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ANALYSIS

In Search of Modernization Without Irritation

Medvedev's Third Address To The Federal Assembly

By Hans-Henning Schröder, Berlin

Abstract

On 30 November 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev delivered his report on the state of the nation to the Federal Assembly—the bicameral Russian parliament. The guiding theme of his address was modernization, but the president avoided controversial or disputed issues, instead focusing on one area where general consensus could be expected: Meeting the needs of children, supporting their development, and creating an amenable environment for them. Very obviously, the address was crafted to avoid controversy and to convey an integrative stance. This is probably due to the fact that the power arrangement for the period following the 2012 presidential elections will have to be negotiated over the coming year. It would not have been helpful in this context for the president to make radical proposals in November 2010 and alienate parts of the elite. Thus, the annual address to the Federal Assembly was an overture for the follow-up debates that will ensue during the coming year.

Not An Easy Year

The year 2010 was not an easy one for the Russian president. It is true that the country has experienced worse periods, such as the hyperinflation from 1992 to 1995, the crisis of autumn 1998, or the year 2008, which brought the war in Georgia, the financial crisis, and a collapse of fuel prices. But 2010, despite economic stabilization, was a year full of adversity that exposed shortcomings in society and the weakness of the government. The devastating forest fires during the dry summer had shown the regional authorities to be ineffective and incompetent. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's idea of monitoring the reforestation efforts by webcam showed that the Russian leaders did not trust their own administration. Efforts to curtail the violent conflicts in the Northern Caucasus were unsuccessful. In March, suicide bombers from the Northern Caucasus carried out two attacks in the Moscow metro that killed 37 people. The distrust of the security forces came to the fore in the case of the "Primorsky Partisans" as large parts of the population—in a completely misguided perception—romanticized a series of attacks on police officers as acts of resistance. The internal problems of the security apparatus became apparent in the case of the mass murder in Kushchevskaya, which revealed the close linkage between the investigative authorities and the world of organized crime. The second trial of former Yukos owners Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev—a legal farce—demonstrated the dependency of the judiciary on the executive authorities. The brutal attack on a "Kommersant" correspondent who had publicly criticized the construction of a highway through the forest of Khimki drew attention not only to the failure of the rule of law, but also to the difficult situation of the media. The campaigns Medvedev had initiated for combating corruption and a comprehensive modernization of Russia were not making any progress. Privatization of state companies was going slowly. The reform of the police and the Ministry of the Interior, which Medvedev himself had pursued with considerable energy, showed no immediate visible results. In short, the multiple weaknesses of the Russian state came to the fore in a way that could not be ignored in 2010—despite all of the efforts by Putin and Medvedev to exert vertical control.

The Modernization Campaign of 2009

Therefore, the president had a whole range of issues to choose from in his annual address to the Federal Assembly. In the previous year, the main issue had been the modernization of Russia. Medvedev had spoken about "chronic backwardness", a "primitive economic structure", an "archaic society", and "confused actions dictated by nostalgia and prejudices", and had announced a drive that would be "the first experience in our history of a modernization based on democratic values and institutions". The basis would be a technological overhaul of the entire sphere of production, assisted by foreign investors and imported know-how. The president identified the following key technologies: medical technology, energy and information technology, the development of aerospace and telecommunications, and enhancement of energy efficiency. Medvedev wanted to achieve a modernization of the state sector including cautious privatization. Fully or partially state-owned companies were to submit to independent audits and be restructured in line with contemporary concepts of corporate governance. As early as the first quarter of 2010, the state was to present a comprehensive program for the promotion of science and research. Within two months, the government was to revamp the approval process for investment programs, reducing the processing period from between one-and-a-half and two years to three or four

months. Furthermore, before the end of the first quarter of 2010, laws were to be drafted on reforming the system of taxation and mandatory insurances in order to create favorable conditions for investors. Medvedev also demanded an expansion and improvement of the public school system and an improvement of working conditions for charitable endowments and non-governmental organizations. The implementation of this ambitious program required an assertive political leadership and broad support throughout society.

Autumn 2010—A Time Of Great Expectations

It would therefore have been reasonable to expect that the president would take up his ambitious plans of the previous year and implement them energetically—not least considering the difficulties and resistance that his policies had met with during 2010. After the summer break, Medvedev had made several political sallies on various occasions. At an international forum in Yaroslavl that was held in September at Medvedev's initiative, he had declared: "…I not only believe in democracy as a form of leadership, I not only believe in democracy as a form of political regime, I also believe that an application of democratic principles can liberate millions of people in our country and billions of people worldwide from degradation and poverty." The conception of democracy that he propagated in this speech was patterned on international norms: The president referred to the UN Charter and the OSCE Paris Charter. He described Russia as a democratic state, albeit flawed, but on track towards true democracy. At the same time, however, he rejected attempts to leverage democratic standards for demagogic purposes as a means of enforcing geopolitical interests—a side blow at the US. In November, one week before his address to the Federal Assembly, Medvedev once more took up these thoughts in his blog. He wrote that it was necessary to make the political system more just and to raise the level of political competition as well as the quality of popular representation—the core task of any democracy. However, he also stated in this blog that the danger of election-rigging had been minimized and all parties had been given equal access to state media—an outright lie, given the obvious recent administrative interference in the regional and municipal elections.

