



The Putin Restoration

By Leon Aron

The Revolution had, indeed, two distinct phases: one in which the sole aim of the French nation seemed to be to make a clean sweep of the past; and a second, in which attempts were made to salvage fragments from the wreckage of the old order. For many of the laws and administrative methods which were suppressed in 1789 reappeared a few years later, much as some rivers after going underground re-emerge at another point, in new surroundings.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution*

Vladimir Putin's lopsided victory in Russia's March 14 presidential election has been widely ascribed to the Kremlin's neo-authoritarian interference in the political process, including its manipulation of the media and its intimidation of the opposition.

Yet a closer examination of the key trends in Russian politics and public opinion reveals a far more complicated picture. To attribute Putin's triumph, or indeed his popularity, solely to semi-authoritarian political technology is to mislead the American public and American policymakers. Putin's reelection is part of a broad and multifaceted trend affecting Russia today: a post-revolutionary "restoration" that, in one form or another, has followed every great revolution.

The trend's key components (sometimes overlapping but distinct and often clashing) are a reactionary revanchist agenda; a new national consensus; and President Putin's interpretation of and mediation between these forces in accordance with his own policy predilections. Outlining the policies advocated by each of these three institutional actors, highlighting the differences between them, and gauging the results of their interaction will help determine the direction of Russian politics, economy, and foreign and

security affairs in the next four years and very likely beyond.

Not So Simple an Explanation. To be sure, Russia's presidential election was marred by tactics that made the contest less than fair. While the three national television networks skewed the news to play up the president and to say as little as possible about the other candidates,¹ Putin refused to participate in the election debates, dismissing them as a "senseless game," unnecessary for a sitting president because "everything he can say he should have already shown by his actions in the past four years."² In addition, "administrative resources" at every level of government were employed to increase voter turnout. Running against the incumbent in a country where a decade of democracy was preceded by four centuries of brutal authoritarianism is by definition intimidating, and the Kremlin did nothing to lessen (and a great deal to heighten) the inevitable fears and suspicions by, among other things, scaring off wealthy contributors to opposition candidates and parties. In addition, following the venerable Russian tradition of seeking to please the Kremlin with administrative zeal even when the Kremlin does not require it, local officials resorted to petty harassment, occasional ballot stuffing, and,

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apparently, striking voters off the lists to increase the turnout rate.³

Still, in the month preceding the election, the five other presidential candidates had a total of sixty free hours on the three state-owned national television networks⁴ (and the same amount of time on the three state-owned radio stations) for uncensored political advertisements and debates.⁵ Russian newspapers carried long interviews with them and published their platforms. One of the candidates, Irina Khakamada, took out a full-page ad in one of Russia's most popular business newspapers, *Kommersant-Daily*, and Moscow's largest-circulation tabloid, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, in which she branded President Putin a liar and, in effect, a murderer, for his handling of the October 2002 hostage crisis, in which at least 129 hostages died, as well as forty-one Chechen Islamic terrorists.

As a prominent Russian political weekly noted, Kharitonov, Khakamada, and Glaziev seemed to have a "tacit agreement" in their nationally-broadcast debates not to attack each other but "to focus their criticism" on Putin.⁶ With no one to rebut the opposition candidates' attacks on the president, the debates, in effect, amounted to television viewers being told "three times a week that Putin is leading the nation in the wrong direction."⁷

Election posters and leaflets of all the candidates were mounted and handed out in house-to-house canvassing across Russia. Most importantly, the names of Putin's rivals were on the ballot; people were free to vote for them, and almost 15 million did.⁸ Asked if they had the opportunity to express their position freely in the election, 87 percent of those polled answered in the affirmative.⁹

As for Putin, he received almost precisely the number of votes that innumerable polls from some of the most reliable Russian and international public opinion firms predicted he would long before the campaign began. Based on the same polls, it is not unreasonable to assume that Putin would have won with only a slightly narrower lead if the election had been free of some of the tactics mentioned above, which ought to be deplored as setbacks for Russian democracy.

"Restoration" and a New Consensus. The margins of Putin's victory¹⁰ make clear that we are dealing with a phenomenon that extends well beyond campaign shenanigans. First, it does not seem too risky to suppose that the chief executive in a capitalist democracy is very likely to be reelected when, during his term in office, the country's economy grows by at least 30 percent,¹¹ real

incomes increase by an average of 10 percent a year, the average monthly salary more than doubles,¹² and the number of people in poverty shrinks by over one-third.¹³

Yet perhaps nearly as important as the state of the economy is a vast and complex social and political phenomenon at the heart of which is a conservative or even reactionary retrenchment and a drift to the core of the national political and cultural tradition.

Known from the histories of other revolutions as a "restoration," the trend consists of two elements. First, formerly dominant pre-revolutionary political and economic elites seek to stage a comeback, to regain their power and possessions. In the Russian case, they are law enforcement functionaries, federal bureaucrats, and officers of the Federal Security Service (FSB), whose middle and upper ranks are filled with ex-KGB apparatchiks—the groups that effectively owned Soviet Russia's politics and economy. Known as *siloviki* (from "silovoy," or "power-based"), among the most frequently mentioned leaders of the revanchists are Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov, FSB director Nikolai Patrushev, and the two deputy chiefs of staff of the presidential administration, Igor Sechin and Viktor Ivanov.

