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Michael Urban; Rouslan Khestanov

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The Significance of a Non-event: Dmitrii Medvedev's 2010 Presidential Address to Parliament

MICHAEL URBAN AND ROUSLAN KHESTANOV

Dmitrii Medvedev delivered his third presidential address to the Russian parliament in an atmosphere marked by widening fissures in the country's power structure and increasing calls for political reform. His public statements in recent months had led many to believe that he was prepared to stand again for the presidency, this time on a reformist platform, and that this speech would launch his campaign. His banal and conservative address deeply disappointed them. A close analysis of that address, however, shows that it is altogether congruent with Russian political discourse, and thus indeed signalled his bid for another term in office.

Context and Atmosphere

This analysis applies a constructivist approach to political language – one focused on the representation of things (words) rather than on those things themselves (referents) – to Dmitrii Medvedev's third presidential address (*Poslanie prezidenta*) to the Russian parliament. Its objective is to interpret this speech act as a critical moment in Russian politics, mapping out how power pervades public language and thereby reproduces itself. This study addresses a paradoxical situation in which a candidate for high office kicks off his campaign by fundamentally transforming his political persona, thereby deeply disappointing his own supporters. It aims to account for just how this reversal was executed and why it was performed. We begin with the presidential address and the background against which it was delivered in order to outline the manifest contents of Medvedev's speech and establish something of the significance attributed to them by its audience.

The president's annual address to the Federal Assembly in Russia resembles the US president's State of the Union address or the Speech from

Michael Urban is Professor of Politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, USA. Rouslan Khestanov is Professor of Cultural Studies at the National Research University, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia.

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the Throne in Great Britain. Stripped of the eschatological embellishment reminding listeners of their membership of the political community, it amounts to a solemn and authoritative summary of accomplishments and a list of problems to be tackled. However, the occasion of this address for the Russian polity is in some ways even more momentous because of the hyper-centralized character of the state in which all power revolves round that of the president. Added to this would be the buzz engendered in the mass media by the Kremlin propaganda corps, pitching the speech as one of the year's most important events and ramping up public interest in it by initiating a series of press leaks about its main themes roughly a month before it is actually delivered. Public interest is promoted and sustained by these teasers that are endlessly rehearsed in mass media discussions while keeping secret the actual date of the address until a few days before it is to be given. Moreover, the importance attached to Medvedev's 2010 address was expanded further by the question of who will stand for the presidency in March 2012 – he or Putin? – an issue amplified yet more by the fact that the term of office had been extended from four to six years.

In the previous year, Medvedev had initiated a broad public discussion about the country's strategy for modernization with the publication of his article 'Forward Russia'. The politically engaged part of the population – on the whole, fully loyal to the regime – took this tract to be a reformist manifesto representing an alternative to the conservative policies associated with his predecessor, Vladimir Putin. Ensuing discussions resulted in the formation of a rather amorphous informal 'party' of Medvedevites, on the one hand, and Putinites (or the force-wielders, *siloviki*), on the other hand. Any distinction, however insignificant, between the two members of the 'tandem' was dramatized in the mass media and raised to the level of contentious, party-like differences between the two 'contenders'. Regardless of the fact that neither Medvedev nor Putin had announced any plans for making a bid for the presidency, columns of political supporters emerged spontaneously. Debates about the expected contents of the presidential address further polarized the field.¹

Just five days before his address, Medvedev piqued interest yet further by sending out a video message on his blog acknowledging the existence of symptoms of a brewing political crisis and hinting at the possibility of deep political reforms. He claimed that the 'party of power [United Russia] has ossified [*zabronzovela*], degraded, and symptoms of stagnation have begun to appear in society'. His use of the term 'stagnation' (*zastoi*) called to mind Gorbachev's *perestroika*, mounted to reverse the stagnation said to have afflicted the USSR. In order to overcome it, Medvedev called for the reintroduction of political competition whose absence has meant that 'the threat arises that stability will be converted into a factor of stagnation'

and that such stagnation 'is equally ruinous both for the ruling party and for opposition forces'. Medvedev's radical remarks gave birth to the hope among his supporters that his coming speech would be an official declaration that he would stand for another term as president and carry out an ambitious programme of reform.