Nevertheless, the Yaroslavl speech and the blog entry gave rise to high expectations. At quite an early stage, the Russian media speculated that Medvedev's address would refer to the issues he had raised earlier. In any case, it was expected that the president would use the opportunity to position himself for the 2012 presidential elections and introduce concrete projects to give tangible shape to his modernization drive. However, at the beginning of November, the "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" daily newspaper noted with irritation that preparations for the address were being kept top secret, and reported on speculation that Medvedev would focus on social issues this time around. When the address was delayed several times, new rumors arose, including that Medvedev would propose a far-reaching restructuring of the Russian Federation and a reduction in the number of federal subjects ("states") from 83 to 20. Medvedev's meeting with the Duma party chairmen on 24 November as well as his blog entry on 23 November raised expectations that the address would deal with a reform of the political system. But at this point, high-ranking Kremlin officials signaled that the president did not intend to pursue this matter in greater detail in his third address to the Federal Assembly.

Such speculations, which were nourished to some extent by the late date of the address—Medvedev had presented his address for 2008 on 5 November and the second one on 12 November 2009—were primarily an indicator of the expectations harbored by the political class. The political intelligentsia was certainly aware that the comprehensive modernization proposals and reforms announced by a swaggering Medvedev in 2009 could not be realized without an overhaul of the entire political system. Therefore, many observers were waiting for concrete measures that would create space for reforms. But once again, in 2010 Medvedev disappointed these expectations as well.

Children And Other Problems

The address that the president delivered to the Federal Assembly on 30 November 2010 was unspectacular. Certainly he did not retract the ideas he had presented in the previous year, but he did not engage in any energetic further development of the modernization policy and avoided controversial or disputed issues. Instead, his remarks focused on a topic where he could reasonably expect broad consensus: Meeting the needs of children, supporting their development, and creating an amenable environment for them. He prefaced his address by positing a claim that he had already formulated in the previous year and that his audience in the Russian parliament undoubtedly agreed with: The status of Russia as a great power was to be strengthened by encouraging greater innovation. In this way, he offered a precise outline of the tasks of the modernization policy while simultaneously underscoring the necessity of that policy: Without comprehensive modernization, Russia cannot become competitive at the international level.

The president devoted only a few sentences to the problems of 2010 and the necessary measures to address

these problems, he also discussed technology and the pharmaceutical industry, and announced his intention to present the government with a list of tasks that it would need to tackle. Then he turned to his main theme, the situation of children. Here, he covered an impressive range of topics ranging from demographics to pediatric hospitals, support for families with many children, the availability of kindergarten places, law enforcement for minors and juvenile delinquents, and the problem of sexual abuse of children. He demanded that the corporate sector become more engaged in charitable work and announced that he would hire a presidential plenipotentiary for children's issues. Medvedev called for future-oriented schools and for greater efforts to foster young talents and to raise teachers' qualifications, and did not forget to mention the importance of a patriotic education. His approach to the matter of environmental pollution stressed the necessity of passing on an intact world to the next generation, for which civil society had a special responsibility.

Turning away from the question of children, the president moved on to the topic of the state and its citizens, and discussed a range of issues including transparency, modernization of state services, and improving the investment climate. He touched briefly on the questions of privatization, reforming the Interior Ministry, the need for just laws, reforming criminal law, and the fight against corruption as well as the new version of the law on public contracts, which is designed to prevent waste in this area. The modernization of the armed forces, the quality of the political system, and the state of the municipalities were also identified as important issues. The president dwelt in slightly more detail on security policy and the reform of the armed forces, and particularly discussed the Russia–NATO summit in Lisbon and the question of missile defense. In the part of his address dealing with foreign policy, Medvedev stressed the importance of diplomacy for economic development and in particular emphasized the significance of Russia's modernization partnership with Germany and France. He highlighted cooperation with the EU and the US, mentioned the Asia-Pacific region and ASEAN, referred to the CIS in connection with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Community (but not the tax union with Kazakhstan and Belarus), offered the services of the Russian disaster management service for global assistance in emergency situations, and advocated international cooperation in combating piracy. The issue of modernization was a recurrent theme throughout his address in many variations. Nevertheless, the speech did not introduce any specific program, but was rather a potpourri of old and new ideas, to which each government department appeared to have contributed. Apart from the committed and well-structured section on childrens' and youth policy, which listed a number of concrete problems, the address came across as disjointed and unfocused.

Modernization And The Succession Of 2012

Unlike in September 2009, when Medvedev's "Russia Forward" article introduced a political campaign that culminated in his address to the Federal Assembly, he avoided criticism or indeed any harsh notes in his 2010 address. In 2009, he had criticized the state of affairs in the country so roundly that his remarks were perceived as criticism of his predecessor. He had made clear that unless Russia underwent a radical transformation, the country would lose touch with its international competitors altogether. In 2010, he focused on children, an issue that enjoyed a consensus transcending partisan political or social boundaries. Quite obviously, the address was designed to avoid controversy and to serve an integrative function.

The open criticism voiced in the previous year, his efforts to reform the legal system and the police force, the armed forces reform, the initiatives to privatize state companies, and the attempts at limiting corruption among government officials had irritated parts of the elites. Medvedev had stated only too clearly that real modernization was impossible to achieve without sacrificing special rights and privileges. For politicians, high-ranking officials, and corporate directors, the creation of an independent judiciary meant that they could no longer influence court decisions with a simple telephone call. Effective combating of corruption meant diminishing income for many state officials. For all of them, serious efforts at modernization implied a loss of privileges they had hitherto enjoyed.