The other element of the "restoration" is an intense and widespread longing for predictability, security, and continuity after a decade of political and economic revolutions, the relentless and dizzying onslaught of the new, and the taxing choices and responsibilities of freedom. As in all previous post-revolutionary restorations, there is a shift in popular sentiment from a near-total negation of the old regime to a desire for a partial recovery of traditional policies, institutions, and symbols. Unlike the radical liberal intelligentsia, a plurality of Russians over forty-years-old is not ready to dismiss the entire Soviet past. Among other cherished memories, they are proud of the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis in World War II, its nuclear parity with the United States, and its pioneering achievements in space exploration.

Putin's Remarkable "Fit." It is because of his remarkable "fit" into this national consensus that Vladimir Putin has accrued much of his extraordinary popularity. Instinctively or by design (or, likely, both), he has come to embody and symbolize to millions of Russians a still very precarious balance between freedom and order, and between the old and the new.

Asked in a March 2004 nationwide survey what "democracy" meant to them, a strong plurality of Russians (44 percent) singled out the freedoms of speech, press, and religion.¹⁴ Yet the next three most popular

items on the ten-point list were “prosperity” (31 percent), “order and stability” (29 percent), and “strict rule of law”—*strogaya zakonnost*—(24 percent).¹⁵

From his first day in office, while mentioning the importance of “strengthening democracy” in virtually every major speech, Vladimir Putin has unambiguously declared tangible improvements in the latter three areas to be the core of his agenda. As far as public perception is concerned, he has succeeded. As a result, in the four years since Putin was elected, three-quarters of the population continue to believe that he will “bring order to the country” or raise the standard of living.¹⁶

Personal Appeal. Unlike his two immediate predecessors, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, Putin was not a Communist Party leader. He resigned from the party in the wake of the attempted *putsch* by Communist hardliners in August 1991 and went on to serve under Anatoly Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg and one of Russia’s most radical anti-Communist leaders.

Vladimir Putin owes much of his popularity to an uncanny natural ability to make millions of people think that he is “just like they are.” Like the Russian people, who are roughly divided between those who believe Stalin was a “bloody dictator” and those who remember him as “a great military commander” and the man who made Russia “a great power,” Putin deplores “totalitarianism” for its lack of freedom and its concentration camps,¹⁷ yet he unveils a plaque to Yuri Andropov, the longtime KGB chairman and, briefly, general secretary of the USSR. In Putin’s first term, the Duma voted to adopt a new national anthem with the music of the old Soviet one, which was composed under Stalin’s personal guidance and which most older Russians associate with the Soviet Union’s achievements.

Putin seems genuinely to admire Boris Yeltsin as “the person who has done the most important thing” in Russian modern history by “giving [Russia] freedom.”¹⁸ Simultaneously, like most Russians, he recalls the Yeltsin era as a time when the oligarchs “were appointed billionaires” and “state officials stuffed their pockets . . . under the cover of state interests,” as did “windbags, under the cover of democratic phraseology.”¹⁹

Unlike many of the young reformers who shaped Russia’s course in the early post-Soviet years, Putin was not the child of privileged Soviet nobility. Like millions of Russians, he grew up in the crushing poverty of the post-World War II Soviet Union in a freezing, rat-infested communal apartment that the Putins shared with two other families.²⁰

The New Consensus

A Strong State. Yet perhaps above all, Vladimir Putin is associated with the key feature of the new consensus: the desire for a stronger state²¹ and more effective central government to enforce the laws, secure public order, and protect the weak and the poor—even at the expense of some (but by no means all) newly gained liberties. This is not a new choice. As Ronald Syme noted in his classic study of Rome, after the “transference of power and property . . . the consolidation of the revolutionary process” forced the Romans to choose between “liberty or stable government.”²² (They chose the latter and with it the rule of Augustus in 44–23 BC.) Confronting the same dilemma in post-revolutionary Napoleonic France, amid “events, mistakes, and misjudgments,” the people, in de Tocqueville’s words, “abandon[ed] their original ideal and, turning their backs on freedom . . . acquiesc[ed] in an equality of servitude.”²³

Asked this past January in nationwide poll by the Levada Center to identify the key policies they expected from a president of their choice, “the strengthening of law and order” was the second most frequently mentioned domestic priority.²⁴ This attitude translates, among other sentiments, into wide approval for greater federal control over Russian provinces perceived as the fiefdoms of corrupt and dictatorial governors. Elimination of the oligarchs’ often-brazen presence in national politics, including the near-ownership of the Duma by the oil lobby, is another popular policy.

Yet while most Russians, at least for now, do not feel threatened by increased Kremlin authority over broadcast media,²⁵ majorities or pluralities of them are not ready to surrender key liberties: freedom of speech and demonstration; an uncensored press; freedom to leave the country and to return; and, most important, elections in which people freely vote for parties or individuals of their choice, with a chief executive ratified by popular vote, rather than appointed by the ruling elite.²⁶ Among Russia’s fast growing post-Soviet middle class, now estimated at 30 million, or 20 percent of the population, twice as many respondents consider the “interests of the individual” to be “more important” than those of the state.²⁷

Economy. Asked to list their expectations of a president of their choice, “securing a fair distribution of [state] income in the interests of common people” led among the domestic priorities with 48 percent, and the “strengthening of the role of the state in the economy” was the third

most frequently cited preference with 39 percent.²⁸ The polls also have consistently shown uneasiness about private ownership of large industrial enterprises, especially the business empires of oligarchs who are deemed thieves and crooks by a majority of Russians.²⁹ The scapegoating of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, CEO of YUKOS, Russia's largest private company, for the corruption and rapacity of the early privatization proved very popular with the electorate. There is also widespread support for the "natural rent" (*prirodnaya renta*) supertax to be levied on the profits of oil companies.³⁰ The law, which has been on the Duma's agenda for years, was repeatedly blocked by the YUKOS-led oil lobby.