Political reform was back on the agenda for many in the political class owing to the way in which a series of events over the previous 18 months had shaken the power structure more and more violently. Indeed, this seemed to be what Medvedev had in mind when using words such as 'degradation' and 'stagnation'. The first blow was delivered in spring 2009, when a drunken Moscow policeman, Major Denis Yevsyukov, shot down a number of shoppers in cold blood at one of the city's supermarkets. The ensuing scandal had a colossal impact on public opinion, conclusively discrediting the police – who have not enjoyed high ratings among the public for many years – and raising the question of reform for the entire system of law-enforcement organs.

Before it was neutralized in June 2010, a militant group whom the press had christened – not without obvious sympathy – the 'Primorie partisans' had carried out a series of attacks and assassinations of policemen in the Far East. A video placed on the internet showed the 'partisans', young men living in a small settlement in Primorskii *krai* (territory), issuing a call-to-arms against the system of police violence and injustice. The video itself was made in clear imitation of the genre of such messages put out by radical Islamicists. Moreover, the 'partisans' clearly stated their own solidarity with the Islamic fighters of the North Caucasus in their struggle against the unjust Russian occupation. For their part, the residents of Primorskii *krai* seemed to regard the 'partisans' with sympathy rather than with fear.

Then came the heat, drought and wildfires of summer – over 27,000 of them. The debacle of the Russian state's utter incapacity to deal with this catastrophe gave the lie to all the images of strength, control and reliability that the regime had been circulating about itself. The wildfires also represented a vulnerability for Moscow's powerful mayor, Yurii Luzhkov, who had deserted his post at the most difficult hour in order to go on holiday at his chalet in the Alps. Thus, in September, the national television networks exploited this opening by launching a full-scale propaganda blitz against Luzhkov accusing him of massive corruption. From the very start of this sordid media campaign, many in the political class assumed that the attack had been perpetrated exclusively by 'the party of Medvedev' and that a blow against Luzhkov counted for a blow against the conservative 'party of Putin'. Moreover, Luzhkov himself seemed to believe that there was a real split within the ruling tandem inasmuch as he openly sought Putin's support. Thus, for those who believed in the modernizing rhetoric of

Medvedev, the forced resignation of Luzhkov became yet another reason for optimism. It looked as if the president were emerging as the leader of an incipient reform movement.

Probably the most important and stunning event that occurred on the eve of the presidential address took place in the village of Kushchevskaya in Krasnodar *krai* on 4 November in the home of the entrepreneur and farmer Sever Ametov, where 12 persons – four of them children – were brutally murdered. Behind these killings stood a criminal ring that had subordinated to itself not only businesses in this agriculturally developed district but also the entire system of law-enforcement organizations and local administration. Journalistic investigations have shown just how powerful were officialdom's connections to the ring, one of whose leaders attended Medvedev's inauguration. Kushchevskaya immediately became synonymous with a new understanding of social reality in Russia. We do not know who coined the phrase 'All Russia – that's Kushchevskaya [*Vsya Rossiya – eto Kushchevka*]', but it quickly appeared on the lips of many.

The Kushchevskaya episode had two important consequences. First, it undercut the legitimacy of Putin's policy of strengthening national executive power, the 'power vertical', that had been pursued under the guise of battling against corruption. This, for instance, had been the reason given to the parliament in 2004 to terminate the election of governors in favour of presidential appointments. The scandal demystified the 'power vertical', showing how, at ground level, it was, in fact, controlled by organized crime. Second, as criminologists and journalists unearthed more evidence, it showed that not only were state structures corrupt but so was civil society itself. It turned out that the strategy for social improvements implemented by Putin depended directly on the degree of society's integration with the criminal underworld. Investigators and journalists inquiring into the massacre encountered resistance to their efforts among the local population because of fear, of course, but also because people seemed to have lost their ability to distinguish right from might, police from bandits, public officials from agents of corruption or victims from oppressors. Indeed, during his annual televised 'Dialogue with the People' on 16 December, the architect of the 'power vertical' himself, Vladimir Putin, was forced to admit as much.²