In 2011, however, as Duma elections are held and preparations for the presidential elections begin, resistance from parts of the elites is the last thing the political leadership needs; instead, it depends on collaboration with these elites. This is also true for Dmitry Medvedev personally, who seems to be aiming for a second term in office as president. The decision on his succession will be made at some point during the year 2011. What is at stake is not a competition between Putin and Medvedev. The two of them have a more or less frictionless collaboration, which will be continued after the presidential elections. The question is which power arrangement will be in place when the successor comes into office. Medvedev's modernization program is clearly aimed at the period beyond 2012—and it is safe to assume that both Medvedev and Putin are serious about modernization. Most likely, Medvedev is hoping to be involved in its

implementation even after 2012—preferably as president, but possibly also in some other role. The specific shape of the power arrangement and the distribution of roles will probably be "negotiated" between the various elite groups in 2011. It would not have been helpful for the president to make radical suggestions in November 2010 and to alienate parts of the elite. In this respect, the address to the Federal Assembly was an overture to the discussions that can be expected to ensue in the coming year. The goal is modernization, but preferably without causing irritation.

Translated from German by Christopher Findlay

About the Author
Hans-Henning Schröder teaches at the Institute for East-European Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin on "Regional political analysis focusing on Eastern Europe".

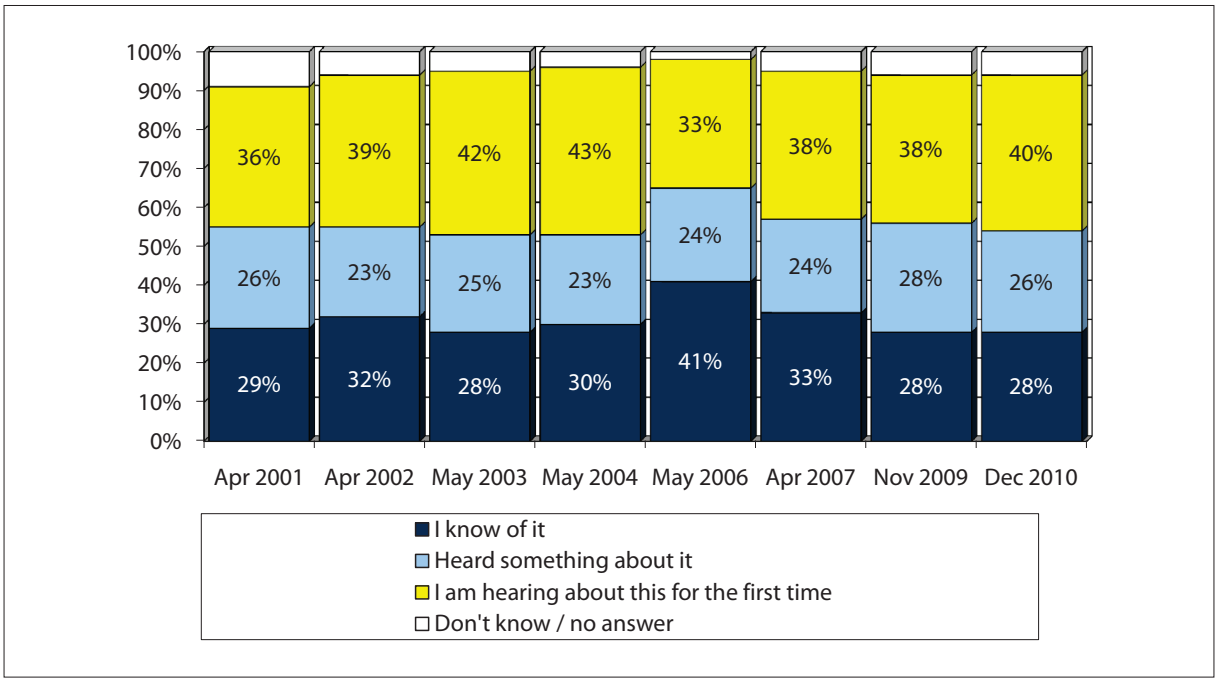
Further Reading

- Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. 30 November 2010, 13:00 The Kremlin, Moscow http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/1384
- Speech at the plenary session of the Global Policy Forum The Modern State: Standards of Democracy and Criteria of Efficiency. 10 September 2010, 16:30, Yaroslavl http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/928
- "Our democracy is imperfect and we are absolutely aware of this. But we are going forward". 23 November 2010, 21:00. Dmitry Medvedev's blog entry on the development of Russia's political system. http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/1358