Support for Reforms and Private Enterprise. Yet, while nearly four in ten Russians wish to strengthen the state's hand in the economy, virtually as many (38 percent) or, in another poll, slightly more (45 percent), want the free market reforms to continue with "greater attention to the social protection of the population," while another 25 percent support the continuation of reforms in their present version. Only 25 percent wish to "return to socialism."³¹ The share of those who respond affirmatively to the question of whether the market reforms should have been introduced has grown from 47 percent in 1990 to 62 percent in 2002.³²

Most people likewise support the institution of private property, as well as small and medium businesses and the entrepreneurs who own and run them.³³ Even the oligarchs, in the end, are not perceived by most Russians as enemies.³⁴

Today, an overwhelming majority of Russians want to work in the private—rather than the state—sector: their number has increased from 19 percent in 1990 to 84 percent in 2002.³⁵ When President Putin declared in a state-of-Russia address to the Federal Assembly in 2002 that "the most important thing today is to create conditions for the citizens of Russia to earn money . . . and to invest in the economy of their own country with profit to themselves,"³⁶ he, as usual, was expressing a very popular view.

Foreign and Defense Policy. Making Russia into a world-class power is a cornerstone of the new consensus. In the January 2004 Levada Center survey, "returning [to Russia] the status of a great and respected power" led the wish list with the support of 58 percent of respondents.³⁷ Yet in the past decade, the means of achieving this status have undergone a vast reevaluation.

Early in the 1990s, Russia adopted a tripartite vision of its core strategic foreign and defense policy objectives:

Russia as a nuclear superpower, as a global great—but no longer super—power, and as a regional superpower.³⁸ This means that, while insisting on maintaining nuclear parity with the United States, Russia has given up the Soviet messianic globalism and ideologically driven worldwide competition with the United States. Once the world's leading "revisionist" power (that is, one relentlessly seeking a change in the "balance of forces"), Russia has now become a status-quo power.

During the same period, there has occurred a startling departure from traditional Russian criteria of national greatness. The latter is no longer equated with the state's military might, the amassing of lands and clients, and the instilling of fear. Instead, for both the people and elites, the foundation of national pride is the well-being of the individual and the country's economic progress. Asked recently how Russia can best assert its place in the world, 46 percent of respondents cited "becoming more competitive economically," and only 21 percent mentioned "maintaining and rebuilding a strong military."³⁹

New Assertiveness and the "Near Abroad." Russia's new popular sentiment is strongly in favor of greater assertiveness of national interests. Russians are no longer desperate to be liked by the United States (or "the West" in general). They realize, moreover, that the West is not going to protect them from the Islamic terrorists who have killed over five hundred people in Moscow, Chechnya, and southern Russia over the past eighteen months. As Dmitry Trenin, a leading Russian foreign policy expert, put it recently, Russia wishes "not to belong but to be."⁴⁰

Finding themselves after a decade of unprecedented unilateral disarmament in a very rough neighborhood and sharing thousands of miles of borders with China and North Korea (and with only a string of unstable Central Asian states between them and Iran and Afghanistan), most Russians support a strong, efficient, and modern military.⁴¹

Yet no matter how nostalgic for the security of the Soviet Union millions of them feel, most Russians reject out of hand a re-creation of empire because of the enormous economic, political, and military burden that such a project would entail. Not one reputable poll since 1991 has shown a majority of Russians longing for the re-creation of the unitary Soviet empire in its pre-1991 form. In the January 2004 Levada Center poll, only 12 percent of the respondents wished for "a policy of reunification of the former Soviet republics."⁴²

The “Revanchist” Agenda

Were Russia a mature democracy, the consensus just outlined would shape, in the main, the country’s policies. Yet after centuries of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, the translation of popular sentiment into policy is far from direct. There is little doubt that the revanchist core of Putin’s bureaucratic constituency will strive to push beyond the consensus to advance their ideological and practical agendas, as it has done in the past few years. Putin’s notorious reticence, his hesitancy in setting a clear policy, and his reluctance to choose between competing factions for as long as possible facilitate such attempts.

The reactionaries will seek to extend and strengthen policies undermining not just the letter but also the spirit of the flawed but real democratic achievements of the past decade. Among the tactics they have already employed in the parliamentary and presidential elections are petty harassment of opposition parties and candidates; intimidation of the opposition’s wealthy donors; media manipulation to diminish the opposition’s exposure; pressure on the more daring political newspapers and magazines; rollback of judges’ independence granted them in 2001 by the progressive Criminal Procedural Code;⁴³ and, most dangerously, attempts to rewrite the constitution to extend Putin’s presidency by a few years—or even by another term.

