

Steve Jobs and Bill Gates Need Not Invest Here

By [Ian Pryde](#)

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Russia wants a two-way, visa-free regime with the European Union, but the Kremlin has consistently complained about the EU's unwillingness to reciprocate. As a result, Moscow remains intransigent on introducing a visa-free regime for entry into Russia. It is yet another classic example of how Russia cuts off its nose to spite its face.

The Russian elite is coming to realize that Russia's development lag cannot be overcome without outside help. The right policy response would be to declare Russia "open for business" to attract as many outside experts as possible from the science and technology sectors.

But the main reason for not granting a visa-free regime for entry into Russia is not economic but ideological and is tied to Moscow's hubris and outdated perception of how a superpower should act. For some reason, the Kremlin considers a unilateral relaxation of its visa regime as a loss of face and an acknowledgment that it is a defeated superpower.

Russia has not thought through its own policies and statements of intent. In his address to the nation last fall, President Dmitry Medvedev called for accelerated visa processing for highly qualified staff who could contribute to the country's scientific and technological development, adding the key phrase, "We need it, not them!"

But, of course, implementation in Russia is always very different from intent. During his recent visit to California, Medvedev had a meeting in a cafe with Russian emigrants working in Silicon Valley. One person brought up a very good point to Medvedev: "I can set up a company in the United States in two days for just \$35. But in Russia, I have to fulfill ridiculous bureaucratic requirements, including presenting an apostil of my U.S. university degree."

Any foreigner who applies for a Russian work visa knows what a headache it is to get this apostil.

When Medvedev was in Silicon Valley, he also met Apple founder Steve Jobs. The irony is that Jobs never completed his university degree. Nor did Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Assume for a minute that neither Jobs nor Gates had contacts in the Kremlin. If they wanted to come to Russia to set up a business or research, they presumably wouldn't be allowed in the country.

This is just one example of how Russia places unnecessary barriers to foreigners. Russia needs to make it easier, not harder, for foreigners to help modernize the country.

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