OPINION POLL

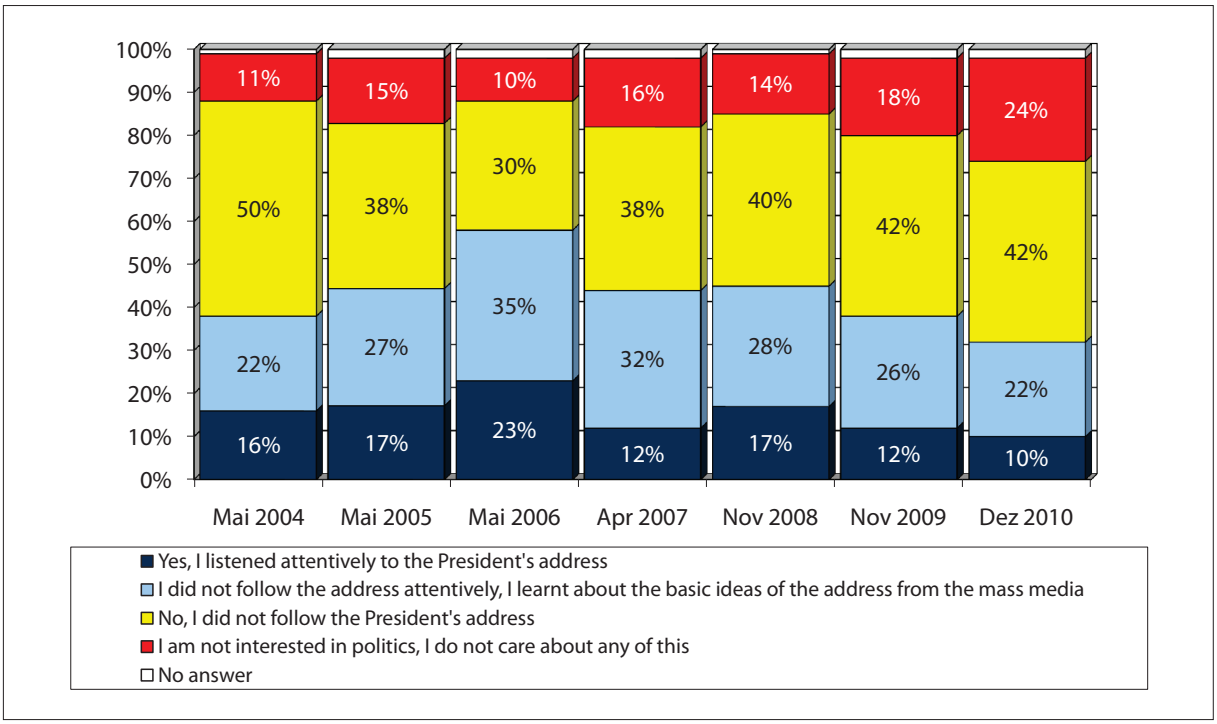
Reactions to the Address

Figure 1: Do You Know That the President Delivered His Annual Address To the Federal Assembly? (FOM, 2001–2010)



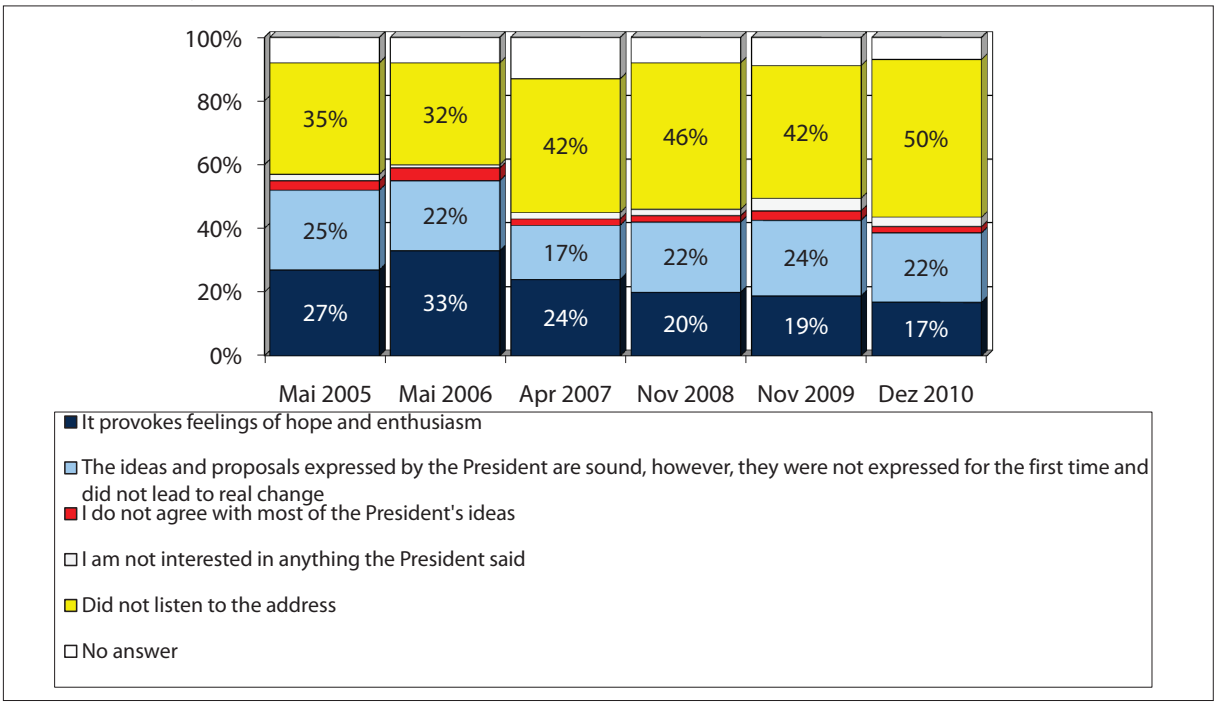
Source: opinion polls by FOM 2001–2010, last polls conducted 4–5 December 2010
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom1048/d104811

Figure 2: Did You Follow the President's Annual Address To the Federal Assembly? (VTsIOM, 2004–2010)