Thus, at the moment of Medvedev's address, the politically informed segment of Russian society had begun to question seriously Putin's policy of stability. Putin's power bloc – uniting a part of the upper echelons of the bureaucracy, big business and the force-wielders (*siloviki*) – suddenly seemed ideologically disarmed. Although the major economic and governmental resources were still on Putin's side, the legitimacy of his authoritarian course was vanishing. Thus, whereas the existence of an elemental protest movement from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok had previously been perceived

as a consequence of local conflicts or the mistakes of the local authorities, since the beginning of 2010 protests have become more and more directed at the political regime in Moscow, personified by Putin.

It was precisely in this atmosphere of growing demand for deep reform that Medvedev delivered his address to the Federal Assembly on 30 November. But astonishingly, his speech scarcely mentioned the matter of reform at all. Rather, he executed a detour, waxing unctuously and for most of his 45 minutes at the podium on the problems of children. This unexpected turn of events delivered a serious blow to the rank and file in the 'party of modernization' who had hitherto come to regard Medvedev as the champion of their cause. Here is a sample of the 'disappointment' – the title of *Nezavisimaya gazeta*'s editorial on the speech on the following day – visited on the reformist community by Medvedev's address:

- 'The major theme of the address – the theme of childhood – is absolutely innocuous in every sense . . . Possibly Medvedev has departed from reformist discourse in view of the approaching presidential election . . . This is particularly [important] if we turn attention to the fact that his core constituency is actually Vladimir Putin with whom he is negotiating a decision of destiny regarding a single nominee between the two of them' (Editorial, *Vedomosti*, 1 December 2010).
- 'In Dmitrii Medvedev's address to the Federal Assembly there is not the slightest hint that it has the character of a campaign for [the presidency], although many definitely were awaiting this' (Dmitrii Orlov, General Director of the Agency for Political and Economic Communication, *Izvestiya*, 1 December 2010).
- 'the address was directed at those people who will be alive when perhaps the majority of people today will have already departed this earth' (Valerii Khomyakov, General Director for the Council for National Strategy, *Izvestiya*, 1 December 2010).
- 'In distinction from previous addresses, on the whole this one was bereft of a reformist spirit, when what we were waiting for this time as we begin the electoral cycle would have been something revolutionary' (Gennadi Gudkov, deputy of State Duma of the party, 'A Just Russia', *Kommersant*', 1 December 2010).
- 'In a few days, no one will remember this speech, but it would be nice if it resulted in the construction of 100 kindergartens' (Boris Nemtsov, Former Deputy Prime Minister, leader of the opposition movement, Solidarity, *Kommersant*', 1 December 2010).
- 'A dutifully reasoned doughnut hole [*zvenyashenaya pustota*] about innovations and technological modernization' (Mikhail Kas'yanov, former prime minister, *Kommersant*', 1 December 2010).

What had happened? Was the address, in fact, intended to signal that Medvedev was about to step down from the presidency? We think not. Rather, the following section will offer two intertwined arguments to the contrary. The first concerns the language selected by Medvedev to target a specific audience relevant to securing his re-election. The second involves the particular use of language, altering not so much its content as its structure in order to produce a new meaning out of what were essentially the same old words. In short, our view is that this address inaugurated Medvedev's re-election campaign. Central to this interpretation is the issue of audience: what Medvedev is saying is determined by the matter of to whom he is saying it.

