

Speech by President Medvedev: in praise of continuity

On 30 November, President Dmitri Medvedev made his annual speech to the both chambers of parliament and representatives of the state administration. In comparison with last year's address, which was based on the liberal manifesto 'Forward, Russia', this year's speech was characterised by the absence of any new clear propositions or reformist messages. Social matters and continuity in such areas as security and foreign policy predominated in it.

Medvedev presented himself as "the president of continuity", not striving for deep reforms, and seeking at most to make adjustments in selected areas and adapt to new challenges.

This is already Medvedev's third presidential address. This time the dominant topic was social policy, especially in regard to children and young people. Other topics were not heavily emphasised, and were rather repeats of previous declarations, including references to an "economic diplomacy" which would provide Russia with new technologies and investments, and the modernisation of the armed forces. As is traditional, the President insisted on the need to use new technologies in all spheres of the economy and education.

Contrary to most observers' expectations, Medvedev's address did not contain any statements that would have hinted at his intentions on his possible re-election in 2012 or any ideas on further political changes. The declarations he made have led to assurances that the existing policies will be continued, and adjustments will be made on selected issues. Medvedev has tried to present himself as both a public-minded and a modern politician. The message of his statement to the ruling class seems to be that Medvedev is a loyal member of that class, and he supports those issues which the Russian government sees as being of top priority (including in the fields of security and foreign policy). <JR>