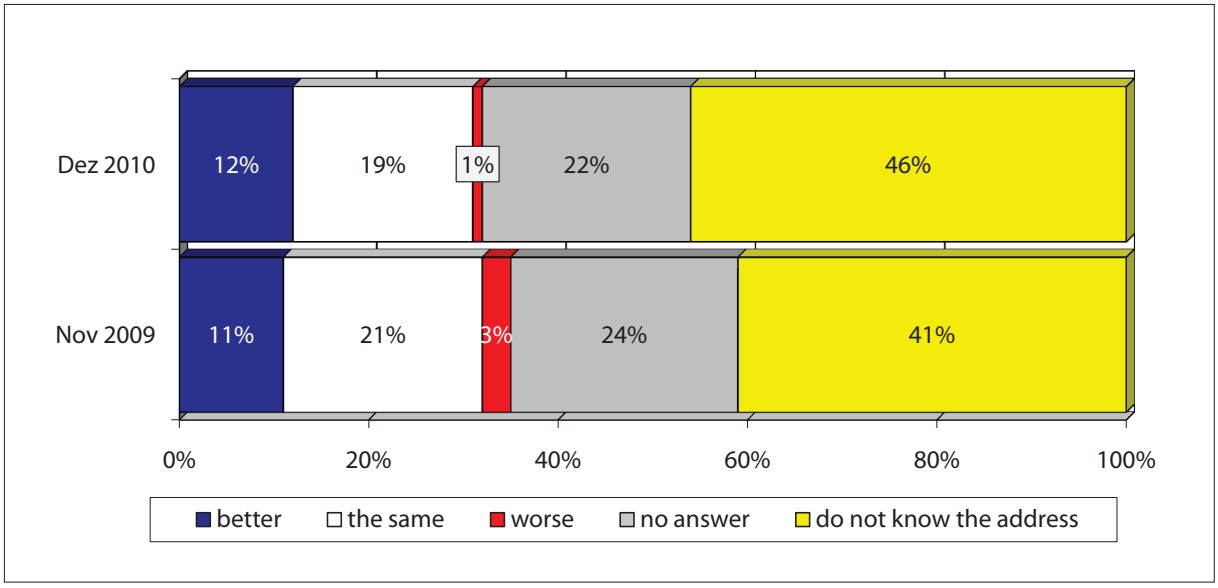
Source: opinion polls by VTsIOM 2004–2010, last polls conducted 4–5 December 2010 http://old.wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/111147.html

Figure 3: How Do You Rate the President's Address To the Federal Assembly? (VTsIOM, 2005–2010)



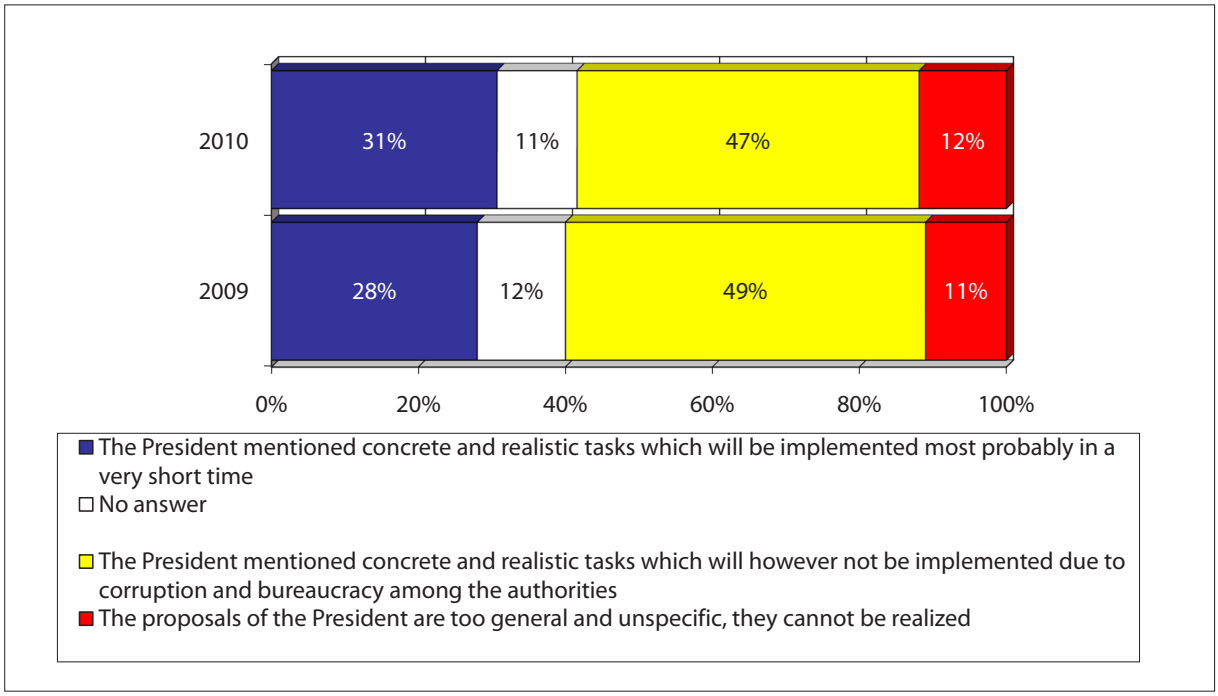
Source: opinion polls by VTsIOM 2005–2010, last polls conducted 4–5 December 2010
http://old.wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/111147.html

Figure 4: In Your Opinion, Was the President's Address To the Federal Assembly on November 30th Better or Worse Than in Previous Years? (FOM, 2008–2009)



