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realities of 2000s Russia and in relation to the main elite groups at the national level, who largely determine the composition of politics.

17. Let us think of the aggregate of players as a set divided into three subsets: (1) players who have maintained their share of the market; (2) players who have increased their share; and (3) players whose share has decreased. The sizes of the second and third subsets coincide: these two groups have played a zero-sum game. In an expanding market, players in the first subset will increase their income and tend to associate themselves with the winners, forming a loyal majority with them. In a contracting market, conversely, their income will decrease and they will tend to associate themselves with the losers.

18. See, for example, Barbara Geddes, "Authoritarian Breakdown: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, September 1999 (http://ipa21.cu.ac.kr/supervisor/UploadFiles/guest/AuthoritarianBreakdown_Geddes.PDF).

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NIKOLAI PETROV

Highly Managed Democracy

The Tandem and the Crisis

The author analyzes which characteristics of the political system created under Putin have and have not changed since Medvedev became president. He considers the likely impact of the economic crisis.

The system of governance that has taken shape in Russia under the rule of President Putin may be described as *highly managed democracy* (HMD). Use of the term HMD does not mean that the current model has a democratic basis. "Democracy" here refers to the origin of the model in the protodemocracy of the Yeltsin period, which later evolved toward "managed democracy," of which the last and highest stage is HMD. The system of HMD is torn by internal contradictions; it is not capable of reproduction. It is unstable and transitional in character. The system is located at a point of bifurcation: it must either continue its slide into authoritarianism or turn back toward democracy. The second scenario seems to me not only preferable but also more likely. The term "highly managed democracy" therefore emphasizes both the current attempt at excessively rigid and centralized—beyond the limits of what is reasonable and effective—governance and confidence in the inevitability of democratization in the next stage.¹

Since the economic crisis reached Russia, the HMD system has had to face serious external difficulties as well as intrinsic internal ones. The

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external problems are connected with qualitatively new challenges resulting both from the crisis itself and from the associated sharp contraction in the regime's resource base. Thus, the conditions under which the system has to function have significantly deteriorated. However, the situation of dual power—whether real or merely formal does not matter—that arose in the country in the spring of 2008 has only exacerbated the constructive defects of the system.

A Year of Life in Crisis

The HMD system has not undergone any significant changes, either evolutionary or revolutionary, in response to the serious economic crisis, despite its obvious—and increasing—ineffectiveness.² How can we explain such stability? One reason is that the system is experiencing no pressure from below. Although the situation in the country is worsening, the regime is trying to buy off the citizenry. The colossal resources accumulated during the fat years are being spent on maintaining employment, paying pensions, and making other provision for pensioners; by devouring these resources, the system buys itself a respite. Ever since the unsuccessful attempt in January 2005 to monetize special benefits ended in mass protests by pensioners, the authorities have done all they can to prevent a repetition of anything similar.

This tactic may prove effective only if two conditions are fulfilled: (1) the world economic crisis turns out to be short; and (2) when it ends, Russia resumes the position it occupied before the crisis—that of a privileged exporter of expensive, and increasingly costly, minerals and raw materials for which demand rises and outstrips supply. I have the impression that the people in the Kremlin assume (or have convinced themselves?) that both conditions are possible. Otherwise (if the crisis deepens and serious changes take place in world consumption of resources), the current refusal to work out and implement a development strategy, even as other governments feverishly and not ineffectively seek ways out of the crisis, will exacerbate rather than ameliorate our problems. Then we will have to resolve them without our marvelous “buffer of safety.”

The system is nonetheless undergoing a certain internal political evolution, if at a snail's pace. Two obstacles block its path. First, even before the crisis the HMD system was poorly adapted to the making of carefully considered strategic decisions, and now it is doubly paralyzed.

Second, the separate parts of the system are spending their energy in fighting over the remaining resources. Thus, at present the crisis, instead of impelling the system toward self-development and self-improvement, has preserved it for a certain period.

The HMD system has entered its third term, and it is now already clear that by its own efforts the regime will not be able to escape the bounds of this model. In Putin's first term, it consolidated the state and restored control; in the second term, it strengthened the state's presence everywhere, beyond the requirements of reason and necessity, even as the system of state power began to decay; and in the third term it appears that the defects will reach the point of absurdity and the whole political system will collapse.

Does the regime itself sense all this? Evidently, it must, but it responds in the moment and without cohesion. When those in power see that the situation is changing, and that their responses to emerging problems cause the system to malfunction, they become nervous and alternate between decisions that are too mild and decisions that are excessively harsh. Various representatives of the regime make statements that are often mutually contradictory and settle their scores with one another in public. As a rule, matters do not go farther than declarations. The ruling group pays no attention to the widening gap between old concepts; strategies, plans, and instructions and new realities. In terms of the well-known anecdote that describes how different Soviet leaders react in different ways when the train they are riding suddenly halts, the regime has chosen Brezhnev's response: close the curtains and rock the carriage to make it appear that the train is moving.*

HMD in Transition

It would be a mistake to argue that HMD has not changed at all since the mid-2000s, when its construction was largely complete. It has changed, if only in accordance with the inner logic of the development of its individual elements and of their interaction. For instance, the system of appointing governors, once fully implemented, not only introduced new figures but also

*Lenin wants to call a holiday and make the workers and peasants fix the problem. Stalin threatens to shoot the driver, and Khrushchev suggests taking the rails that the train has already passed over and using them to construct new track. In post-Soviet times, the joke has added Gorbachev (announcing that the train had been heading in the wrong direction), and Yeltsin riding the train off the rails (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_political_jokes).—Ed.

altered the institutional relationship between federal and regional political elites. The new mechanism for forming both chambers of the Federal Assembly modified other segments of the political system. The paradigm as a whole, however, remained unchanged, as did the general framework of the system and the basic principles governing its operation.

Because high oil revenues removed any impetus for the system to develop and gave it no outside challenges, its institutional design became increasingly simple and primitive as administrators sought to cut their work load. At the same time, the system accumulated temporary contrivances aimed at performing specialized tasks. The main changes in the organizational system of state power took place not after but before the end of Putin's second term, so to clarify how the current "Putin-Medvedev" system differs from "mature Putinism," we must reconstruct the political and economic steps taken in 2008, when the Putin system was "squeezed" into a new presidential term.