The Corporatist State. The revanchists’ economic ideal appears to be a kind of corporatist arrangement modeled on Mussolini’s Italy or, until recently, some Latin American nations. They are willing to tolerate the agglomeration of large private wealth, but on the condition of its total subservience to the state’s political and economic agendas. The reactionaries are likely to attempt the re-nationalization of Russia’s largest private oil companies, like YUKOS and Sibneft (perhaps first driving them into bankruptcy through lawsuits centered around exorbitant past tax assessment and retroactive application of tax laws). Private ownership of other extractive industries might be targeted as well, along with foreign ownership (or even co-ownership) of Russian natural resources. Advocacy of sharp increases in income and especially corporate taxes is a certainty.

Restoring Russia’s position as a global superpower is another item on the revanchist agenda. They are likely to advocate a tougher, even provocative stance toward the United States, especially in what they consider Russia’s “sphere of influence”: the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the

Far East. On the territory of the former Soviet Union, there is likely to be a push to change Russia’s position from that of the leading economic and military power toward that of an overlord and perhaps even an imperial master.

The Putin Factor

Given the obvious disjunction between the popular and the revanchist versions of the “restoration,” President Putin’s mediation and his own agenda are of critical importance. Unlike his two immediate predecessors, the current Russian chief executive is not a man of abrupt changes and risky policies. He is obsessed with and addicted to his popularity. Judging from his public statements, he sees his place in history as someone who presided over the country’s economic revival, increased its prestige in the world, and strengthened the rule of law. He may, of course, surprise us, but there is little in his past behavior to indicate that he will adopt an extreme reactionary agenda: when all is said and done, he is most likely to stay within the consensus, or at least never stray from it too far or for too long.

Politics. There is little doubt that in a number of instances Putin has allied himself with the revanchists, or even spurred them on. The attack on the media oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky and his empire, built largely with state loans, amounted to a state takeover of the only independent television network, NTV. In the case of YUKOS and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the blatant judicial assault was at least as much about eliminating a formidable independent political force and warning other wealthy Russians off politics as it was about cracking down on bribery, corruption, and tax evasion.

Putin was behind the extra-constitutional appointment of unelected “presidential representatives” to supervise several Russian provinces within the newly created seven “federal districts.”⁴⁴ Early in Putin’s first term, the Kremlin pushed through the Duma legislation that changed the membership of the Federation Council (the upper house of the parliament) from governors elected by the people to individuals selected by regional legislatures.

Parting Ways with the Revanchists. Yet Putin has chosen to ignore or oppose the revanchist agenda in a number of critical areas. Last year he vetoed a law that severely restricted media coverage of terrorist attacks and welcomed the Constitutional Court’s decision to strike down a similar law passed by the Duma that limited

political campaign reporting and analysis. While strengthening the Kremlin's control over the provinces, Putin has not exercised the right, granted him by the Duma in 2000, to dismiss a governor or dissolve an elected provincial legislature. As a result, Russia's inchoate democracy continues to solidify in the provinces, with voters reelecting or retiring governors based largely on their regions' economic performance.⁴⁵ Neither incumbency nor the support of the Kremlin have proved to be guarantees against defeat at the polls.⁴⁶

The president has repeatedly spoken against changing the constitution and, in one of the first votes of the 2004 Duma, the pro-government bloc defeated a motion to extend the presidential term from four years, modeled on the United States, to a seven-year term, as in France. The two peaceful transitions of power in a row—from Gorbachev to Yeltsin, and from Yeltsin to Putin—have created the momentum for a new national tradition that Putin is not likely to scuttle. With Putin mediating between a new national consensus that welcomes a stronger state but rejects a return to a dictatorship, on the one hand, and the pro-authoritarian revanchism on the other, a Soviet restoration is very unlikely.

Economy. Putin's economic policy also is likely to "split the difference" between the consensus and revanchism. State supervision of key privatized industries will continue to increase, including the elimination of offshore tax havens and other tax-reducing devices. Yet no across-the-board revision of privatization is likely. Given the highly negative impact on foreign investment, to which Putin seems to be strongly committed since his days as vice mayor of St. Petersburg,⁴⁷ state takeover of the top privatized oil companies, while possible, should not be given more than a 40-percent chance. While additional export duties and oil production duties are going to be imposed on the oil industry's "super profits," the projected increases are far less than advocated by the revanchists: between \$2 billion and \$3.5 billion annually if the oil prices average \$27 a barrel (or \$900 million at \$24 a barrel) compared with \$6 billion.⁴⁸

In his address to the first session of the newly elected Duma last December, Putin declared "strengthening property guarantees" and "the development of entrepreneurial freedom" as his key goals.⁴⁹ Other items on his economic agenda are further privatization, market competition and increased transparency in banking, land ownership, education, health care, utilities, and "a market for affordable housing and a legal framework for

mortgages."⁵⁰ Deepening the liberal reforms already underway in the de-monopolization of railroads and electricity, pension accumulation and deposits, and reducing the number and functions of the state and local bureaucracies have been promised as well.⁵¹

The president and his economic adviser, the Hayekian liberal Andrei Illarionov, remain strongly supportive of small and medium-sized businesses, as well as the diminution of their vulnerability to bureaucratic interference and extortion. (In 2003 the share of GDP produced by small companies grew by 4 percent and the number of small businesses by 6 percent,⁵² with the highest growth in job creation occurring in private firms employing between thirty and one hundred employees.⁵³)

