot. The prime ministers of Spain and France seemed to be more statist than some Russian politicians. Democratic standards referred to by Medvedev at the previous forum became the watchword of the moment – everyone needs rules, everyone is seeking new certainty. Models and samples became things of the past, and the harsh human rights activists may be chanting a noble mantra but their competency is no more credible than the patriotism of the officials. Iran brings up new issues. How safe are democracies that have rallied the support of the national majority, but which pose a threat to their neighbors? What are the international sanctions that can be used to oppose flawed democracies? And is fair evaluation of one democracy by another possible at all? The answers should be pursued through diplomacy and the analysis of the models of developing democracies (for example, the BRIC countries).

4.

Discussions of the last year were to a certain extent inspired by past debates: 'Is Russia a democracy?' The dispute has drifted away from the defensive apologetics in the pursuit of liberal micro-elements (Medvedev labeled them 'nanodemocracy') to universal issues. Russia is a part of the worldwide democratic process; it is a member of the global democratic community. At the 2010 World Political Forum, our new state will be looked upon as a world-class acting model, whose 20 testing years have seen growth and development despite a number of difficult forks in the road. Some of the turns were deliberate, others were driven by external challenges, but *the value of democratic development* was preserved throughout these years. Today the Russian model is ruminating on its own know-how. ■