The preparation and implementation of the "transfer of power" included the following components:

—*placing governance on autopilot* in adopting "Economic Strategy 2020" and developing domestic and foreign policy doctrines. This point refers not so much to the final documents as to the choice and demonstration of a course of action. In this sense, Putin's Munich speech and the Georgian war carry more weight than signed presidential decrees. In domestic policy, the main decisions of this kind gave final shape to the party and electoral systems;

—*creating parallel structures of state administration and property* in the form of state corporations controlled by Putin's proxies and free of the constraints imposed by the state budget and state oversight; "Gazpromization" as a variation on the chaebol. (Gazprom represents a managerial model in which the state is the largest shareholder of a public corporation, with a de facto monopoly over managerial decision making);

—*political castling* by fixing up a new job for the "boss," politicizing the formerly executive function of the prime minister's office, and depoliticizing the formerly political function of the presidency;

—*casting for the role of successor and bringing Medvedev into the presidential office*. The word "successor" must be used with a certain reservation: the casting was not for a real successor but for a "wedding general" [invited so that his dress uniform would lend splendor to the occasion—Trans.], who would never become a full-fledged head of state; and

—*emasculating the siloviki* [defense and security ministers—Trans.], who were greatly weakened as political actors. The level of confrontation among them fell, as did their ability to intervene in political decision making.

Let us note that all these changes were made within the personalistic system, without strengthening existing institutions or creating new ones. Apparently, a real transfer of power was not part of Putin's plan. Under prevailing conditions, a transfer of power would require preliminary institutionalization, because Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin remains the sole functioning "mechanism" for harmonizing elite interests and the sole guarantor of all informal agreements.

The present article examines in detail only the *silovik* component of the transition to the "Putin-Medvedev" regime.

Between the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2008, there was a major shakeup of the *siloviki*. All the influential heads of security and defense—the armed forces (Sergei Ivanov), the Federal Security Service (FSB, Nikolai Patrushev), and the Federal Narcotics Service (FNS, Viktor Cherkesov)—who had belonged to Putin's "inner circle" were relegated to second-tier positions and stripped of control over the means of coercion. Even earlier, in the middle of 2006, the same fate overtook Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov, who a year or two earlier had been virtually the most influential and certainly the most public of the *siloviki*; at one point rumor considered him a possible presidential candidate representing the security elite. Ustinov's dismissal weakened not only him personally but also the procuracy as an agency that had claimed a leading role among the *siloviki*. The Prosecutor General's Office weakened even more after it lost control of the Investigation Committee.

Other agencies also lost influence after the transfer of their *siloviki* directors. Moreover, only in the FSB was the new chief a man from within the system, although not a politician. The men named to head the armed forces and the FNS were "outsiders," who started work in their new posts by purging a significant number of headquarters staff. While "public" *siloviki* like Patrushev, Cherkesov, and Sergei Ivanov were relegated to less important positions, two nonpublic *siloviki*—Viktor Ivanov and Igor' Sechin—were brought into the public sphere. From the presidential administration, where their role was determined not so much by their official positions as by proximity to Putin, Viktor Ivanov was put in charge of the FNS (the "Afghan front"), while Sechin was appointed deputy prime minister for the energy complex. In this manner

they capitalized their informal influence into formal resources and powers and acquired greater autonomy.

At the same time, Sechin's in-law Ustinov participated in a "triple exchange." He was again transferred, this time from the post of minister of justice, and sent as presidential representative to the Caucasus, which he had overseen at the start of his career. Another prosecutor—Aleksandr Konovalov, who is close to President Medvedev—replaced him, moving from the provinces to the center. Finally, the former presidential representative in the Southern federal district, Grigorii Rapota, handed over that post to Ustinov and took Konovalov's previous position as presidential representative in the Volga federal district.

While moving his old colleagues into the political shadows, Putin elevated even older colleagues from his days in Dresden [as a KGB officer—Trans.]. Sergei Chemezov became director of the Russian Technologies state corporation (Rostekhnologii), Nikolai Tokarev director of Transneft, and Evgenii Shkolov deputy minister of internal affairs. Another of Putin's old colleagues who returned to Moscow from "exile" in the Caucasus was the "strategist" Dmitrii Kozak, who had once worked out plans for administrative, judicial, and municipal reform, of which only the municipal reform was implemented.

Analysis of personnel changes enables us to make a number of observations. Thus, in setting up the internal system of quasi-checks and quasi-balances that Putin needed to reshape a system with a single presidential center into a "prime minister-centered" system, he was guided by a clan-corporate and not by an institutional logic. At the same time, the chains of personnel transfers are well thought out and carefully constructed, and new appointments are inevitably accompanied by a certain growth in publicity and institutionalization—which, however, are confined to the "prime minister's government." The members of the "president's government," who include *siloviki* directly subordinate to the president as well as the ministers of justice and foreign affairs, have smaller personal roles than their predecessors. As most of them are new appointees and outside appointees, they will need considerable time to bring their political weight up to the level of their predecessors. A separate point worthy of note is that as a "counterweight" to Sergei Lavrov, who retained his post [as foreign minister—Trans.], besides the "second key" of Presidential Aide Sergei Prikhodko, a third was added—Deputy Head of the Government Apparatus Iurii Ushakov, so that the "foreign affairs" bloc is now under the simultaneous control

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government apparatus, and the presidential administration.

Finally, we must note the special role played by the FSB and to some extent by the procuracy: these agencies serve as instruments of expansion (that is, they provide a personnel reserve for filling leading posts elsewhere), but they are not themselves targets of expansion for other departments. The heads of the FSB—in contrast even to the procuracy, let alone the FNS or Ministry of Defense—are selected exclusively from among "our own people." In all this administrative engineering, which is fraught with a certain risk of disorganization, Putin fears only for the FSB—or takes the best care of it. The FSB agents and, to a lesser extent, the prosecutors who are appointed to head other departments are more than a personnel reserve for Putin; these are like dynastic marriages.

HMD "Under Medvedev": Adaptation and New Elements

The period that began in the spring of 2008 and is formally designated as life "under Medvedev" is not, however, life "after Putin." The changes that have taken place since Dmitry Medvedev took office (a list of them is presented in Table 1) fall into three main categories:

- adaptation of the system to individual personnel transfers ("switching of nameplates") and to changing external conditions;
- continuation of established trends within the logic of the "Putin" presidency; and
- emergence of new, specifically "Medvedev" elements.

