

Putin Will Never Leave The Kremlin

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President Vladimir Putin has recently made it clear that he does not entertain the possibility of leaving power. Asked whether the lack of a change in government could be at the heart of Russia's problems, Putin emphasized the importance of continuity of government as a prerequisite for development. He portrayed his job swap with Dmitry Medvedev as an efficient way of combining change with continuity and equated appointing new Cabinet members from his team with a change in government.

He is actually being quite sincere.

Being a Russian patriot, he aims for this country's greatness. He honestly thinks he is acting in the nation's best interests and that nobody else has a better plan. Maintaining the continuity of his rule is the best long-term strategy for Russia. A change of regime means upheaval and would be bad for the country. Therefore, those who advocate a Russia without Putin are Russia's enemies, and their coming to power should be prevented.

He's been at this since the election.

Political reforms have been reconfigured to ensure that no independent player could emerge to challenge Putin's power. Registering political parties has been made easy, while independent funding and media access remain restricted. Proliferation of dwarfish parties allows United Russia to stand tall as a serious force. Restrictions on funding and media access eliminate credible alternatives. More parties would make for fewer challengers to Putin's system, as he himself gleefully revealed.

Elections of governors have been returned in a form that all but precludes independents from getting on the ballot. Only Kremlin-vetted candidates would be allowed to run to guarantee that no opposition leader would gain popular legitimacy that rivals Putin's. No new Boris Yeltsin would ever be allowed to emerge. The new rules for elections to the Federation Council ensure the same outcome: No one outside Putin's circle of trust could get in.

The latest laws intimidate ordinary people from joining any unsanctioned political activity. Manual control over major television networks, including the new public television project, would block any narrative that challenges Putin's worldview.

All legitimate avenues for a democratic and peaceful change of government are blocked. Attempts at regime change by force will be ruthlessly suppressed.

It's a perfect system, but it has one defect: It cannot function without Putin. He is chained to the galley for life.

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