

Panel: Russia's Leadership Transition and Its Implications in East Asia (Violet/Cosmos)

Date/Time: April 27, 2012 / 9:30-10:45

Organizing Institution: Diplomatic Academy, MFA of Russia

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The outcome let alone the conduct of both General and Presidential elections in Russia triggered off a chain of dynamic and deeply controversial changes in its domestic political landscape. The scope of changes as well as their long term impact on Russia's foreign policy is hard to predict. Yet one thing seems almost certain: as long as the process of changes is not complete Russia's foreign policy will be predominantly shaped by the domestic rather than by the external challenges. As any political regime bent on staying in power for as long as possible without abandoning the ostensibly democratic procedures the Russian government will strive to mobilize public support and, if need be, to suppress dissent by cultivating the image of a fortress besieged by the enemies. To this end Russia will need foreign "adversaries" fearsome enough to justify its bellicose rhetoric and screw tightening at home, but friendly and cooperative enough to go on in a "business as usual" way. In practical terms it means that Russia will pay special attention to the countries who have always professed special concern with the problems of Russia's transit to democracy.

Countries of East Asia – China, Japan, both Koreas – can hardly fit into this picture. Due to various reasons none of them is suitable for bashing. All of them are associated with their own serious but not necessarily urgent problems. (For example, North Korean nuclear and other problems have been in and out of international focus for a decade and can await settlement longer than for example the problems of Iran, Syria etc.) And of course China, Japan and both Koreas can't care less about the future of the Russian democracy.

All in all for the time being Russia's policy towards its East Asian neighbors will receive relatively low priority and remain mostly reactive rather than proactive.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.