Adaptation

Adaptive changes are the most numerous. All the forms and instruments previously developed by the system have been retained practically in full, undergoing only minimal stylistic modifications; in some cases, they have merely been renamed. For example, whereas as president Putin used to hold meetings with key ministers, in his new capacity he conducts sessions of the government presidium with more or less the same ministers in attendance. Putin has not, however, managed to retain some things—for instance, presidential councils, including the State Council. Here there has been some change, if not fundamental (see Appendix 1). Both the president and the prime minister meet with governors at equally frequent intervals; moreover, the style of these meetings in many ways

Table 1

Changes in the Political System During the Presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, 2008–2009

Elements of the system	Overall trend	Positive	Negative	Unclear
Carcass of the political system	↓	—	Weakening of presidency as institution; increased dependence on ratings; revision of Constitution	Extension of president's term to 6 years; State Duma to 5 years; new requirements for Federation Council candidates
Political parties	↓	Legal guarantees for parties' equal access to television	Elimination of Union of Right Forces, marginalization of Yabloko	Insignificant reduction in required signatures for registration, from 50,000 to 45,000; 1–2 consolation seats for parties that fail to collect 7% of vote
Regions, federalism	↓	Some redistribution of taxes in favor of regions	More standardization of regional political systems	—
Governors	↓	Nomination of candidates transferred to United Russia, greater publicity; expanded range of appointees; involvement of figures from outside bureaucratic milieu	Higher proportion of "outsiders" among appointees	—
Local government, mayors	↓	—	Greater avoidance of direct elections; new dismissals of mayors; spread of elections based on proportional system and excluding public associations	—
Elections	↕	More intense competition inside United Russia; greater use of primaries	Ongoing transition to proportional system with declining number of parties; increased administrative pressure; abolition of registration by monetary deposit	—

Elements of the system	Overall trend	Positive	Negative	Unclear
Courts	↓	Constitutional Court ruling abolishing death penalty	Less independence, purging of Constitutional Court; abolition of jury trials for certain crimes	—
Civil society	↑	Easing of administrative pressure on small nonprofit organizations; assistance to "socially oriented" nonprofit organizations	—	—
Personnel	=	—	—	Extension of system of horizontal rotation of personnel to heads of regional courts; creation of presidential personnel reserve
Corruption	=	—	—	Income declarations by officials at various levels; open campaign against lower and mid-level corruption
Caucasus	↓	Partial dismantling of corrupt regimes (Karachai-Cherkessia, Ingushetia)	Further strengthening of Kadyrov's regime of personal power in Chechnya; threat of destabilization from recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia	Introduction of a special government post for Caucasus

resembles those that took place in late 2007 and early 2008, when Putin was president and Medvedev was first deputy prime minister responsible for national projects. Curiously, the practice of governors reporting to government sessions in 2006–7, and with it the government's systematic work with individual regions, came to an end—under the impact of the crisis—at about the time Putin became prime minister. But the crisis also prompted the government to set up a commission on questions of regional development, which between December 2008 and August 2009 held four sessions in the provinces, presided over by Putin. The reports presented by regional representatives at government sessions were much fuller and much more useful for both sides than this or that governor meeting with the prime minister. Following each session, moreover, the government

prepared a special decision in response to the most important problems of the region, proposing concrete plans for specific departments to build roads, bridges, and enterprises, move people out of decrepit housing, and so on.

Of all the new and revived presidential councils and commissions, only the modernization commission goes beyond the traditional bureaucratic framework. It meets once a month, often in the provinces. Addressing himself to the commission, Medvedev expressed the hope "that in the intervals between commission sessions all those present will give highest priority to tasks assigned by the commission."³ The commission is small (fourteen members, not counting leaders) and includes two deputy prime ministers, four ministers (of economic development, industry and trade, mass communication, and education and science), and the heads of two state corporations—State Nuclear Energy (Rosatom) and Russian Nanotechnology (Rosnanotekh).⁴ At the November session, it was noted that a sort of presidium led by the two deputy chairs holds weekly sessions to monitor fulfillment of the several dozen assignments given by the commission, as do working groups set up under the commission. The working groups defined the five areas of modernization specified by the president in his 2009 missive. A sum of 620 billion rubles has been allocated to carry out the commission's projects. To all appearances, this is Medvedev's "toy regiment"—a piece of the economy that he is allowed to steer and a budget for him to appropriate. As Medvedev himself put it, "the commission's chief task is to squeeze out difficult solutions, and I feel no embarrassment in saying this. Otherwise there would have been no reason to set up the commission: we have the government, with many ministries and departments that are obliged to perform their own tasks. But as we are not able to cope with all our tasks and have an enormous number of routine duties dragging us all down, the commission must do this kind of work."⁵

Adapting the system—adjusting the "driver's seat" for a new person—includes shaping a special image for Medvedev, a new style of presidential power. The image of President Medvedev converges with the image of Putin in some respects and contrasts with it in others. "Direct lines" work well with Putin; for Medvedev they thought up the more classical format of telecasts with participation by citizens and by federal and regional bureaucrats. During these telecasts, the president administers ostentatious floggings to the bureaucrats, using an intentionally crude tone. During the two telecasts in 2009, the president also handed out a few

"carrots" to selected citizens, but on the whole the format is extremely inexpensive. Unlike Putin, Medvedev has an active Internet presence. At the Valdai Club, foreign journalists and political scientists now meet with both the president and the prime minister—something that never happened when Putin was president. Medvedev has been given his own forum—the Yaroslavl Forum. While Putin is a master of the trenchant phrase or expression, Medvedev's speechwriters deliberately place crude language in his mouth while thinking up striking formulas and slogans like the "Four I's" or "freedom is better than unfreedom." Medvedev is a president of declarations; he dominates the space of virtual politics. Putin is a prime minister of deeds and decisions; he dominates real politics. Because President Medvedev does not have much to do in the space of real politics, his extraordinarily active presence in the space of virtual politics is partly compensatory in nature. Need I say that most of the "divergences" that experts detect between the members of the tandem stem from attempts by Medvedev's public relations team to construct for him an image independent of Putin?

