
For today, the key question of Realpolitik inside Russia is **who, in terms of politics, will provide and 'reinsure' the real investments of its millions of citizens into its state system?** This is not a matter of the personal political future of Medvedev or Putin. This is a matter of the future of their voters, and not in a theoretical sense. Will the new poli-

cy of Medvedev be able to provide for their interests?

Putin is still closely related to the current regime. Putin can be seen as a kind of Fannie Mae for the Russian state. As he is inside the majority, which has become unreliable, he can no longer protect it even with all the means of the country's financial infrastructure. He, just as every citizen of Russia, must be convinced that the

new system offers stability.

This question should be addressed to Medvedev, not to Putin. Will the president put forward a concept to provide for the mass interests (including those of Putin himself as a citizen of Russia) or will he fail to do so? Here lies the axis for the agenda of future elections, as well as their main element of intrigue. ■

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THE SNARE OF HABERMAS

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If we speak the truth, people will believe us less and less' — such is the paradox faced nowadays by the ruling establishment in authoritarian countries attempting to implement reforms. Evidently, this paradox has the following structure: by 'tightening the bolts' slowly, a regime loses credibility.

Then, if it begins to loosen the grip, i.e. ventures to publish materials about abuses and crimes inside the system, hoping that the society perceives it as a friendly step, the expectations of the ruling bureaucracy, as a rule, are not fulfilled. The general reader, seeing 'purging' publications, allowed by the system, about corruption inside the very system, totally forgets that just yesterday such publications were prohibited. **When a bureaucracy tries to turn into 'a bureaucracy with a human face,' it gets a juicy spit in this very face from society.**

Actually, we have witnessed this in looking at the failure of Putin's megaproject named 'gradually stepping behind Medvedev's back.' Vladimir Putin probably thinks: 'Well, I have gone! I have agreed to change the style, I am not against new freedoms. I do it voluntarily!' But in response he gets pictures of 'Putin's palace,' Gunvor accounts, lists with the names of those who are prohibited to enter the Euro-zone, where he is number one, flows of publications clearly showing that all his

'friends' are thieves and the new rich, sunk in vice. What has happened to Ushakov, who has just been dismissed from the post of FSB deputy director, is particularly smashing. It is clear that, without 'the monarch's will' to ensure the freedom of the press, the story about the general's 60 years anniversary celebration, which turned into a full-swing festivity in a Rublevka restaurant and cost 1 million dollars, would not be read in the *LifeNews* in every commuter train, it would be available only in special memoirs by Vladimir Pribylovsky published in London.

But the general reader, even if he understands about the struggle on top, does not believe for a second that here it is the case of the 'good functional bureaucrats' punishing a 'bad, immoral apparatchik.' The reader exclaims: 'You are all tarred with the same brush! Look at how your generals go berserk with money!' Actually, the history has shown that in such cases the 'good apparatchiks' fail to keep such a situation under control. The loss of credibility hits them with crushing mass riots.

What is the mistake of the ‘good apparatchiks’ in such a situation? There are actually three fatal mistakes. The first one is that, when starting to play ‘in the expansion of public space’ they strive to hide outside of the public zone. This mistake is called ‘the snare of Habermas’ in Chinese military strategies. Stratagems say that **it is impossible to participate in the creation of an ‘open space’ while being in the shadow.** The moderator needs to either enter the area of public politics and stand on equal footing with other participants, or he will eventually be found in his dark hiding place and dragged out to the daylight, together with all his ‘strategic plans.’

The second mistake: ‘a stage-by-stage tail amputation.’ The ruling elite, while being in the shadow, initiates the ‘paternalistic’ procedure of ‘gradual valve opening’ (i.e. Voynovich can be read, but Solzhenitsyn is still prohibited), or, ‘today we are already allowed to say that a lot of funds are embezzled, but we are not allowed to claim that elections are fraudulent, we will go to this stage tomorrow.’ Such ‘phasing’ does not lead to anything but to the further loss of trust.

The third mistake is ‘relying on emptiness.’ While trying to keep the ‘public process’ in certain acceptable boundaries, the bureaucracy begins to use in its rhetoric the vocabulary that has nothing in common with the public mood. Thus, **in the course of ‘liberalization,’ the elite forms ‘the second language of deceit.’**

All these mistakes are united by a common result – any liberalizing actions of the ruling elite fly back in its face, without improving its credibility. Yes, a public space is formed, but it contains inherent structural defects that make the society go around in a

vicious circle, similar to a hobgoblin on a bog. The public discourse is initially deformed by the need to constantly react to the ‘gradually amputated tail,’ to ‘the search of a moderator in the dark’ and to ‘doublethink.’

What do we see at present? Medvedev’s modernization group is scattered, its fledgling sprouts are seen here and there as mushrooms under the autumn leaves. One is sometimes at a loss whether it is a mushroom or a pile of garbage. **Who leads this group? What does it contain? We are not allowed to discuss it directly. Why? Because it entails an irreparably damaged system.** One should pay attention to how carefully experienced political analysts comment

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on this rhizome. Who is in charge there? Timakova? Or Voloshin? And Surkov, has he joined this group? Is it true that Budberg is behind all of this? Or is it Yumashev? And so forth.

The first, the second, and the third legs of the Kremlin are stuck in the ‘snare named after Jurgen Habermas’: let us not say who we are, whom we support, let us not participate in public debates, let us try to create ‘a really working model of public space,’ sitting in the dark in a detached pantry.

And from this pantry we will ‘gradually’ loosen the nuts (referring to the concept of ‘long cultural changes’ proposed by Ronald Inglehart). It means that we will be compiling the lists classified ‘Now it is allowed!’ Nemtsov ‘is allowed,’ Udaltsov – ‘not yet allowed.’ One is already

allowed to say that Yedinaya Rossiya is ‘a party of swindlers and thieves,’ but Kudrin is not allowed yet to offer his opinion about the fairness of elections. And so forth. This **illusion of rational ‘stage-by-stage liberalization’ creates a constant paranoid bifurcation in the public conscience as to the real intentions of the ruling group.**

Eventually the modernizing group sacrifices the society. It is forced to state, with desolation and cynicism, that ‘society is not ready,’ ‘the people are raw,’ ‘public debates – it is just talking.’ **Having made three mistakes in the gambit, the ruling elite begins to see by the middle of the game that mate is inevitable.**

The sublime goal of transferring the country to the ‘North-European democracy’ model has failed once again! We fail at creating the ‘public space’ with independent system elements. It happens because it never dawns on the elite that, trying to enter the space of another geometry, the elite should also perceive itself as a part of this public space. The elite should clearly denote its own subjectivity in relation to what we can all define ourselves.

We jointly lay our hopes rather on living in an open, comfortable society that recreates its civil and creative potential, than on the ruling elite’s ability to pass over the power from a Sadat to a Mubarak without violence and murder. ■

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