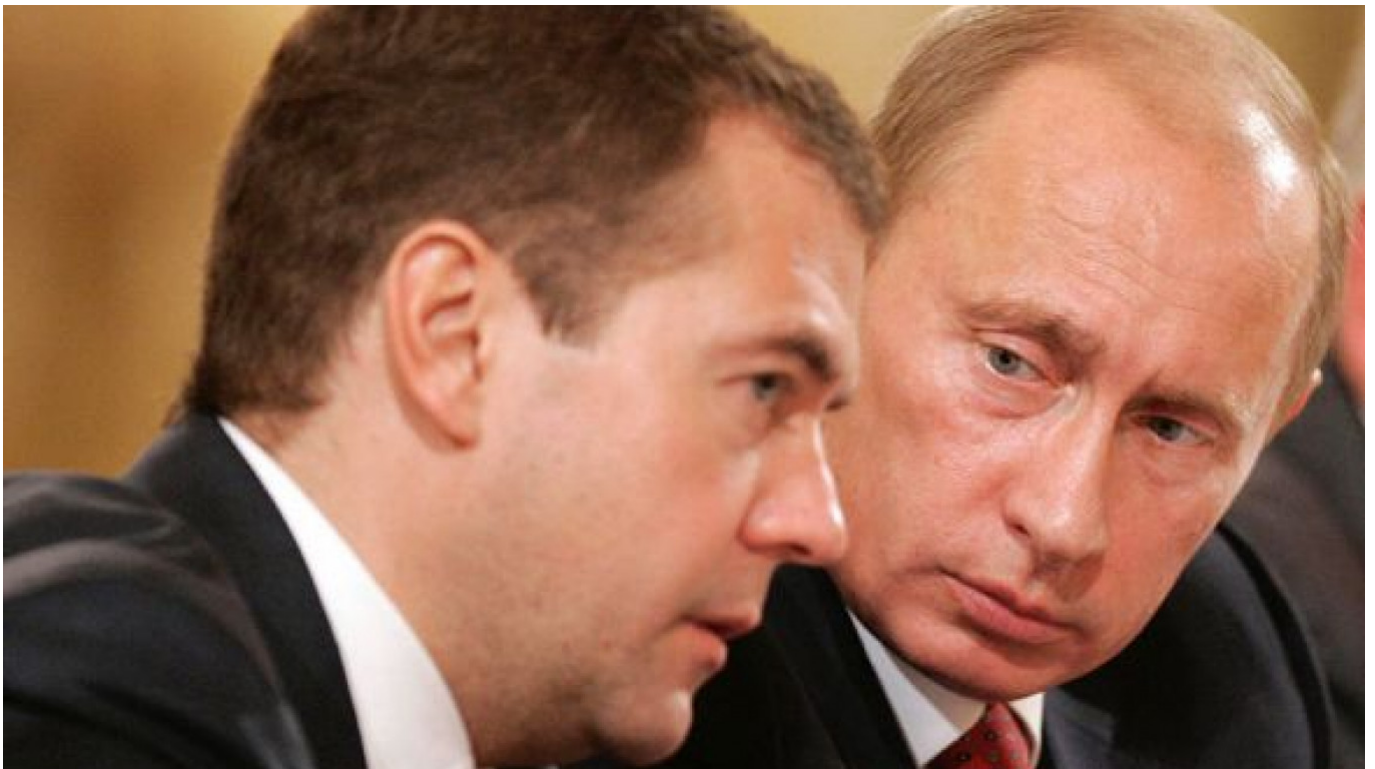


Think Tank Offers Medvedev Platform for 2012 Re-Election Bid

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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President Dmitry Medvedev and his predecessor and political patron, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, have said they will decide together whether one of them or a third candidate will run in the 2012 race.

The Kremlin's pet think tank rolled out a proposal Tuesday for radical political reforms that it says may serve as Dmitry Medvedev's platform for the 2012 presidential election.

The authors of the report acknowledged that Medvedev did not explicitly request the document, but said they hoped it would prompt him to run for re-election.

The report, drafted by the Institute for Contemporary Development, whose board is chaired by Medvedev, advocates a "reset of democracy" as the only way to avoid an impending economic collapse and the disintegration of the country.

The document, titled "Discovering the Future," also calls for extensive economic, social and infrastructural reforms as part of a modernization drive that has been a staple

of Medvedev's agenda since 2009.

"The next presidential circle has a chance to start real modernization, systemic and deep," said the report, which was to be made available in the institute's web site by Wednesday.

Medvedev and his predecessor and political patron, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, have said they will decide together whether one of them or a third candidate will run in the 2012 race. But with no indication about who might run, the ruling elite is growing increasingly worried as they seek to hedge their bets.

The institute's report criticizes the current system of de-facto state control of the courts and the main television channels, and calls for reinstating direct gubernatorial elections and single-candidate districts in State Duma elections.

All of the above were introduced during Putin's tenure as the president from 2000 to 2008 and provide the backbone for the current political system, the "vertical of power." But the pro-Medvedev think tank said the system stifles political activity, which can result in public protests by radicalizing the population.

The report also urges a reduction in the state's domination of the economy — another measure widely credited to Putin — as well as an end to attempts by officials to regulate prices.

Rules for foreigners looking to start business in the country should be eased, the report said, adding that this would stimulate immigration.

The document is a direct follow-up to the institute's report last year, "Reflections on an Attractive Tomorrow," which also called for the political liberalization in the country, institute representatives said at a report presentation in Moscow on Tuesday.

But the new report is explicitly tailored for the upcoming presidential election, they said.

"This is an attempt to create an election program for — I hope — President Medvedev," said Igor Yurgens, the institute's head and the report's co-author.

"We would like to stimulate discussion about the future of the country," institute deputy head Yevgeny Gontmakher told The Moscow Times. "Today, two-thirds of the Russian population do not see any prospects" for the country.

The report was intentionally written in a simple language that the general public would find easy to understand, Gontmakher said. But he added that copies were sent to the Kremlin, including Medvedev himself, and said he was "100 percent" sure that the president would read it.

"This report was not done on an order [from above], and I can say for sure that it is not addressed to Putin," said another co-author, Andrei Kolesnikov.

Gontmakher, a former Cabinet official, said the document was previewed by government officials "who have trust in the institute." He did not elaborate, but the report clearly echoes remarks by Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin in February that modernization is not possible

without political reforms.

Gontmakher said he had no idea whether Medvedev or Putin might run in 2012, saying the report's authors were working while being "completely in the dark" about it.

Independent political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky said the report is itself a step in a pre-election power struggle aimed at supporting Medvedev's possible re-election bid.

But he expressed doubt that Medvedev would be interested in carrying out deep reforms as long as the country's political stability continues uninterrupted.

"He will only go for it if he faces strong pressure from the population," Belkovsky said by telephone. "Today, he and Putin are working together for the preservation of the current system."

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