The Lost Object: Modernization

'Modernization' appears in contemporary Russian political discourse as the proverbial sought-for thing or lost object. Its absence initiates the telling of a larger story about it and about how to retrieve it.³ Broadly speaking, narratives framing 'modernization' in this way tend to cluster around two poles and to render the word itself as a 'floating signifier' – a term employed by two or more sides in a debate, each of which supplies it with a set of associations differing from that supplied by the other(s).⁴

At one end of the argument in Russia, 'modernization' is associated with state efforts to stimulate greater economic productivity – and to advance enterprises thought to be related to it, such as education and technical innovation – without disturbing the social hierarchy or reforming the political order.⁵ At the other end, 'modernization' is predicated on altogether different sources; namely, society and politics themselves. As James Livesey has remarked about the modernizing thrust of the French Revolution, 'economic modernity could attain legitimacy [and thus inscribe itself in social consciousness and practices] because it need no longer be the project of an administrative class' but had grown organically out of extended and prolonged popular struggles and negotiation of differences representing the revolution itself.⁶ Russian narratives framing 'modernization' in this way are linked closely to desiderata such as 'democracy',⁷ 'political competition'⁸ and 'Westernization'.⁹ The term, therefore, signifies the need for fundamental change in society and polity. Let us call, then, the first usage of 'modernization' the 'technocratic' or 'authoritarian' one and the second the 'democratic' one.

Medvedev's first two presidential addresses had led many observers to conclude that his use of 'modernity' coincided with this second meaning of the term. Although both of these addresses are chock full of technocratic language, democratic moments seem to appear as well, such as this one in his 2009 presidential address:

A truly modern society is one that seeks constant renewal, the continuous evolutionary transformation of social practices, democratic institutions [and] visions of the future ... Changes for the better occur only when there is an opportunity for fair competition between ideas on how to resolve those problems ... where people ... are willing to assume responsibility for the situation in their own village or town and realize that only an active stance can set in motion the heavy machinery of government bureaucracy.

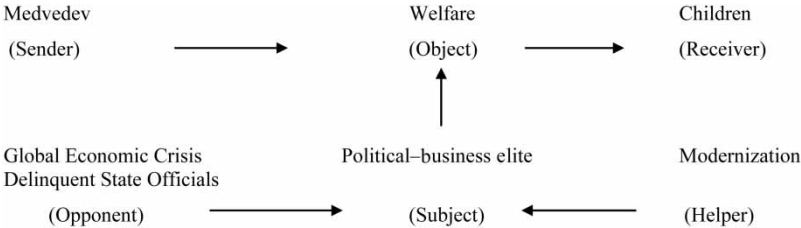
As the occasion of his 2010 presidential address approached, he seemed to send even stronger signals of this sort. Speaking at a forum with foreign and domestic social scientists in Yaroslavl' in September of that year, he complained that much of the present establishment – government officials and some businessmen – were opposed to making those changes required to modernize. Moreover, he argued that Gorbachev had been correct to reject the authoritarian Chinese path to modernity as historically and culturally inappropriate for Russia. He explained to his interlocutors

We have a problem against which we must struggle, ... paternalism, that is 'what will the state do for me?' [This attitude] appeared not only in the Soviet period but in the pre-Soviet period. But we don't have to drag it into the XXI century, and this will require more 'heat' than [there has been] in the People's Republic of China.¹⁰

The tone of the 2010 presidential address, however, veers sharply in another direction. In it, Medvedev mentions 'modernization' in his first sentence, to which he gives concrete meaning in the phrase 'technological modernization' a few paragraphs later. He then goes on to say simply that it 'is not a good in itself' and does not utter the word again except for a passing reference many minutes later to the need for 'modernizing the system of public services'. But it is not merely the infrequent appearance of the term that is telling. More importantly, its meaning is set in a technocratic and politically toothless mould because of the structure that Medvedev has deployed for his narrative.

In order to get at this crucial aspect of the speech, we have recourse to A.J. Greimas's 'actantial model' whose basic terms appear in parentheses in Figure 1.¹¹ The dynamics of this model – applicable to stories, in general, and to political speech, in particular¹² – are such that the narrative is initiated by some lack on the part of the Receiver that is identified by the Sender (representing the normative order), who, therefore commissions a Subject to search for the Object (sought-for thing or lost object) that will fill it. In doing so, the Subject is equipped with the capacity to secure the Object and to overcome the resistance of the Opponent, through the assistance of a Helper. In this respect, it is important to emphasize that Greimas's actantial model refers to the basic

FIGURE 1
THE STRUCTURE OF MEDVEDEV’S 2010 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



structure of narrative enacted by characters who are empirically present in a text rather than to those characters themselves. Accordingly, more than one character might perform the function of a given actant (as both Global Economic Crisis and Delinquent Officials do in Medvedev’s naming of the Opponent), while a single character might perform more than one actantial function (as we see that Medvedev himself appears in the form of both Sender and Subject in the figure).

