

# 'Green' Medvedev Can Initiate Next Big Thing

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While Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was stealing the show by piloting a firefighting plane, it was President Dmitry Medvedev who formulated the right political response to a problem that is affecting the entire world.

In a speech in early August, Medvedev said the scorching heat wave in Russia's central regions was evidence of global climate change. "We need to change the way we work," Medvedev insisted, "to take a more energetic approach to countering the global changes to the climate."

These are bold statements from the Kremlin on climate change, which just a few years ago, Putin, as president, and his economic adviser Andrei Illarionov denied even existed. Putin suggested in 2003 that global warming could actually be good for Russia, resulting in "less spending on fur coats."

Medvedev, on the other hand, has taken steps to promote a more proactive climate policy for

Russia, rolling out a “climate doctrine” and urging the government to back the doctrine with new laws and regulations.

Medvedev has said energy efficiency and nuclear technologies are crucial to reducing greenhouse emissions that cause climate change, among the five strategic directions of his innovation agenda.

He has introduced political initiatives to reduce Russia’s dependence on oil: from the decision to phase out the use of incandescent light bulbs to setting requirements on the share of electric power generated through the use of green technologies.

He seems to be embracing the view that green technologies are the next big thing in the global economy and will generate enormous financial and social rewards to the nations that become the world leaders in these sectors.

Unfortunately, the competition is already far ahead of Russia. China has become the world’s leading manufacturer of wind turbines and solar panels. Just a few weeks ago, the Chinese government shut down more than 2,500 industrial enterprises for failing to meet the strict government requirements for cutting energy consumption and carbon emissions.

In early 2010, the U.S. government set up ARPA-Energy, a government-run venture capital fund with a budget of \$400 million to fund the development of alternative fuels and energy storage options — some bordering on science fiction — for future passenger cars.

The race for the next big thing is on. Medvedev is trying to join the game before it’s too late.

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*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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