Tax relief appears to remain a key priority of the Putin administration, which argues that its core objective of reducing poverty necessitates diminishing the tax burden on small and medium businesses. Having cut the income tax to 13 percent, corporate tax on profit to 24 percent, VAT to 18 percent, and eliminated the sales tax, Putin's economic team is planning to slash the "unified social tax" (akin to social security) from 36 to 26 percent—a reduction which will save employers an estimated \$10 billion dollars annually.⁵⁴ According to newly appointed deputy prime minister Alexander Zhukov, the government is willing to sacrifice its record budget surplus to underwrite tax relief.⁵⁵ Disregarding a key item on the revanchist agenda, Putin confirmed in one of his first public appearances after reelection that the 13-percent flat income tax would not be raised.⁵⁶

A Rejection of Empire. After the Yeltsin-Gaidar government cut military spending by 90 percent in 1992, it remained no more than 3 percent of GDP for the rest of the decade. Putin has generally hewed close to this parameter. Even with a booming economy and treasury flush with tax receipts, gold, and U.S. dollars (and even with a 19-percent increase in defense appropriations this year, the first such increase in eleven years), last year Russia spent between 2.8 and 3.7 percent of GDP on defense. Putin rejected calls to use the country's swelling reserves on its military because that money "provided the basic foundation for our economic development."⁵⁷ In 2004, defense spending is set at 3.5 to 4.6 percent of GDP—at least six times smaller than the military's share during the Soviet era.

Because of the massive defense appropriations that such a policy would necessitate, an aggressive anti-Americanism with global reach not only would reverse the post-Soviet tradition but would also directly challenge

Putin's key domestic objectives, dooming his declared goal of doubling the country's GDP between 2000 and 2010.

Like Yeltsin (and unlike Soviet and pre-Soviet Russian leaders), Putin appears to believe that the country's economy is not meant to secure the state's glory by paying for foreign adventures and imperial expansion, but, on the contrary, foreign policy should serve the country's economic development. The goal of foreign policy, Putin told Russian diplomats early in his first term, is to create "conditions, which would allow us to concentrate our efforts and resources as much as possible on solving socioeconomic tasks. . . ."58

The "Near Abroad." For Yeltsin and his cohorts, a main lesson of Russian history was that a free and prosperous Russia cannot be an imperial Russia. One of the powerful leitmotifs of glasnost was Russia's impoverishment as a result of its "generosity" in subsidizing other Soviet republics. In large measure, this perception of Russia's victimization has paved the way for the abandonment of its domestic empire.

As large continental powers have done for millennia, Russia will still seek to maintain, or enforce, stability on its borders by ensuring that neighboring regimes are friendly. It will do so both by exerting pressure and by continuing to keep afloat some of its impoverished neighbor-states with electricity, oil, and gas provided free of charge or orders of magnitude below the market prices in what amounts to perhaps the world's largest bilateral economic aid program, particularly in Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia.

There is bound to be a great deal of saber rattling and chest beating as regards Russia's actions on the territory of the former Soviet Union, with U.S.-Russian tensions over Moldova and Georgia liable to be repeated elsewhere in the "near abroad." Yet such conflicts are likely to be contained by Washington and Moscow's mutual strategic agenda in the war on terrorism, U.S.-Russian energy cooperation, and nuclear nonproliferation.⁵⁹

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States, Putin overruled the revanchists in his entourage and initiated unprecedented cooperation with the United States in its war against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The new U.S.-Russian partnership included intelligence sharing, overflight rights through Russian airspace for American and NATO aircraft en route to the Afghan theater, and the establishment of U.S. bases in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

A day after his reelection, Putin told journalists that "under no circumstances" would the protection of Russia's national interest "deteriorate" to "confrontation of any kind." Rather, Putin promised to "seek flexibility, partnership, and . . . compromises acceptable to us and our partners."⁶⁰

Lessons of Other Revolutions. In the end, as we seek to gauge Russia's future in the next four years and beyond, it is important to recall two key lessons of past great revolutions. First, after revolutionary breaks in large nations' centuries-old political and economic arrangements, it takes many decades of zigzags from "republics" to "empires," from democratic breakthroughs to reactionary retrenchment to find a stable balance between the old and the new, to marry revolutionary change to the preceding centuries of political and cultural national tradition.

In this inevitable movement, the Putin presidency represents a retreat. Informed by the revanchist agenda of some of his closest associates, by a new, more conservative national consensus, and by his own policy preferences, Putin is presiding over the strengthening of state control over politics and economy, and a more assertive and, at times, truculent foreign policy, especially on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

At the same time, Putin is not likely to go far outside the consensus and to cast his lot with the revanchists. The Putin restoration is not a Soviet restoration. As a result of this uneasy balance, in the next four years, Putin's Russia will be an amalgam, a patchwork in which neo-authoritarian trends in politics, neo-statist ones in the economy, and nostalgia for the Soviet Union's global reach and military might will coexist with a number of democratic liberties, private property, entrepreneurship, further market reforms, and accommodation in the international arena.