Applying this model to the text of Medvedev’s speech, we note first that, while ‘modernization’ had represented the Object in his first two presidential addresses, in this instance, it appears under the category of Helper. Owing to the mutually defining character of the relations among the terms at the level of narrative structure, this repositioning switches the thrust of ‘modernization’ on to technocratic rails. It no longer is the purpose of action – a meaning that would correspond to Medvedev’s previous invocations of a condition of ‘continuous evolutionary transformation of social practices’¹³ – but an ‘instrument’ for attaining the Object, now defined (or re-defined) as the welfare of Russia’s ‘26 million children and teenagers’ (Receiver). Throughout the speech, this instrument is associated with education, health, technology and economic development, all things that the Subject – the existing political and business elites – is directed to secure for the Receiver. Within this structure, then, ‘modernization’ is unconnected to any change in social relations or practices. It has no democratic significance. If anything, the reverse would be true. By constructing *this* Receiver, the Subject liberates himself from obligations *vis-à-vis* those living in the present. ‘Everything’, Medvedev tells his audience, ‘is for the sake of our children’. This de-politicizing instrumentalization of the public is accomplished most glaringly in the case of women. Medvedev reports that ‘the number of women of so-called reproductive age has significantly declined. And this is a serious threat, this is a challenge for our entire nation’. In his words, then, women do not appear as members of the community so much as they are characterized as instruments of demographic growth.

Medvedev himself appears in Figure 1 in the upper-left quadrant under the category of Sender. His use of the first-person singular pronoun 'I' accomplishes this. With appropriate phrasing – 'I have sent two bills ... to the Duma'; 'I said that the law should be tough' – he positions himself as the one identifying the Subject (the political–business elite), charging him with a number of quests, 'all ... for the sake of those we love most – our children' (Receiver). This narrative strategy is two-pronged. On the one hand, Medvedev refers to himself no fewer than 84 times in the text, using either 'I' (80 times) or 'my' (four times). The audience cannot escape the fact that it is Medvedev himself to whom they are listening. On the other hand, the content of his narrative is composed almost entirely of commendations and injunctions directed at the Subject. The long recitations of accomplishments thereby mark the Subject as worthy, while the extended list of new things to do reminds the Subject of his desire to do them.

The Subject is constructed by the use of the exclusive 'we', thus placing Medvedev in this category too.¹⁴ This Subject – which sometimes refers to the government alone, sometimes to the business elite and sometimes to both – appears a remarkable 154 times in the text. In contrast, the inclusive 'we', representing the nation as a whole, is uttered only ten times in the speech (four times as 'we' and six times as 'our'). There is little doubt, then, about whom Medvedev is speaking to: to 'us', the power-holders. In the same way as the speaker constructs an identity with his audience through his use of 'we', the form of the pronoun that he uses – whether inclusive or exclusive – indicates just who that audience is. This imbalance in the use of the first-person plural would coincide with patterns detected in a previous study of contemporary Russian political discourse in which the personal characteristics of political actors – their competence and morality – dominate their speech at the expense of the public elements of political discourse – community and approval (law).¹⁵ However, what is striking about the results reported here consists in the fact that, while that previous study had concerned interview conversations that might have cued respondents to frame their remarks in terms of their *personal* experience in politics, Medvedev's address is a quintessentially *public* speech act in which the public is scarcely represented. Rather than telling his listeners what the public wants, needs or directs, he tells them what Medvedev or the exclusive 'we' wants, needs and so forth. When not regarded as a mere instrument, the public appears only as the consumer of the benefactions bestowed, or about to be bestowed, on it by the Subject. In this respect, the nation in his narrative is infantilized not only at the level of content in which the Object of the Subject's quest appears as 'everything for the sake of our children', but at the structural level as well, where they may be seen but not heard. Thus, it appears that Medvedev is reinforcing in this address that very paternalism about which he had complained two months earlier at the Yaroslavl forum.¹⁶