Development Along Old Lines

Although the political system that emerged under Putin is sometimes subjected to sharp criticism, including from Medvedev's retinue, the president himself—while indulging in harsh general statements—never proposes concrete steps to change the system. On the contrary, he emphasizes that political parties have been established in our country, that elections take place in an organized fashion, that the procedure for appointing governors need not be changed for the next hundred years, and so on. The political package that Medvedev announced in his presidential address for 2008 and subsequently implemented is at best an adornment of the existing political structure with pseudodemocratic trinkets like a consolation seat or two in the Duma for political parties that do not quite clear the 7-percent threshold.⁶ At worst, Medvedev's political modifications—in particular, the abolition of the election deposit as a means of party registration—continue tightening up the system. There are, however, two exceptions—proposed innovations that do not preserve the system but introduce real changes. I have in mind the longer terms of office for the president and State Duma, dictated by considerations of the moment that remain hazy, and the requirement that candidates for the Federation Council should first pass through local or regional elections.⁷

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The latter initiative appears to aim at strengthening the control of United Russia's functionaries over the formation of the Federation Council. Medvedev's modification of the procedure for appointing governors or, more precisely, for nominating gubernatorial candidates—a right that now belongs exclusively to the party that has obtained the majority of seats in the local legislature—also basically changes nothing, except perhaps that it legally codifies Putin's leading role in this process as the leader of United Russia, which invariably wins a majority in all regional elections.

The political package announced in the 2009 address extends the special constructive characteristics of the federal political system to the regional level. Above all, it makes party lists the sole foundation for electing legislatures; under our conditions, this greatly strengthens the party bureaucracy of United Russia, radically reduces public political competition, and further weakens the mechanisms of communication and feedback between citizens and the authorities at all levels.

It is likely, however, that Medvedev's political packages of 2008 and 2009 are not just attempts to simulate improvement of the political system but the gradual implementation of plans to strengthen control in this system and reduce the number of relatively autonomous actors. If this is true, the consolation seats for parties that fail to clear the 7-percent threshold may be intended not for Yabloko and other "marginal" parties outside the Duma but for some parties that currently have minority representation in the Duma—A Just Russia and the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (hence their unexpectedly sharp reaction to the elections to the Moscow city duma in October 2009, in which they may have seen a "rehearsal" for the forthcoming State Duma elections). A similar "double move" may also have been aimed at Sergei Mironov. After the adoption of the 2008 political package, he had to negotiate with the regional and local authorities for the Federation Council members he needed; now that the 2009 package has been adopted and all regions have switched to the proportional electoral system, he will need two "keys," one of them held by United Russia.

Another development along old lines is the consistent attack on the independence of the courts—conducted, as usual, under slogans that promise the exact opposite. A striking example here is the amendment to the law on the Constitutional Court that gives the president the right to appoint its chair and deputy chairs. The *démarche* of the Constitutional Court judges Vladimir Yaroslavtsev and Anatolii Kononov, who criticized the current situation in public, for which their more conformist colleagues

expelled them, attests to the troubled state of the judicial system.⁸ To this we may add such measures as the exclusion of a whole series of crimes from the jurisdiction of courts that conduct trials by jury.

Even the limited relaxation of policy regarding nonprofit organizations and the promise of state support for nonprofit organizations that the authorities regard as useful are in reality a continuation of the previous course of exerting selective pressure and giving equally selective support.⁹

Elections and ratings—a remnant of a dismantled democratic institution and the chief pivot on which all substitutes depend—merit our special attention.

Because elections are held regularly, they make it possible to trace a political trend, casting light on the actions of the regime at various levels. The trend in the year of crisis that began in the autumn of 2008 pointed in divergent directions. This was fully manifest in the elections of the spring and autumn of 2009.

Although, on the whole, the repressive electoral system aimed at barring undesirable players from the political arena remained in force, at the beginning of 2009 changes took place that can be interpreted as a liberalization of electoral practices. These changes occurred through hands-on management, when a peremptory shout from Moscow prompted local authorities to reinstate banned candidates (for example, Boris Nemtsov in the mayoral elections in Sochi and Oleg Shein, who was standing for the office of mayor of Astrakhan) or at least to moderate their rage. At the same time, elements of publicity and political competition within United Russia—be it the creation of discussion clubs or, let us say, the conduct of primaries—were strengthened.

However, the United Russia primaries, which are now conducted almost everywhere, not only expand public political competition, if within a single party, but also extend the application of indirect democratic procedures. Such procedures include secret public opinion surveys and complex procedures for assessing performance on the basis of multiple criteria, as well as "zero" readings in the State Duma, which take the interests of key groups into account at an early stage and without public debate, thereby averting unwelcome legislative initiatives. In all these cases there seems to be some sort of basis for decision making, but the opinions expressed can be adjusted or altogether ignored.

The elections of the autumn of 2009, especially to the Moscow city duma, and the mayoral elections in Astrakhan showed that the Kremlin

needs a "good" result at any cost. To all appearances, this is connected with a feeling at the top that the worst of the crisis is past, so why complicate things?

By releasing the flywheel of vote fraud and explaining increased confidence with the claim that in a crisis people rally around the authorities, the ruling group has "trapped itself."¹⁰ After assertions that the popularity of United Russia in Moscow has grown by 50 percent, any honest election result will look like a failure, making an escalation of lying almost inevitable.

With the participation rate down to 20–25 percent (such was the turnout in the latest Moscow elections), voting can no longer serve as an instrument for legitimizing the regime.¹¹ Elections have already lost their other functions—the training and selection of politicians, the shaping of an agenda, the testing and adjustment of platforms, and communication and feedback between citizens and the authorities. In accordance with the tactic of creating substitutes to perform the functions lost by emasculated institutions (see Appendix 2), the regime employs the following tactics: a forty-indicator assessment of the performance of regional administrations, introduced under Putin but implemented in 2008; the formation of a personnel reserve (the "Medvedev hundred" and "Medvedev thousand"); and public reception centers (today these are attached to the offices of mayors and governors, presidential representatives, and Putin as head of United Russia).

The number of elective offices continues to decline. After gubernatorial elections were abolished in 2005, Aleksandr Veshniakov, the former head of the Central Electoral Commission, spoke of this as a temporary measure for the next decade or so. In 2009 President Medvedev declared that he saw no reason to restore gubernatorial elections in the next hundred years. More and more regions are abandoning direct mayoral elections in their capitals and switching to an arrangement made possible by the municipal reform—a mayor is selected from among the regional assembly deputies and assisted by a hired city manager. Use of the proportional system is becoming increasingly widespread and being extended to elections at all levels; the number of real voters is falling sharply (there are no longer millions of them but only a few—in the case of selecting governors, United Russia party functionaries and the president); the nature of competition is changing rapidly and its administrative effectiveness is declining.

United Russia functionaries usually present the elimination of single-mandate electoral districts virtually as a favor to other parties: supposedly

only their candidates now win in single-mandate districts, so they are giving minority parties a chance. In fact, that is not true. Under the present setup United Russia has a guaranteed victory in almost all districts, but the winners are not faceless "soldiers of the party" but strong and relatively independent politicians. Often United Russia simply hands its banner to the strongest "independent" candidate. In addition, unlike appointments, elections in single-mandate districts, even with violations, provide real feedback from voters and make politicians answerable to them.

