

rent regime in Russia is quite stable. But it is stable under present economic conditions, and no one knows what turmoil is actually in store for us.

To prevent such turmoil, the current Russian government is trying to regain the public trust. Moreover, most activities on the part of the Russian ruling elite are inspired by nothing other than their wish to appease everyone - both those who can be pleased and those who cannot. **The desire to regain trust is one of the leading forces of the Russian authorities and the driving force of Russian reforms. Besides, one can hardly imagine a more powerful driving force for Russian reforms,** not to mention an irrational pursuit for good and justice as understood by elites.

However, there should be an easier way to regain public trust.

About 80-90 people should be arrested and tried fairly. This would be a good lesson for the remaining dozens of thousands of Russian officials. Unfortunately, these people are symbols of Russia's national identity.

It is believed that the Russian society of today is depoliticised. However, this is not actually true. The apathy and submission inherent in Russian society are not a sign of depoliticisation. On the contrary, **our society is quite politicised, but its politicisation is focused on the understanding of and interest in circum-political events,** which is quite natural for a country that has recently changed its political regime. To a lesser extent, its politicisation is focused on interest in political actions. At the same time, public interest in non-political actions is rather strong. It is a general trend which

hardly depends on who is in power. Broadly speaking, the space that is gradually utilised by society is utilised faster than the pace at which the authorities are growing. Surely the government has long arms, but it simply cannot reach everything that appears all of a sudden. The world is growing faster than the government is able to reach and grasp it. The number of forbidden things is gradually decreasing, not the least because many new things continually appear.

One of the places where we may see the appearance of innovations that are not accessible is the Internet. However, Russian society gained access to the Internet in a mass form only three years ago, and new users need some time to master it. ■

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THE GOOD AND THE BAD



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As far as China is concerned, society does not reject everything that is associated with the elites. **Ordinary people believe that there are two kinds of elites: bad ones and good ones. The Chinese tend to look at local elites as bad ones and at some national elites as good ones.** Many have made tremendous efforts to go to Beijing, the capital, in the hope of finding 'real' justice. They know local elites are bad because many have suffered in their hands. But they still hope that national elites, especially President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, are good ones because they have appeared to be very much concerned with the underprivileged.

The hatred is not necessarily class-based. Anyone who has something to lose is bound to have some

complaints. For example, the middle class could also be victims of food safety issues, environmental degradation, and social injustice. The hatred in China so far is not directed against the whole system but against certain individuals, especially at the local levels.

In China, the elites do not hate the masses. Elites in China also have a lot to complain about the system, e.g., lack of freedom of expression, lack of mobility, and lack of full access to information. Some are working with international organizations to improve the situation.

In China it is unlikely for the moment to have any radical manifestations like those we have seen in the Middle East. **There are elements of hatred present in China but there are no organized opposition groups. Also, the peoples' hatred is not against the system but is mostly case-specific.**

One lesson from Tunisia is that, in spite of fast economic growth, income disparity could be a future source of instability. One lesson from Egypt is that high rates of unemployment, especially among the youth, could cause serious problems. ■