The Object and Receiver in the actantial model exist in a condition of mutual codetermination with the Sender and Subject. Thus, in Medvedev's narrative, 'the children' construct, in a pattern not uncharacteristic of Russian political discourse that incorporates gender roles prevailing in the culture, a Sender who functions as a 'father' and a Subject bearing traces of elder (and thus responsible) brothers. As noted above, Medvedev positions himself in both of those categories. This positioning encodes the two dimensions of his address that make it structurally equivalent to a campaign speech in the context of Russian politics wherein the president is not so much elected by the voters as he is selected by the elite. Along one dimension, that of the Sender, Medvedev tells the same elite that he is worthy of continuing in that office. Just look at the accomplishments over which he has presided, and in the face of Opponents such as the Global Economic Crisis! Along the other dimension, that of the Subject, Medvedev's exclusive 'we' situates him among the elder brothers, off on a quest for the sake of the children. As one of them, he can be trusted – trusted to preserve the hierarchy on top of which they all sit. Even his two *rebukes* of officialdom indicate his loyalty to the group. In that respect, he maintains only that (1) 'government officials should not discredit the state with their activities' and that (2) 'government officials should not be hiding in their offices while criminal gangs grow and take over the territory'. Here again, the narrative is confined to the personalized elements in Russian political discourse – competence and morality – which have already been established by Medvedev as characteristics belonging to the Subject. Thus, the 'government officials' to whom these words refer are quite simply *other* government officials, not members of the exclusive 'we'. Medvedev's tough words in this context amount to a reassurance that the Sender is planning neither to commission a new Subject nor to dismiss members of the elite for anything but the most egregious offences. This oscillation between the roles of Sender and Subject – accomplished by the over-abundance of 'I' and 'we' in his text – enables Medvedev to share membership of the brotherhood even while he distinguishes himself as the president. Here is a short passage illustrating the frequency and oscillation of the first-person pronoun – as well as the banality of its theme – highlighting the first person with italics:

Everything that *I* have been talking about just now, all the modernization, is not a goal in itself. It is an instrument, a tool that would allow *us* to solve economic and social problems that are long overdue. [It is] an instrument that *we* can use to support those who need it most and create the conditions that would help develop the potential of those *we* pin our hopes on: *our* youth and *our* children. Modernization is carried out for their sake. *We* must not be ashamed of the country *we* pass on to *our* children and grandchildren but who *we* pass Russia on to is also crucial.

Not only do first-person blizzards, such as this one, place Medvedev among the elder brothers, but they likewise invite those in the brotherhood to identify him as the president and to identify themselves with him, the president.

Conclusion

According to the analysis presented here, Dmitrii Medvedev's presidential address of 30 November 2010 constituted his bid for re-election to the presidency of the Russian Federation. His narrative hinged on the reassurance offered to his audience that he could be trusted not to initiate measures that might disturb the status quo. This reassurance was accomplished by two structural alterations distinguishing this speech from others he has given. First, along the lines of the actantial model, his 2010 address featured a new Object, the welfare of Russia's children, in place of the one, modernization, that had hitherto been his principal shibboleth. By making this switch and converting modernization into a Helper, the potential for political reform has been removed from the term. As an instrument assisting the Subject, the power-holders, to secure this new Object, 'modernization' is rendered as technological innovation promoting material well-being, not as a political reform with uncertain and, for the power-holders, potentially dangerous consequences. Within this structure, it is about things such as computers in the classroom, not free and fair elections.