In his surprisingly frank article about the "secret-service wars," Police General Viktor Cherkosov said that secret police officers are the hook on which post-Soviet society hangs, preventing it from falling into the abyss and smashing to smithereens.¹² According to this logic, if secret police officers are the internal hook—or at least the personnel reserve—then *ratings* of confidence in the leader are the external hook. In the absence of strong institutions, confidence in the leader is the sole basis of legitimacy—a basis that gives the system relative political stability and prevents it from "falling into the abyss and smashing to smithereens."

Putin's approval rating is currently at the fantastic level of about 80 percent.¹³ In a crisis it is logical to expect a fall in the rating of the head of government, whom citizens willy-nilly hold responsible for the hardships that are inevitable in a crisis, especially if the government previously claimed credit for all good things and assured them that hardships would pass them by. The problem of a rating that has started to fall and fear of the repetition of the 2005 social protests over monetization compel the government to spend colossal sums on increasing wages and pensions.¹⁴ By continuing with populist policies—no longer thanks to but despite the state of the economy—the government falls into the trap of steadily rising social expenditures.

Although sociologists meticulously publish the ratings of both leaders, in reality there is only one rating—Putin's. Medvedev's rating, or even the number of votes cast for United Russia, merely reflects Putin's standing. In two years Medvedev has done nothing to earn a rating of his own; he was and remains Putin's shadow, his retouched photograph for outside use. The work of Daniel Treisman shows a direct link between the rating of a Russian president (Yeltsin or Putin) and growth in household incomes and the economy as a whole.¹⁵ Now the economic health of the nation is shaken, but the government stubbornly pursues its populist course. It is clear that if the crisis continues, there will come a time when nothing is left to prop up the rating. Then Putin's approval

rating, which all this time has been maintained at a high level (among other things, by the optimistic view of the crisis expressed by bureaucrats and the official media) may crumble. At a certain point, the rating will cease to work for the system and the system will start to work for the rating—which makes not only Putin himself but also the whole system hostages to the rating.

Emergence of New Elements

The signs of new elements in the system pertain to personnel and style; there have been no institutional changes in eighteen months of Putin–Medvedev rule.

The whole of the current managerial team, both veterans and newcomers, is Putin's. The administration that Medvedev inherited from his predecessor has been kept practically unchanged, except for a few individuals brought in by the new president.

Medvedev's own team exists mainly in the imagination of experts, who see in the advancement of the president's fellow students from the Law Faculty of Leningrad State University (LSU) some sort of organized expansion into various areas of governance. This personnel reserve existed even before Medvedev became president, but even if we do consider it an expansion by the current head of state, it is proceeding at a snail's pace and is confined to the judiciary and law enforcement. There are hardly any grounds for thinking that the newly promoted individuals constitute a coherent team. Moreover, they occupy key positions in agencies of secondary importance, or where they have been assigned positions in key agencies—for example, the Prosecutor General's Office—these positions are of only secondary importance (see Appendix 2).

Not all new elements are cultivated by the authorities; some things happen despite the will of the state. In particular, there are increasingly frequent lapses in the decision-making system. Elsewhere I discuss the decision to replace the Unified Social Tax with insurance contributions, accession to the World Trade Organization and the Customs Union, the Law on Trade, and the subsequently cancelled increase in the transportation tax (see note 2). In all these cases, capricious decisions made by the prime minister in the absence of a functioning interest harmonization system proved insufficiently balanced and were subsequently changed or annulled under the pressure of circumstances, again in a capricious manner. I could cite many other episodes: the harsh comments that the

prime minister made about [the mining company] Mechel and its owner Igor' Ziuzin, causing a run on the market; the "Chichvarkin affair," the closing of the Cherkizovskii Market, and many other, less important cases in which ill-considered and clumsy interference by the authorities—often in the service of some corporate, departmental, or even personal interest—has led to serious image-related and economic losses for the country. A similar phenomenon was the strange and, on the whole, counterproductive gas war with Ukraine that broke out in January 2009.

Such lapses happen because of the decline in resources and more intense competition for them, the need for innovative decisions within stricter time limits, inefficient governance and the notorious hands-on management by insufficiently qualified administrators, and the absence of filters and "failsafe" mechanisms. Moreover, as a result of deinstitutionalization and substitutionalization (see Appendix 3), discussion of the most important problems long ago receded from the public arena into the depths of the administrative system, where subordination prevents officials from speaking freely and only interdepartmental squabbles are possible.

The entire unwieldy administrative system, based on the performance of standard tasks and on the transmission of signals from the top, is poorly adapted to functioning in a crisis. The diverse and contradictory nature of incoming signals disorients bureaucrats. In this sense, the crisis is bad for the tandem (as the tandem is for the crisis), however formal and internally harmonious the tandem may be.

This is especially noticeable in ideology. Here people are searching for an ersatz ideology while searching for scapegoats to blame for exacerbating the situation if the crisis continues. An example of contradictory "ideological" signals is the speech in which Medvedev makes a clearly negative appraisal of Stalin against a background of ongoing "spontaneous" Stalinization.¹⁶ Putin soon followed this speech with a more evasive appraisal of Stalin, apparently intended to suit everyone.¹⁷ Here, as in a number of other areas, there is competition between the teams, with Medvedev often positioned as the "harsher" of the two leaders—for example, in statements about the falsification of history by Ukraine and Georgia.

Searching for scapegoats was especially intense in the first half of 2009, when people in the Kremlin did not yet anticipate a rapid and favorable outcome to the crisis. They tried out the "imperialists" (the falsification commission) for the part, then the governors, replacing four regional heads at one shot in February. The next sign of targeting the

governors came in May, when the Public Opinion Foundation published the results of a secret survey showing that several regions expressed less confidence in their local authorities than in the federal government. Then, right after Putin sorted out the situation in Pikalevo at the beginning of June, Medvedev made his harsh declaration that governors must not "hide under the table."