No one can now predict how long it will be before the pendulum begins to move in the opposite direction of strengthening democratic institutions and liberties, yet move it will. For the other lesson of the past is that even when restorations succeed in the formal resuscitation of the *ancien régime* (as under Charles II or Louis XVIII), the revanchists' victories are Pyrrhic. They are powerless to raze—or even long negate—the key achievements of the revolutions that preceded them.

The Russian Revolution was not begun by Vladimir Putin and it will not be ended by him.

Notes

1. According to the numbers presented by the Communist Nikolai Kharitonov's campaign, the national television networks showed Putin 1,584 times between February 12 and March 10, compared with 275 times for Irina Khakamada, 264 times for Sergei Glaziev, and 242 times for Kharitonov. (*RFE-RL Newline*, March 12, 2004, 2.)

2. "Vstrecha s zhurnalistami v izbiratel'nom shatabe" (Meeting with Journalists in the Election Headquarters), Putin campaign transcript, March 15, 2004. Accessed at <http://putin2004.ru/putin/work/4054F2C6> on March 17, 2004.

3. For a sample of violations noted by the Russian Association for the Protection of Voters' Rights (VOICE), which monitored the elections in 18 regions, see "Domestic Monitoring Group Decries Open Hostility Faced by Observers in Many Regions, Highlights Violations Found During Monitoring," National Democratic Institute, March 15, 2004. Accessed at www.ndi.org/worldwide/eurasia/russianf/statements/voice_elect_rel_031504.pdf on March 16, 2004.

4. "Federal Law on the Election of the President," Articles 52 (3, 5, 6, 12). The three state-owned television networks (RTR, ORT, and TV-Tsentr) and three state-owned radio networks (Mayak, Yunost', and Radio Rossii) are obligated to allocate at least an hour each per at least twenty workdays within the thirty-day period before the election.

5. "Opposition Candidates Gang Up on Putin," *RFE-RL Newline*, February 20, 2004, 3.

6. *Yezhenedel'niy Zhurnal*, No. 107 (2004), as quoted in *RFE-RL Newline*, February 20, 2004, 3.

7. *Ibid.*

8. The number, 14,912,145, includes the votes cast for Nikolai Kharitonov (9,440,860), Sergey Glaziev (2,826,641), and Irina Khakamada (2,645,644). Oleg Malyshev and Sergey Mironov, who together received approximately 2 million votes, cannot be considered opposition candidates. Slightly over 68 million people (64 percent of the electorate) turned out to vote.

9. "Rossiyane ob itogakh presidentskikh vyborov" (Citizens of Russia on the Results of the Presidential Election), Levada Center, March 24, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004032402.html on April 12, 2004.

10. After discounting a few percentage points of Putin's electoral support as a product of administrative pressure and ballot stuffing, his wide margin of victory is not unusual for young democracies, after their political and economic systems have been resolved in very close elections. In the absence of stable party structures and loyalties, periods of economic growth and political stability in such democracies are likely to result in victories for incumbents with electoral margins that would be considered unbelievable and suspect in more mature republics.

Thus, for example, in Poland, a country far ahead of Russia in the transition toward liberal democracy, President Aleksander Kwasniewski, the ex-Communist youth leader, was reelected in 2002 with a 37-percent lead over his closest rival.

11. Alexander Bekker, Anfisa Voronina, Boris Grozovskiy, "Kasyanov uvolen" ("Kasyanov Is Fired"), *Vedomosti*, February 25, 2004. Accessed at www.vedomosti.ru on February 25, 2004.

12. Al Breach, *Rasshiryaya gorizonty* (Moscow: Brunswick UBS Warburg, January 31, 2003), 38.

13. By some estimates, the number of Russians in poverty shrank from 37 percent of the population in the first quarter of 2001 to 25 percent in the fourth quarter of 2002. See, for example, Gregory Feifer, "Russia: Even as Incomes Rise, Poverty Remains Endemic," *RFE/RL Weekly Magazine—Russia*. Accessed at www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/01/09012003175821.asp on December 19, 2003. Also see, "Number of Citizens Living in Poverty Continues to Decline," *RFE/RL Newline*, November 13, 2002. Accessed at www.rferl.org/newline/2002/11/1-RUS/rus/rus-131102.asp on April 8, 2004. The *CIA World Fact Book* estimates an even sharper decline in poverty, from 40 percent to 25 percent. Accessed at www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html on December 13, 2003.

14. "Demokratiya nam ne grozit?" (We Are Not Threatened By Democracy?), Levada Center, March 9, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004030901.html on March 10, 2004.

15. *Ibid.*

16. L. Sedov, "Predvybornaya kampaniya" (The Election Campaign), Levada Center, March 5, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004030502.html on March 10, 2004.

17. "We remember, and we are obliged to remember, everything negative, everything horrible that we encountered in the 20th century," Putin said to an American reporter in October 2003. "We should draw conclusions from this. We have paid a very great price for this. Millions of people died in the camps. The totalitarian regime brought the country to a national catastrophe and the collapse of the Soviet Union." (Steven Lee Myers, "Putin's Democratic Present Fights His KGB Past," *New York Times*, October 9, 2003, A1.) In a February 2004 poll, 44 percent of respondents described Stalin as a "bloody dictator" and "perfidious politician" who exterminated millions of people; 45 percent thought of him as a "great military commander" and someone who "made our country into a great power." The pollsters noted, and found "perfectly logical," that "the younger the respondents the more they perceived Stalin, first of all, as a dictator and responsible for the violent collectivization." ("Stalin," *Rossiyskoye Obschestvennoye Mneniye i Isledovaniye Rynka* (ROMIR, Russian Public Opinion and Market Research), March 2004. Accessed at www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/03_2004/stalin.htm on March 15, 2004.)

