

THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP TANDEM IN INTERACTION:

INSIGHTS FROM MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

January 2011 (Revised April 2011)



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This paper, produced as part of the BODY LEADS project out of the Strategic Studies Group, applies nonverbal methodology, primarily Movement Pattern Analysis, to shed light on the unusual and controversial power-sharing arrangement in contemporary Russia. Russia is a regional and world power, flawed yet a long way from inconsequential, and is a major target of current United States policy through the “reset” launched in 2009. It is prudent for the United States Government to understand what goes on at the highest levels in Moscow and how these activities impact American interests and concerns.

Conventional means of getting at leadership in so centralized and secretive a political regime as Russia’s—and for getting at it in real time, as opposed to historical retrospect, when the observer benefits from memoirs, diaries, and archival materials—are hampered by an information deficit and by the inconclusiveness of so much of the information that can be gleaned from the public record. As a supplement and corrective to these standard techniques, the analysis of nonverbal data provides valuable pointers to underlying repertoires and a basis for forecasting future developments.

The Puzzle

Russia has been ruled for almost three years by an unprecedented twin-headed leadership team, commonly referred to as “the tandem.”¹ Because Vladimir Putin, the effective, popular, and increasingly undemocratic president since 2000, was constitutionally ineligible to serve a third consecutive term and unwilling to push through an amendment to lift this restriction, he decided to step down from the presidency and to throw his support in the election of March 2008 to Dmitrii Medvedev, a protégé thirteen years his junior. In that he was riding Putin’s political coattails and had the state apparatus and mass media at his disposal, Medvedev’s confirmation by the electorate was a foregone conclusion; he triumphed with over 70 percent of the total vote and was inaugurated that May.

What was distinctive about the transfer of power was not only the precipitous promotion of Medvedev, a career functionary who had never run for office until then, but that his patron Putin chose not to depart the scene and instead migrated to the prime ministership, the second-ranking position in the executive branch and the political system. Normally, in a country with a popularly elected president, the office of head of government, if it exists at all (under a “semi-presidential” mechanism), is vastly inferior in prestige and influence to that of head of state. This was the situation in Russia when Boris Yeltsin was president in the 1990s and when Putin reigned supreme from 2000 to 2008. No one knew how the novel, topsy-turvy bargain struck between Putin and Medvedev would work in practice or where it would take Russian politics and policy.

Speculation about how the new arrangement would function began even before

¹ The word *tandem* is the same in Russian as in English. Russian observers of critical bent have come up with various plays on words—like for example, *tandemokratiya*, short for “tandem democracy” or, in effect, “two-man democracy.”

the transition was finalized. At a farewell press conference, Putin did not attempt to conceal that his relationship with President Medvedev would have “a unique quality” to it, “which consists in the fact that I myself was president for eight years and didn’t do a bad job.” By implication, Medvedev was going to be laboring in his mentor’s shadow. Putin promised to give his successor the leeway to make presidential decisions, while insisting that “I naturally [will] have the right to express my views.” Putin acknowledged that differences of opinion might crop up and also that third parties might try to drive a wedge between them. Any possible difficulties, he assured the nation, would be forestalled by their excellent working relationship, going back to joint service at St. Petersburg city hall in the 1990s. “Dmitrii Anatol’evich and I are well aware that attacks will be made along personal, political, and economic lines. There will be endless attempts to find differences in our approaches. There are always differences, I have to say, but over our more than fifteen years of working together we have gotten used to listening to each other.”²

In Putin’s hands, the post of prime minister was upgraded overnight. From the outset, he was active in policy realms such as energy, foreign economic affairs, and federalism which had been considered presidential monopolies until then. He also remained front and center in public politics, taking over the chair of the United Russia party (which has a commanding two-thirds majority in the State Duma) and communicating with the citizenry through the mass media and heavily publicized tours of the provinces. Medvedev took over the president’s constitutional responsibility for diplomacy, internal security, and law enforcement and participated with Putin in shaping

² Presidential press conference of February 14, 2008; Russian-language transcript at http://kremlin.ru/appears/2008/02/14/1327_type63380type82634_160108.shtm.

the response to the global economic recession of 2008–9. More interesting, within a year of his inauguration the novice president also put forward a biting critique of the Russian status quo. Not limiting himself to traditional forums such as the annual presidential address to parliament, he took advantage of the Internet and opened a videoblog and a Twitter account. In “Go, Russia!” a rambling essay published in a liberal online newspaper in September 2009, Medvedev assailed Russia’s chronic corruption and “legal nihilism,” “primitive raw-materials economy,” and technological backwardness and called for a stem-to-stern “modernization” of society and state. Rhetorically, he positioned himself in a more reformist place than Prime Minister Putin.