While both halves of the duumvirate rarely appear together in public, they often implicitly correct one another in an indirect dialogue or "broadcast exchange." The first to speak in this dialogue is usually Putin, with Medvedev picking up the cue and making his move. But the exchange can also happen the other way, as in the aforementioned statements about Stalin and about state corporations (for a more detailed account of the latter exchange, see below). In the opera of participation in the 2012 elections, Medvedev and Putin sing in unison as two tenors—at the Valdai Club in September and in Moscow and Rome in December.¹⁸ Here Medvedev, it seems to me, seeks not so much to demarcate a position that differs from Putin's, thereby gradually distancing himself from the government, as engage in image making for the system, aimed at the domestic audience. At times, Putin's team attempts to belittle Medvedev's image as the chief leader of the country (here the target audience is, naturally, the international one).¹⁹ A special group of changes weakly fit the current context and pertain to long-term plans or models. I have already mentioned the lengthening of terms of office for the president and State Duma and the new requirements for membership in the Federation Council.

The consequences of some innovations are difficult to assess because of the secrecy surrounding them and the opaqueness of the system as a whole. This category includes the requirement that bureaucrats and members of their families must declare their incomes and the president's monitoring of state corporations in the autumn of 2009. Some experts viewed the monitoring, implemented by prosecutors in collaboration with the Regulatory Department of the Presidential Administration, virtually as a revision of Putin's course and an attack against his people (especially after the exclusion of Sergei Chemezov from the modernization commission for failing to attend its sessions). So far, the monitoring has led to a report by Prosecutor General Iurii Chaika and Konstantin Chuichenko, the head of the Regulatory Department. They submitted the report to Medvedev just before he delivered the presidential address in which, as is well known, he declared the state corporation a "form without prospects." The report cast as scapegoat Russian Nanotech, led

by Anatoly Chubais—one of the newest of the state corporations and by no means the most inefficient.²⁰ Putin soon delivered a public (but, as always, indirect) response to Medvedev, by declaring during a "direct line" on 3 December 2009 that state corporations are "neither good nor bad—they are a necessity." At the same time, the prime minister emphasized that the country's leadership agreed on this issue and that the president had taken part in decisions connected with the establishment of state corporations.

The formula that I used earlier to describe "Medvedev's team" generally applies to the innovations of the last two years: serious efforts address unimportant matters, while those that deal with important matters are not very serious.

At one time it seemed that the crisis would push the system to modernize. There were at least some signs of improvement in electoral practices (the spring elections), increased political competition (if only within United Russia), and institutionalization of the government's dialogue with experts and business people. But apparently in mid-2009 those in the Krèmlin decided that the worst was over and they had no need to modernize the political system.

As a result, the essence of the system remained the same, while its forms and certain mechanisms were modified a bit. Putin as prime minister is functionally almost identical to Putin as president: he conducts meetings with key cabinet members (now the presidium of the government) just as before; he has largely the same team, the same publicity, the same meetings with governors in accordance with the same organizational framework. He also has his own foreign policy. All he lacks is formal control over security and defense. He is a political prime minister—a role previously assumed only by Yevgeny Primakov and by Putin himself during the last year of Yeltsin's presidency. The place of executive prime minister is now occupied by the two Igor' Ivanoviches: Sechin and Shuvalov with his government commission for stabilizing the development of the Russian economy.

Medvedev as president is almost identical to Medvedev as presidential candidate: a great deal of public relations activity and the performance of a broad spectrum of representative functions in relation to all target groups (the president's Web site now even has a special rubric on "meetings with representatives of various communities"). The presidential councils and commissions have been reformulated and a few new ones established under Medvedev. The more limited the scope for changing

anything essential, the more superficial changes we see: the president's Web site, forms of communication, and so on.

The Dénouement: Life After HMD, the Tandem, and the Crisis

In times of tranquillity, inefficient or even decaying political systems can survive for many years. In times of turbulence and constant external shocks that test a system for durability, such systems have no chance of longevity. First, trends in politics and society (such as the degeneration of elections or of the administrative system) occur quite rapidly. Second, things that appear stable—for example, the rating of the prime minister and the president—are actually propped up by money that is melting away like ice in the heat. Third and last, under these conditions a local dysfunction is increasingly likely to lead to a breakdown of the entire system.

In 2009 the country entered a period of large-scale accidents and technogenic disasters: the accident at the Saiano-Shushensk hydroelectric plant in August, the fire at military stores in Ulianovsk and the crash of the Nevsky Express in November, the terrible conflagration in Perm at the beginning of December. Each of these cases, considered in isolation, can be attributed to a tragic concurrence of circumstances, blunders in a particular department, and so on. Taken together, however, they paint a gloomy picture of an avalanche of systemic lapses and a control system that is breaking down in all sorts of places. I do not want to be a Cassandra, but there are many easily torn "thin patches" in our country's technological fabric—in the municipal services infrastructure, in worn-out industrial equipment, and so on. In the unfavorable context—both psychological and financial—of the economic crisis, it is hard to count on the problems somehow going away. As in the case of the North Caucasus, we face serious cumulative systemic problems on a scale that exceeds by orders of magnitude any possibilities of effective intervention.

A managerial crisis—and associated political crisis—await us in the next year or two, whichever Latin letter the trajectory of the economic crisis may follow (perhaps "O"?). A substantial reorganization of the political system is inevitable. Probably this will be not a revolution with Lenin's "lower" and "upper" classes but something like pulling a cork out of a bottle. The chief role in the reorganization will probably go to the middle stratum of managers and business people, where disharmony

within the system has provoked the greatest tension, with the complete discrepancy between outside challenges and the response (or lack of response) from the top.

The system as a whole has lost its instinct for self-preservation—or at least its ability to act effectively in obedience to this instinct. Problems intensify, and the actions of the authorities become increasingly inadequate. At a certain moment, it no longer matters whether the authorities really think that nothing is more important than counting the deputies in regional parliaments or whether they are merely simulating activity.²¹

In the personalistic Russian political system, the tandem is a problem. Putin, too, is a problem, because he blocks decision making: he does not make decisions himself, and others lack the necessary autonomy to do so. A system in crisis needs to be decentralized: otherwise it cannot adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Putin does not want to and cannot manage a crisis; his inaction (there is the *impotence of omnipotence* for you!) paralyzes the entire supercentralized administrative structure. Putin is starting to obstruct and to burden the administrative configuration that he created. Appeals to him to go already resound from the depths of the system itself.²²

In conclusion, let us try to imagine how events may develop from here.