18. Steven Lee Myers, "Putin's Democratic Present Fights His KGB Past," *New York Times*, October 9, 2003, A1.

19. "Vstrecha s zhurnalistami v izbiratel'nom shatabe" (Meeting with Journalists in the Election Headquarters), Putin campaign transcript, March 15, 2004. Accessed at <http://putin2004.ru/putin/work/4054F2C6> on March 17, 2004.

20. Vladimir Putin, *First Person* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 10.

21. See, for example, Tatiana Gurova, "Instruktsiya po ekspluatatsii izbiratelya" (The Manual for Voter Utilization), *Ekspert*, February 24, 2003. Accessed at <http://i.expert.ru:8086/wwwintra/expert/03/03-07-62/data/polit2.htm> on March 7, 2004. The article draws on a fall 2002 survey of the middle class in Russia's 16 largest cities. The "strengthening of the central authority" was supported by 66 percent of those surveyed. Similarly, a poll conducted in December 2003 by ROMIR established that it was the respondents with higher education and entrepreneurs who were most concerned about the "weakness of state power." ("Chto volnuet Rossiyskikh grazhdan?" (What are the Citizens of Russia Concerned About?), ROMIR, January 2004. Accessed at www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/01_2004/voln.htm on March 10, 2004.)

22. Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), vii–viii.

23. Ibid.

24. "Chego zhdat' ot prezidenta . . . ?" (What to Expect of a President . . . ?), Levada Center, February 2, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004020201.html on February 12, 2004. The law-and-order expectation was mentioned by 45 percent of respondents.

25. In a November 2003 survey, 53 percent indicated that they felt no threat to the freedom of speech and mass media from the state, while 28 percent thought that the threat existed. ("Rossiyane o gosugroze svobode slova" (Russians on the State's Threat to the Freedom of Speech), Levada Center, November 4, 2003. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2003110402.html on March 4, 2004.)

26. See, for example, Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, "America's Real Russian Allies," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2001, 52. Also see "Svoboda slova" (Freedom of Speech), Fond Obschestvennoye Mneniye (FOM, Public Opinion Foundation), June 14, 2000. Accessed at www.fom.ru on April 22, 2004.

27. Tatiana Gurova, "Instruktsiya po ekspluatatsii izbiratelya" (The Manual for Voter Utilization), *Ekspert*, February 24, 2003. Accessed at <http://i.expert.ru:8086/wwwintra/expert/03/03-07-62/data/polit2.htm> on March 7, 2004.

28. "Chego zhdat' ot prezidenta . . . ?" (What to Expect of a President . . . ?), Levada Center, February 2, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004020201.html on February 12, 2004.

29. In a July 2003 survey, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (88 percent) thought that "large private capital" in post-Soviet Russia has been earned "dishonestly" or "mostly dishonestly." ("Rossiyane o vozmozhnosti peresmotra itogov privatizatsii i krupnom kapitale" (Russians on the Possibility of Revising the Privatization Results and Large Capital), ROMIR, July 2003. Accessed at www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/2003/07/privatization.htm on March 11, 2004.) Asked if oligarchs' activities result in "more harm" or "more good" for Russia, 59 percent agreed with the former statement and 8 percent with the latter. ("Oligarkhi kak ponyatie" (Oligarchs as a Notion), FOM, July 17, 2003. Accessed at www.fom.ru/reports/frames/tb032805.html on March 20, 2004.)

30. See, for example, "Den'gi pod nogami" (Money Underfoot), *Novoe Vremya*, December 7, 2003, 15–20.

31. "Chego zhdat' ot prezidenta . . . ?" (What to Expect of a President . . . ?), Levada Center, February 2, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004020201.html on February 12, 2004; and Nikolai Popov, "Krasnyi den' kalendarya" (A Holiday), *Novoe Vremya*, November 9, 2003, 17.

32. *Kak chuvstvuyut sebya, k chemu stremyatsya grazhdane Rossii? (How Are Citizens of Russia Feeling and What Are Their Goals?)*, Center for the Study of Socio-Cultural Changes, Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow, 2002, 3, Table 5.

33. In a 2003 survey, 81 percent of respondents reported a "positive" attitude toward private property and 16 percent, "negative." In the same poll, 87 percent said that they viewed the owners of small and medium businesses "favorably" and "rather favorably." (Nikolai Popov, "Krasnyi den' kalendarya" (A Holiday), *Novoe Vremya*, November 9, 2003, 17.)

34. "Oligarkhi kak ponyatie" (Oligarchs as a Notion), FOM, July 17, 2003. Accessed at www.fom.ru/reports/frames/tb032805.html on March 20, 2004. Also see, "Otnoshenie k krupnym biznesmenam" (Attitudes toward Tycoons), ROMIR, October 2003. Accessed at www.romir.ru/socpolit/socio/2003/10/buisness.htm on March 10, 2004.

