

UNITED RUSSIA – THE PARTY OF THE SMART MAJORITY

Mikhail Remizov

POSITION



MIKHAIL REMIZOV
is the President of the Institute
for National Strategy

The level of social justice is a key indicator of the mood of the majority. **When we talk about social justice we are not just talking about social programs or handouts but the larger picture of the economy's socialisation.** This type of social justice must create a systematic approach to level out social and class differences on a mass scale. It involves the development of an advanced system for the division of labour that can be embraced by the majority of people and is based on reasonable terms. Social justice must include an industrial policy based on Keynesian economics, which states that, in order to ensure economic growth, society must have enough money to consume the products that they produce.

Such an approach in socialising the economy is not primitive, but rather constitutes an example of a “smart” version of social policy. We have heard the terms “smart policy” and a “smart economy” used widely in today’s world. **Now, let’s turn to the definition of the “smart majority”.**

Exactly what do we mean by the “smart majority”? In a few words, we mean *the majority that is represented in a quality manner.*

Naturally, any majority of its own accord cannot be deemed as smart, because it could include the majority of people who watch Russian television, for instance. All our leaders overtly or covertly shrug their shoulders when they say “this is our archaic society”. But it is absolutely senseless to lay the blame on society instead of those, who ought to represent and to shape our society’s demands. This is namely the duty of political parties and political leaders. These are likewise Medvedev’s and Putin’s duties. Their double duty is to articulate society’s demand in such a manner that society can recognise itself, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, these demands should be geared toward development, and the agenda of social justice should be one that entails “smart” social justice.

These tasks require high-quality political leadership, which, in turn, requires genuine public policy. By the word “real” I mean politics that is capable of influencing governmental policy.

A “smart” conservative majority that demands social justice can emerge only through a strong mechanism of political leadership – one that has the ability to “channel” public policy into governmental policy. Currently in Russia, this is not happening, not even at the institutional level. The advent of Putin’s presidency marked the creation of both formal and informal institutions that essentially have insulated the government from any direct public policy demands.

United Russia is characterised by the same type of disconnect with public sentiment. The party measures the mood of the majority but makes no more than a primitive interpretation of that and does not take these concerns to a higher level.

This model of a government, separated from public policy and from the parliament has, in essence, come to represent the uninformed majority. This uninformed majority is charac-

terised by a short-sightedness that shows itself in the demands it makes of its leadership, typically nothing more than rent redistribution. If this is indeed the case, it may be better to build institutional barriers from them, whereby United Russia, the Russian Parliament, and the political party system all act as an “insulation” mechanism for real governmental policy from the majority. If we adopt the concept of “smart majority”, it is vital to subordinate governmental policy to public policy. The two channels for such subordination are the President and Parliament.

How do these channels interact with each other? **Obviously, the President and the United Russia party are moving toward each other, and this may shape public policy** in a way that would be able to guide governmental policy. This problem is not quite the same as the question as to whether Medvedev is able to beat Putin.

There is potential that the public-political contour that is being shaped by the President and the United Russia party can provide the channels to inform governmental policy in accordance with demands of the smart majority. This will effectively help to grow and create this smart majority.

The mechanism by which United Russia influences governmental policy is now being practiced and honed to perfection in the regions through interaction with the presidential centre of power. As a result of this experience, the president already refers to the party as the “ruling party”, which must inevitably be emphasised. In this current tandem-based system, United Russia has been assigned to play the role as a guarantor of stability. It is possible that this role may develop into something more serious, into something like a third centre of power. In any case, the quality of the party and its power will completely depend on its ability to reconsider the majority, on whose behalf of which the party intends to rule. ■

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