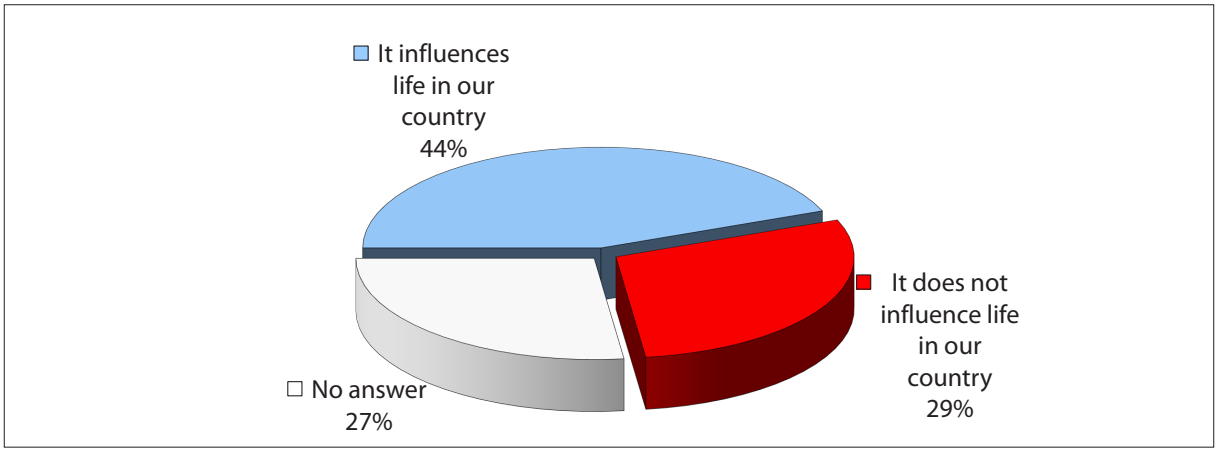
Source: opinion polls by FOM 2009–2010, last polls conducted 4–5 December 2010
http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom1048/d104811

Figure 5: How Realistic Are the Objectives Mentioned By the President in His Address And Will These Objectives Be Implemented? (VTsIOM, 2009–2010)



Source: opinion polls by VTsIOM 2009–2010, last polls conducted 4–5 December 2010
http://old.wciom.ru/novosti/press-vypuski/press-vypusk/single/111147.html

Figure 6: In Your Opinion, Does the Address Of the President To the Federal Assembly Influence Life in Our Country? (FOM, 2010)



Source: opinion polls by FOM 4–5 December 2010 http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom1048/d104811

STATISTICS

The President's Address in Figures

Table 1: TV Audience Shares For the President's Address To the Federal Assembly (2008–2010)

Figures for Russia			
Air date	**Channel**	**Rating (%)***	**Share(%)****
5 November 2008	Pervyi kanal	2.2%	16.6%
	Rossiya 1	2.9%	22.1%
12 November 2009	Pervyi kanal	3.5%	23.2%
	Rossiya 1	3.2%	20.9%
30 November 2010	Pervyi kanal	2.7%	17.9%
	Rossiya 1	2.1%	13.9%
Figures for Moscow			
5 November 2008	Pervyi kanal	3.6%	20.8%
	Rossiya 1	3.9%	22.5%
12 November 2009	Pervyi kanal	3.1%	18.5%
	Rossiya 1	3.3%	19.9%
30 November 2010	Pervyi kanal	3.3%	18.7%
	Rossiya 1	2.7%	15.3%

All figures were compiled by "TNS Rossiya" especially for "Kommersant". Figures for 2010 are provisional. All viewers are 18 years of age and older
**rating – % of total population who watched the televised address*
*** Share of persons who watched the televised address in % of those, who were watching television at this time*
Source: "Kommersant" newspaper, http://www.kommersant.ru/pda/kommersant.html?id=1550532

Table 2: Frequency of Key Words in Putin's und Medvedev's Addresses To the Federal Assembly 2004–2010

	Medvedev			Putin			
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
total no. of words	7,042	9,548	8,342	8,076	6,477	5,220	5,207
we	138	81	92	60	60	37	32
I	54	35	15	12	9	3	5
Russia	35	60	44	74	46	65	95
state	35	51	28	45	29	59	32
economy	24	33	37	34	30	26	47
democracy	5	8	26	7	2	23	8
development	19	40	28	35	33	25	30
reforms	2	2	7	5	5	3	7
crisis	7	10	17	2	0	0	1
technology	16	39	8	18	12	0	1
law	23	35	38	17	9	22	3
modernization	24	20	2	7	7	1	8
corruption	3	11	9	1	2	1	1
future	6	83	7	16	3	6	3
past	4	6	2	8	5	6	5
army, military	10	7	13	17	37	3	16
society, social	33	56	40	31	26	49	37
demographics	4	2	0	1	6	1	1
children	59	12	3	0	33	4	4
family	7	4	2	2	13	0	3
human being	9	10	14	5	6	13	7
pensions	5	3	12	27	4	1	1
dwelling, habitation, domicile	12	5	0	17	7	2	18
education, school	26	44	32	3	14	6	26
science	2	11	3	15	5	5	4
liberty	5	1	29	4	2	31	9
"bureaucrats"	2	1	2	0	2	5	0
bureaucracy	0	1	3	1	2	5	0

Source: "Kommersant" newspaper, 13 November 2009, 27 April 2007 and 11 May 2006 http://www.kommersant.ru/pda/kommersant.html?id=762877*;* http://www.kommersant.ru/pda/kommersant.html?id=672333*;* http://www.kommersant.ru/pda/kommersant.html?id=1273582 *and calculations by Hans-Henning Schröder.*

ANALYSIS

Nikita Mikhalkov, Russia's Political Mentor

By Ulrich Schmid, St. Gallen

Abstract

In his political manifesto on "enlightened conservatism" film director Nikita Mikhalkov calls on Russians to submit themselves to a strong leader. Although some claim that Mikhalkov is singing Vladimir Putin's praises, in fact, he is putting himself forward as the best guide for Russia.