Second, Medvedev places himself in the role of both Sender and Subject. He manages this legerdemain by bombarding his audience with the first-person pronoun whose number continually oscillates. It appears in the singular some 84 times, constructing Medvedev as Sender who commissions the Subject to set off on a number of quests. Yet, on another 154 occasions, he employs the exclusive 'we' to signal his membership of the collective Subject, the power-holders themselves, who are said to have accomplished a great number of things and are now poised to achieve even more.

Beyond this interpretation of the presidential address as a speech launching Medvedev's re-election campaign, how might our analysis contribute to an understanding of Russian politics? In this respect, our focus first falls on context, represented above all by Medvedev's audience. He has made the adjustments that we have reported, because it is the individuals in the hall with him who hold his political future in their hands. Medvedev does not enlist 'the people' to his side; rather, he has gone over to the side of the power-holders. In doing so, however, he has effectively abandoned the very signifier – '(democratic) modernization' – that had constituted his political identity and his cultural–political capital. What Medvedev himself might actually think or believe about modernization shows itself to be simply irrelevant. Thus, we can offer a warning about importing common-sense

categories – such as what individuals ‘really’ think or believe – from everyday life into our understanding of things political: such categories may not survive the journey.

Finally, by reconstructing his narrative in order to ingratiate himself with the power-holders, Medvedev forecloses any opening of his words on to the world of practical matters. Were he interested in democratic modernization, then his Sender, Subject or both would be represented by ‘the people’. That would simply be *democratic* talk, as in usages such as ‘the people have demanded’ or ‘we, the people, can do these things’. Instead, the Subject, Object and Receiver chosen by Medvedev in this speech amount to authoritarian puff and fluff wherein an allegedly transcendent Object secured for an unimpeachable (yet altogether absent) Receiver demotes and degrades the actually existing public. By placing ‘the children’ in binary relation to that public and rehearsing the supposed competence and morality of the Subject (power-holders), Medvedev continues a long Russian tradition of discursively subordinating the people to state power. Paternal care for the children might be the claim of unctuous authoritarian rule, but in itself, it has no connection to legitimate government. This instance of Russian political speech conjures an election campaign performed in the language of oligarchy.

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NOTES

1. Recognition of membership of one or another group of ‘political parties’ is characteristic of a rather limited social stratum (the Moscow intelligentsia, professionals in the mass media, high-level bureaucrats and big- and middle-sized businessmen), the work and career prospects of whom are located in direct dependency on a change of political course. Opposing political identities are expressed most clearly in those spaces free from Kremlin’s direct interference: the national press and the internet.
2. In his discussion of the matter during the ‘Dialogue’, Putin remarked that all the organs of power seemed ‘lame [*nesostoyatel’nymi*] ... I think that this was a failure of the entire system of law enforcement ... [This] was yet another signal to wake up society and power itself ... to what is going on in the regions’.
3. Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edn (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1968); A.J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).
4. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).
5. See, for instance, Il’ya Ponomarev, Mikhail Remizov, Roman Karev and Konstantin Bakulev, ‘Modernizatsiya, innovatsiya, konkurentsia’ [Modernization, innovation, competition], *Modernizatsiya Rossii kak postroenie novogo gosudarstva: nezavisimyi ekspertnyi doklad* [The modernization of Russia as the construction of a new state: an independent expert report], unpublished report delivered at the Institut sovremennogo razvitiia, 29 Oct. 2009.

6. James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.165.
7. I. Yu Yurgens (ed.), *Demokratiya: razvitie rossiiskoi modeli* [Democracy: development of the Russian model] (Moscow: Ekoniform, 2008).
8. N.V. Zagladin and V.I. Katagarova (eds.), *Modernizatsiya, avtoritarizm i demokratiya: sbornik materialov konferentsii* [Modernization, authoritarianism and democracy: a collection of conference materials] (Moscow: IMEMO RAN, 2010).
9. D.S. L'vova and G.B. Kleiner (eds.), *Rossiya v globaliziruyushchetsya mire: modernizatsiya rossiiskoi ekonomiki* [Russia in a globalizing world: modernization of the Russian economy] (Moscow: Nauka, 2007).
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