First the tandem will go, then Putin—and with him the system of highly managed democracy. With the disappearance of the leader with the high rating (whether through the departure of the leader himself or through the decline of his rating), the entire political landscape will be transformed, like Cinderella at midnight. With the extinction of the magical power of the rating, all substitutes will lose their luster: the carriage of United Russia will turn into a pumpkin, its coachman into a rat, and so on. Weaker actors will start to build coalitions; the role of institutions—the government, the Federal Assembly, the higher courts, political parties—will grow in a natural manner. In their current form, unfortunately, they are hardly ready to play a more independent role, but it is important for the mechanism to be set in motion, so that political development will acquire its own impetus and proceed naturally. The role of such a mechanism, uniting the actions of various parts of the political system, must be played by elections, which in the absence of an inflated rating will become more competitive. Our task will be to strengthen and stabilize this situational, spontaneous institutionalization.

Notes

1. Such attempts, I would note, may be far from harmless. Instead of increasing control, they may lead to its complete loss—as happened, for instance, in the Ukrainian presidential elections of 2004.
2. The regime's decreasing effectiveness may be judged, in particular, from the increasingly frequent revisions of decisions that have already been announced, which indicates the absence of effective mechanisms for harmonizing the interests of various elite power groups. Examples include: the sudden shift in priorities on World Trade Organization (WTO) membership (the announcement that Russia would join the WTO as part of the Customs Union with Kazakhstan and Belarus, followed by a hesitant return to the previous stance); the decision to replace the Unified Social Tax by social insurance contributions at a higher rate; and the hasty corrections to the Law on Trade.
3. <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5333> [this and all URLs accessed 1 March 2011—Ed.].
4. Sergei Chemezov, the head of Russian Technologies, initially sat on the commission but was expelled by presidential decree after missing two sessions. Igor Agamirzian, director of the Russian Venture company, took his place.
5. <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5647>.
6. On implementation of the political proposals presented in Medvedev's 2008 address, see www.irena.org.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1558&Itemid=431.
7. Previously appointment to the Federation Council required ten years' service in the region concerned. Medvedev changed this requirement, so from 1 January 2011 an appointee must have occupied elective office in his or her region. Speaker of the Federation Council Sergei Mironov could not block this decision, so that with the transition to the proportional electoral system, he and his colleagues will have to negotiate for "needed" senators either with United Russia or with the Communists, the only group with the capacity to break the United Russia monopoly of "party seats."
8. L. Nalbandian, "Sud'ia Kononov: Nezavisimykh sudei v Rossii net," *Sobesednik*, 27 October 2009; P. Bonet, "Vladimir Yarosláv'tsev, Juez del Tribunal Constitucional de Rusia: 'En Rusia mandan los órganos de seguridad, como en la época soviética,'" *El País*, 31 August 2009. Translation: "Vladimir Iarosláv'tsev, sud'ia Konstitutsionnogo Suda Rossii: 'V Rossii praviat organy bezopasnosti, kak vo vremena SSSR,'" *Inosmi.ru*, 1 September 2009 (www.inosmi.ru/russia/20090901/252151.html).
9. "Poslanie Federal'nomu Sobraniuu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," transcript, 12 November 2009 (www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5979).
10. For a detailed analysis of the results of the Moscow elections, see D. Oreshkin and V. Kozlov, "Nepravitel'stvennyi doklad," *Novaia gazeta*, 23 October 2009.
11. *Ibid.*
12. V. Cherkesov, "Nel'zia dopustit', chtoby voiny prevratilis' v tovgovtsev," *Kommersant*, 9 October 2007.
13. www.levada.ru/press/2009112600.html.
14. See, e.g., the Public Opinion Foundation survey data: "Politicheskie indikatory," *Dominantny*, no. 43, 29 October 2009 (<http://bd.fom.ru/pdf/d43ind.pdf>).

15. D. Treisman, "The Popularity of Russian Presidents" (www.hse.ru/data/351/229/1237/paper-Treisman.pdf).

16. "Pamiat' o natsional'nykh tragediiakh tak zhe sviashchenna, kak pamiat' o pobedakh," transcript of video recording in Dmitry Medvedev's blog on Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repression, 30 October 2009 (<http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/5862>).

17. "Razgovor s Vladimirom Putinyem. Prodolzhenie," transcript, 3 December 2009 (<http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/8444>).

18. "Medvedev i Putin ne budut konkurirovat' na vyborakh 2012 goda," RIA Novosti, 15 September 2009 (www.rian.ru/politics/20090915/185190700.html); "Medvedev: novoe prezidentsvo vozmozhno, protivorechii s Putinyem net," RIA Novosti, 15 September 2009 (www.rian.ru/politics/20090915/185199017.html); "Razgovor s Vladimirom Putinyem"; "Press-konferentsiia po itogam Rossiiskoiatskikh mezhgosudarstvennykh konsul'tatsii," transcript, 3 December 2009 (www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/6236).

19. Compare this with the sudden hardening of Medvedev's position regarding sanctions against Zimbabwe, the appearance on the Internet of photographs of a "drunk" Medvedev at the Russia-European Union summit in L'Aquila, and so on.

20. Before this, the targets of attack chosen by Nikita Krichevskii in his widely circulated report *Russia After Pikalevo: The New Political-Economic Reality* [Post-pikalevskaiia Rossiia: novaia politiko-ekonomicheskaiia real'nost'] were Russian Technologies and Oleg Deripaska; this caused certain experts to conjecture that the Kremlin was preparing a demonstrative attack against two oligarchical business groups: one old "family" group and one new group connected with the "defense and security agencies."

21. In his presidential missive Medvedev argues that the numbers of deputies in our regional parliaments vary too widely: some regions, such as Tuva, have too many deputies, while others, such as Moscow, have too few. A commission set up by the Kremlin to implement the ideas in the presidential address is now considering how many deputies there should be in each region, which regions should have fewer and which more.

22. "Putin obiazan dat' Medvedevu shans stat' velikim prezidentom." A conversation with Gleb Pavlovskii (www.russ.ru/Mirovaya-povestka/Putin-obyazan-dat-Medvedevu-shans-stat-velikim-prezidentom).

Appendix 1: Councils and Commissions

Presidential councils and commissions have become even more numerous and now exceed twenty. Most of the councils that operated under President Putin have been reapproved and continue to exist or even to function, with meetings once or twice a year.

The largest and most representative is the *Council for the Implementation of Priority National Projects and for Demographic Policy*, with Medvedev as chair and Putin as chair of the presidium. It has met only once, in December 2008, and the formation of three working groups for specific national projects has dragged on for over a year.