Enlightened Conservatism

On 26 October 2010, Russian film director Nikita Mikhalkov presented his manifesto on "enlightened conservatism" to the Russian government. In this 63-page document, entitled "Justice and Truth", Mikhalkov laid out his vision for the political future of Russia. Mikhalkov stresses the core values of political stability and economic growth. Only a strong national leader can achieve this agenda: "Law and order must be not only a possibility, but a reality in Russia. Therefore, they must be strengthened by the political determination of the country's leader. This leader must be capable of taking responsibility, and of acting quickly, precisely, and decisively wherever necessary for national security or saving the lives of Russians." Conversely, as a complement to a strong leader, Mikhalkov demands that the citizens of Russia should demonstrate "loyalty to power" and "the ability to subordinate themselves with dignity to authority", since "personified rule" and "personal responsibility" are preferable to "collective irresponsibility". Therefore, he asserts, "maintaining honor, acknowledging duty, and venerating rank" are typical Russian virtues.

Since Russia is not Honduras, modernization should not be equated with Westernization, Mikhalkov writes; rather, he states emphatically that "Russia-Eurasia is the geopolitical and sacred center of the world." Therefore, Russia is not a "nation-state", but a "continental empire". Due to the tragedy of its history, however, Russia does not hold the rank in the global order that it really deserves. Mikhalkov's political program is prefaced by a short lesson in history that is patterned exactly on the officially approved wording in Russia. In line with Dmitry Medvedev's seminal video-blogged remarks of 20 October 2009, the Stalinist terror is mentioned, but is outweighed by acknowledgement of Russia's achievements during the Soviet era: "[The nation] endured the tribulations of collectivization and industrialization. It suffered the horror and pain of the gulag. Illiteracy, child homelessness, and banditry were liquidated. Poverty, disease, and hunger were conquered. In a heroic national feat, victory was won in World War II. Then, our country was the first to take possession of the cosmos, having once again made a huge effort to overcome economic devastation."

In a Hegelian volte-face, Mikhalkov professes his faith in the legitimate omnipotence of the state. His definitions of the state are cast in hymnic phrasing. "The state is culture made to serve the purposes of the fatherland. The state, as state apparatus, is a form of volition that can and must regulate the activities of citizens and NGOs." Mikhalkov propagates the exact opposite of a liberal night watchman state: "The authority of the state is a personal sacrifice brought to the altar of the fatherland." Led by the president and the vertical of power, "we must once more grow united and strong, and Russia great."

Of course, Mikhalkov's political agenda is also supported by the tenets of Russian Orthodoxy. Time and again, he praises the "symphony" of temporal and spiritual power. Unsurprisingly, his manifesto ends with the words: "So help us God!"

Reaction to the Text

Mikhalkov himself was surprised by the response generated by his pamphlet. However, the response was quite ambiguous, being about evenly divided between rapturous acclaim and radical rejection. Nationalist author Aleksandr Prokhanov asserted that the Almighty himself had guided Mikhalkov's pen, while political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky decried the lack of appreciation for democracy in the text, which he claimed was clearly aimed against Medvedev.

Mikhalkov as Moral Authority

Mikhalkov's contribution should be seen in its larger context. Since the success of his movie "Burnt By The Sun" (1994), Mikhalkov has tried again and again in his cinematographic work, but more recently also in political statements, to reshape Russia in line with his own views. Interestingly, he does so by following a recurrent pattern. Mikhalkov himself appears as a moral authority or father-figure who mentors a young, energetic man who has lots of talent, but requires spiritual guidance. In "Burnt By The Sun", Mikhalkov plays Division Commander Kotov, who looks after his protégé Mitja, a young NKVD officer.

The same relationship is repeated in "The Barber of Siberia" (1998). Here, Mikhalkov plays the author-

itarian Czar Alexander III (Vladimir Putin's favorite emperor) who is celebrated by his officer cadets. In both films, however, the mentor role leads to disaster. Because the youthful protagonists do not follow the directives of their elder, they become tragic heroes and end up in complete isolation.

The same structure can be found even in Mikhalkov's documentary on his famous father (2003). In a bold plot device, he reverses the parent-child relationship. He himself is not the son, but the mentor of his own father, who is presented as an "eternal child". Sergei Mikhalkov (1913–2009) wrote the lyrics for the Soviet and Russian national anthem and gained fame as the author of children's poems. This film is especially notable for its sympathetic vision of the Soviet era, which is cast as a tragic low point in Russia's salvation history.

The mentor-mentee structure once again becomes the governing narrative element in the courtroom drama "12" (2007). Here, Mikhalkov is the foreman of a jury in the trial of a young Chechen accused of having murdered his Russian stepfather. The foreman is an artist, but hints that he is a former intelligence officer. In the end, justice triumphs, the young defendant is acquitted, and the foreman of the jury takes the Chechen boy into his home.

Mikhalkov the Politician

In his films, Mikhalkov obviously blurs the lines between autobiographical self-portrait and fiction. While he always plays a person with moral authority, his own real-life personality is always looming behind the fictional protagonist. The patriarchic stance of his alter ego is transparent: He chooses the roles of generals, czars, head jurors – all positions held by men who decide between good and evil, right and wrong.