35. *Kak chuvstvuyut sebya, k chemu stremyatsya grazhdane Rossii? (How Are Citizens of Russia Feeling and What Are Their Goals?)*, Center for the Study of Socio-Cultural Changes, Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow, 2002, 3, Table 5.

36. Vladimir Putin, "Poslanie Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii V.V. Putina Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii" (The Message of the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation), April 18, 2002. Accessed at <http://president.kremlin.ru> on April 18, 2002.

37. "Chego zhdat' ot prezidenta . . . ?" (What to Expect of a President . . . ?), Levada Center, February 2, 2004. Accessed at www.levada.ru/press/2004020201.html on February 12, 2004.

38. For details see Leon Aron, "The Foreign Policy Doctrine of Postcommunist Russia and its Domestic Context," in Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *The New Russian Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998), 27–42.

39. "Russia Nationwide Survey No. 2," International Republican Institute and the Tarrance Group, conducted October 13–23, 2003, Slide 6.

40. Dmitry Trenin, "New Tendencies in Russia's Foreign Policy," lecture at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 25, 2004.

41. Even among the middle class, 79 percent of those surveyed could not imagine a "strong state without a strong military." (Tatiana Gurova, "Instruksiya po ekspluatatsii izbiratelya" (The Manual for Voter Utilization), *Ekspert*, February 24, 2003. Accessed at <http://i.expert.ru:8086/wwwintra/expert/03/03-07-62/data/polit2.htm> on March 7, 2004.)

42. "Chego zhdat' ot prezidenta . . . ?" (What to Expect of a President . . . ?), Levada Center, February 2, 2004. Accessed at www.vciom-a.ru/press/2004020201.html on February 12, 2004.

43. This trend is evident in the numerous procedural violations in the case against Mikhail Khodorkovsky, including the denial of bail and attempts to curtail attorney-client privilege, and in the conviction for "espionage," after four-and-a-half years of court proceedings and pre-trial detention, of arms control researcher Igor Sutyagin.

44. For a detailed critique see Leon Aron, "Russia Doesn't Need a New Czar," *Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 2000. Accessed at www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.17639/pub_detail.asp on April 4, 2004.

45. See, for example, Andrew Konitzer-Smirnov, "Incumbent Electoral Fortunes and Regional Economic Performance during Russia's 2000–2001 Executive Election Cycle," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 19 (1), 2003, 46–79.

46. See, for example, "Putin to Governors: Take as Many Terms as You Can Swallow," *RFE-RL Russian Political Weekly*, January 3, 2003.

47. Putin chaired the Committee on Foreign Relations and, by all accounts, was by far the most effective city executive where foreign economic activity and investment in St. Petersburg were concerned. "Without foreign capital, the country will recover slowly and [with] difficulty," Putin wrote in December

1999, when he was prime minister. "We don't have time for a slow rebirth. That means that we must do everything so that foreign capital flows into our country." ("Rossiya na rubezhe tysyachiletii" (Russia between the Millennia), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 30, 1999.) For details of Putin's St. Petersburg foreign policy experience, see Samuel Charap, "The Petersburg Experience: Putin's Political Career and Russian Foreign Policy," *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 51, no. 1, January/February 2004, 59.

48. Valeria Korchavina, "Putin Launches War on Poverty," *Moscow Times*, March 22, 2004, 1; and Erin E. Arvedlund, "Russia Weights Tax Shift toward Oil Sector," *New York Times*, April 9, 2004, W1.

49. "Remarks by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the First Session of the Fourth State Duma," Moscow, December 29, 2003. Accessed at <http://putin2004.ru/putin/press/3FFD6F65> on February 13, 2004.

50. Ibid.

51. See, for example, "Vstrecha s zhurnalistami v izbiratel'nom shatabe" (Meeting with Journalists in the Election Headquarters), Putin campaign transcript, March 15, 2004. Accessed at <http://putin2004.ru/putin/work/4054F2C6> on March 17, 2004.

52. Simon Ostrovsky, "Report: Small Business Set to Double by 2009," *Moscow Times*, March 2, 2004, 5.

53. Christof Ruehl, *From Transition to Development: A Country Economic Memorandum for the Russian Federation*, Executive Summary (Washington, DC: World Bank, April 2004), 4.

54. Simon Ostrovsky, "Report: Small Business Set to Double by 2009," *Moscow Times*, March 2, 2004, p. 5; and Erin E. Arvedlund, "Russia Weights Tax Shift toward Oil Sector," *New York Times*, April 9, 2004, W1.

55. Alex Fak, "Zhukov: Cut Taxes, Nix Budget Surplus," *Moscow Times*, March 30, 2004, 5.

56. *RFE-RL Newslines*, March 22, 2004, 1.

57. *RFE-RL Newslines*, November 19, 2003, 3–4.

58. Vladimir Putin, "President V. Putin o zadachakh rossiyskoy diplomatii" (President V. Putin on the Tasks of Russian Diplomacy), *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, No. 2 (2001), 4–5.

59. "Interview with President Putin," *New York Times*, October 5, 2003. Accessed at www.nexis.com on April 8, 2004.

60. "Vstrecha s zhurnalistami v izbiratel'nom shatabe" (Meeting with Journalists in the Election Headquarters), Putin campaign transcript, March 15, 2004. Accessed at <http://putin2004.ru/putin/work/4054F2C6> on March 17, 2004.