The *Council for Cossack Affairs* (chaired by Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Aleksandr Beglov), which existed for three years under Boris Yeltsin, was revived in January 2009 and has met three times since then. Each of two new "Medvedev" councils formed in November–December 2008 has also met once—the *Council for the Development of an Information Society* (led by Dmitry Medvedev) and the *Council for the Handicapped* (led by Sergei Naryshkin). The *Council for the Development of Local Self-Government* (chair Dmitry Medvedev, chair of the presidium Vladimir Putin) was at one time, after its creation under Yeltsin, regarded almost as a third chamber of the federal parliament but lasted only a couple of years. It was revived by Putin on the eve of the 2007 elections and reapproved by Medvedev in August 2008, but by the end of 2009 had not held a single meeting of all its members. The most active councils appear to be the *Council Against Corruption* (chair Dmitry Medvedev, chair of the presidium Sergei Naryshkin), the *Council for the Development of Physical Culture and Sports* (chair Dmitry Medvedev, chair of the presidium Vladimir Putin), which is currently engaged in preparing for the Olympic Games in Sochi, and the *Council to Assist the Development of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights* (headed by Ella Pamfilova). Each of these councils has met many times, and an entire series of ideas initiated or considered by them have been embodied not only in presidential instructions but also in government decisions and new laws.

Of the nine presidential commissions, five are somewhat restructured versions of old commissions (this work occupied the whole of 2008): the Commission for the Reform and Development of State Service, the Commission for the Preliminary Examination of Prospective Federal Judges, the Commission on Questions of Military–Technical Cooperation, the Commission on State Awards, and the Commission to Implement the State Program for the Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots. The commission with the highest status—the commission for military–technical cooperation—is headed by the president and prime minister, the commissions for state service and state awards by the head of the presidential administration, and the rest by lower-level officials. To the five commissions that existed earlier, four new ones have been introduced by the Medvedev presidency: (1) the *Commission to Establish a Reserve of Administrative Personnel* (formed in August 2008 with Naryshkin as chair and Sergei Sobianin and Oleg Markov as deputy chairs), which has announced the creation of a presidential "hundred" and "thousand,"

a federal reserve of five thousand, and personnel reserves for regions of the Federation; (2) the *Commission to Counteract Attempts to Falsify History That Harm Russia's Interests* (formed in May 2009 under Naryshkin's leadership)—an invention fully Soviet in spirit, as even its clumsy name testifies; (3) the *Commission for the Modernization and Technological Development of Russia's Economy* (headed by Medvedev, deputy chairs Sobianin and Vladislav Surkov, executive secretary Arkadii Dvorkovich)—the president's favorite brainchild; and (4) finally, the newest and most timely commission—the *Commission to Improve the Administration of the Unified State Examination* (led by Naryshkin); formed in October 2009, the commission was expected to submit its report and recommendations by 15 December.*

Note to Appendix 1

*When this issue [of *Pro et Contra*—Ed.] went to press, neither the report nor the recommendations had appeared, even though all deadlines had passed.

Appendix 2: Medvedev's Associates

By the end of 2009, the president's fellow students from the LSU Law Faculty were on the Higher Arbitration Court (Anton Ivanov, Valeriia Adamova), in the Court Bailiffs' Service (Artur Parfenchikov), in the Regulatory Department of the Presidential Administration (Konstantin Chuichenko), and on the Investigation Committee of the Prosecutor's Office (deputy head Elena Leonenko). They are also to be found in the regions: Nikolai Vinnichenko is the presidential representative in the Urals federal district, Aleksandr Gutsan is deputy general prosecutor for the Northwestern federal district, and Vladimir Kozhokar is head of the Main Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Central federal district. Justice Minister Aleksandr Kononov is also a presidential associate.

Of about fifteen regional heads appointed under Medvedev, only three can be considered—on the basis of specific candidacies and political logic—"new" people or (conditionally) "Medvedev men." These are Boris Ebzeyev, head of the Karachai-Cherkess republic and a former judge of the Constitutional Court; Nikita Belykh, head of Kirov oblast and former leader of the Union of Right Forces; and Army Colonel Yunus-bek Yevkurov, head of Ingushetia. They do not set the tone, although each appointment is interesting in its own way. According to bureaucratic norms, officials are loyal primarily to the one who appoints them, so in

quantitative terms Medvedev's clientele is substantial. In particular, the new presidium of the State Council appointed by Medvedev in December 2009 consists for the first time almost wholly of new regional heads appointed by Medvedev.

In contrast to Putin's first term, when German Gref's Center of Strategic Development played an important role in developing an action program, now there are no serious attempts to develop programs, with the exception perhaps of the technological modernization program being developed by Medvedev's new modernization commission. Several "intellectual headquarters" are, however, fighting for the right to become the chief strategic center. For example, the Institute of Contemporary Development (ICD) (board of governors headed by Medvedev, board of management led by Igor' Iurgens) lays claim to this role, but Medvedev apparently does not maintain regular direct contacts with the ICD. The institute conducts studies on its own initiative and does not propose specific reform plans; these studies are more like conceptual designs or rough drafts for the future. One ICD rival is the Institute of Social Planning (directed by Valerii Fadeev), which has ties to the right-centrist wing of United Russia.

Appendix 3: Substitutes Instead of Institutions

The institutional design of the political system under Vladimir Putin gradually evolved. Initially the expansion of presidential power in all directions weakened all other institutions. Then, when it became obvious that the weakened institutions were incapable of fully performing their functions in the political system, various kinds of substitutes were created to "assist" them. The substitutes, being tied to the president and possessing no legitimacy of their own, serve not only as functional replacements for the weakened institutions but also as means of the further expansion of presidential power. Examples of substitutes include the State Council and numerous other presidential councils in place of a normally functioning parliament, the presidential representatives in the federal districts, and regular, secret, mass sociological surveys in place of normal elections. Two points are important in this context. (1) Although stripped of their role and content, institutions are not eliminated—the core is removed but the outer shell remains. They turn into decorative pseudoinstitutions, pale likenesses of themselves. (2) Substitutes never turn into institutions: they do not receive legal embodiment in the

Constitution or in constitutional laws, nor do they acquire independent legitimacy. They are not created to replace, over time, institutions that are becoming ineffective but to substitute for democratic institutions that formally continue to exist in a decorative role. For a more detailed discussion, see N. Petrov, "Rossiiskaia politicheskaiia mekhanika i krizis," the transcript of a lecture delivered on 21 May 2009 at the Bilingua Club and Literary Café, as one of the "Public Lectures of Polit.ru" (www.polit.ru/lectures/2009/06/25/crisis.html).