In 1995 and 1999, Mikhalkov even publicly considered running as a candidate in the Russian presidential elections. He seemed in no doubt as to his own qualifications for the office. In an interview with *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* on 20 October 1997, he described the president as the "director of a nation": "What is a president? The task of a president is to create an atmosphere in a country and to direct the atmosphere of the country." Putin immediately won Mikhalkov's unrestricted support. On 16 October 2007, Mikhalkov, together with other artists loyal to the government, published an appeal in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* for Putin to change the constitution and to stay for a third term in office: "Russia needs your statesmanship, your political wisdom."

Mikhalkov and Putin

In the same year, Mikhalkov had also produced a 20-minute video on the occasion of Putin's 55th birthday that praised the president's energy and sincerity in effusive words. Characteristically, on this occasion, too, Mikhalkov refers to "atmosphere": "Compare the atmosphere in the country with the way it was ten, fifteen years ago! There have been enormous and highly significant changes. And although it is probably unnecessary to emphasize it – all of these changes are linked in one way or another to the president's name. That is the way it is, whether we like it or not. They are linked in time and space to his name and his forceful, daring, creative élan. These are personal traits."

However, the often-heard charge that Mikhalkov made this video to ingratiate himself with Putin is wrong. The opposite is true: Mikhalkov sees himself as the spiritual mentor of the nation, incorporating the indivisible nexus of Russian culture, Russian Orthodoxy, and the Russian state. He is the representative of a social elite that was part both of the Soviet nomenklatura and the czarist aristocracy. Putin, on the other hand, is the scion of a Leningrad proletarian family. Mikhalkov regards him as a successful self-made man, but one who is not rooted in Russian culture.

The DVD of Mikhalkov's documentary double portrait of his parents is supplemented with a family tree that radically foreshortens and extrapolates familiar bonds to include more distant famous relatives such as Aleksandr Pushkin, Lev Tolstoy, Vladimir Odoevsky, Vassili Surikov, and Sergei Yesenin. Distance is not an issue; the main point is the proud presentation of famous ancestors who are acknowledged exponents of Russia's national culture.

The symbolic gesture inherent in the publication of this impressive pedigree is obvious: Nikita Mikhalkov himself is the incarnation of sacred Russian culture. His ancestry not only authorizes him, but even obliges him to comment on the course of Russia's history. This he has done on numerous occasions, maybe most prominently in his eight-part documentary series "Russians Without Russia" (2003). Here, Mikhalkov portrays mostly White Russian generals and emphasizes their selfless, heroic efforts on behalf of the motherland. He cites belligerent statements by Lavr Kornilov and Aleksandr Kolchak, from which he derives his own metaphysics of war. The US, he claims, wages false wars aimed at establishing democracies. However, a war is only justified in defense of a nation. Mikhalkov goes so far as to elevate such wars to the status of divine ordeal (*pravosudie*): In his view, all military confrontations gravitate towards the affirmation of nationhood.

Mikhalkov's latest manifesto is therefore no sudden revelation, but the sum of his national-conservative, religiously elevated views. Already on 21 December 2006, in the NTV talkshow "To the Barricade" (*K bar'eru*),

he had coined the phrase "national immunity". Russia's entrenchment in its own culture and religion, he claimed, serves as an antidote to the looming "McDonaldization" of the country. His pan-Russian chauvinism was only scantily concealed by concessions to political correctness: "Everything associated with Russian culture and history, everything – from beginning to end – is linked to Orthodoxy and all of the other religions that have taken root in this immensely huge country. Nevertheless, its titular nation has always professed the Orthodox faith."

Mikhalkov's views on the ideal state order with its strong roots in a religiously and culturally defined Russianness is indeed very close to the views of Vladimir Putin. However, the prime minister maintains a careful distance from the controversial film producer. Occasionally, Putin's behavior creates the impression that he wants to avoid acclaim from the wrong side in order to secure the trust of the less nationalistically-minded intelligentsia as well.

Translated from German by Christopher Findlay

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Further Reading:

- Nikita Mikhalkov: Pravo i Pravda. Manifest Prosveshchennogo Konservatizma. Moskva, 2010. (http://polit.ru/exchange/manifest.pdf)
- Beumers, Birgit: *Nikita Mikhalkov. Between nostalgia and nationalism.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Resource Security Institute, the Institute of History at the University of Basel (http://hist sem.unibas.ch/seminar/) and the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University. It is supported by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russland-Analysen (www.laender-analysen.de/russland), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (www.res.ethz.ch), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies is home to a Master's program in European and Eurasian Studies, faculty members from political science, history, economics, sociology, anthropology, language and literature, and other fields, visiting scholars from around the world, research associates, graduate student fellows, and a rich assortment of brown bag lunches, seminars, public lectures, and conferences.

The Institute of History at the University of Basel
The Institute of History at the University of Basel was founded in 1887. It now consists of ten professors and employs some 80 researchers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Research and teaching relate to the period from late antiquity to contemporary history. The Institute offers its 800 students a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in general history and various specialized subjects, including a comprehensive Master's Program in Eastern European History (http://histsem.unibas.ch/bereiche/osteuropaeische-geschichte/).

Resource Security Institute
The Resource Security Institute (RSI) is a non-profit organization devoted to improving understanding about global energy security, particularly as it relates to Eurasia. We do this through collaborating on the publication of electronic newsletters, articles, books and public presentations.

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