As the duumvirs have tackled their respective roles, they have had almost nothing of substance to say about their exact division of labor, preferring boilerplate phrases about mutual respect, cooperation, and regular consultation. Nor have they dropped more than the odd tidbit about the condition of their personal relations.³ Medvedev and Putin seldom appear together in public and steer clear of comment on one another’s work. They have been tight-lipped about what would happen if their relations soured—a gray zone where Medvedev is better equipped with formal prerogatives but Putin possesses enormous informal authority with the elite and the population and controls the ruling party, to boot.⁴ And they have sidestepped questions about the impending fork in the road

³ For example, Putin has disclosed that he addresses Medvedev as *ty*, the familiar form of the pronoun “you” (analogous to *tu* in French), whereas Medvedev addresses him with the more formal *vy* (like *vous* in French).

⁴ On paper, the president of Russia has the right under the 1993 constitution to dismiss the prime minister peremptorily. But if Medvedev did so, he would be obliged to nominate a replacement for confirmation by the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, and that body is dominated by United Russia—whose leader is none other than Putin. If push came to shove, Putin would have the votes in the Duma to get himself reinstated as prime minister and, worse from Medvedev’s standpoint, would have probably enough to have Medvedev impeached as president.

of Russia's politics, the presidential election of 2012; they repeat ad nauseam that the two of them will discuss the nomination beforehand and arrive at a common position.

Much about the Russian tandem is puzzling, even to seasoned and well-briefed analysts. Putin is the more familiar figure, having been in the limelight since Yeltsin put him there at the end of the 1990s. Medvedev is frequently dismissed as an imposter or a willing accomplice in an elaborate façade masking a Putin dictatorship. “It is horrible,” one prominent oppositionist has said, “that, in a country with a presidential tradition, where the central power was always the real power and not a blob, we have ended up with a representative like this, someone who is not president at all.”⁵ Most in the commentariat who belittle Medvedev predict that Putin will displace him and return to the Kremlin as president once Medvedev's term expires in 2012. Analysts who are more charitable to Medvedev often engage in “tandemology”—reading a lot into symbolic events, sometimes minute differences in wording and tonality, and the like.⁶

It is useful to cite two more probing papers by leading scholars of Russian and post-communist affairs. One of these, by George W. Breslauer, a political scientist at the University of California at Berkeley, combs through Medvedev's and Putin's public statements and places them in the context of cycles of change in Soviet and Russian history. What to make of the apparent disharmony in views between the two chieftains? Breslauer's answer is noncommittal: “Much depends on one's view of the power

⁵ Boris Nemtsov, former first deputy prime minister, interviewed in <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/2279987.html>. The Russian-American scholar Nina Khrushcheva, a great-granddaughter of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, has sarcastically referred to Medvedev as “Russia's first lady.”

⁶ “Whether they like it or not, Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin are stuck with each other. . . . Once you cut through all the [display] and head-spinning tandemology (Look! Medvedev is asserting himself! Oh my! Putin is back and he just showed him who's boss!) and look at the issue logically, it is hard to come to any other conclusion.” Brian Whitmore, “Tandemology 2.0,” *RFE/RL*, January 10, 2011; carried in Johnson's Russia List of that date.

relationship between the two and one’s view of the magnitude of their differences over policy.” He sketches a fourfold typology of the possibilities, defined by relatively high and relatively low policy differences between Putin and Medvedev, on one dimension, and a relatively high and a relatively low power differential between them, on a second.⁷ His images of the possibilities are rendered in Table 1.

Table 1: Breslauer’s Images of the Putin-Medvedev Political Relationship

Power differential	Policy differences	
	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
<i>High</i>	Putin seizes initiative (A)	Putinism in charge (B)
<i>Low</i>	Unstable collective leadership (C)	Stable collective leadership (D)

In Cell A, where policy differences are large but Medvedev is politically dependent on Putin, Putin is in charge and will likely discard or downgrade Medvedev when it suits him. In Cell B, where the power differential is also great but differences in opinion are not, Medvedev will compliantly do Putin’s bidding. “In this scenario, Medvedev would be humoring certain constituencies with insincere rhetoric, as a tool of Putin who shares Putin’s perspectives.” In the hypothetical Cell C, a low power differential (that is, Medvedev having political resources of his own) and a wide gap in policy preferences generate friction and conflict within the tandem, with the outcome dependent on the relative strength of the pair’s bases of support and their skill in mobilizing assets. And when the power differential is low but policy differences are

⁷ George W. Breslauer, “Reflections on Patterns of Leadership in Soviet and Post-Soviet [Russian] History,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26 (July–September 2010), 263–74; quotations and table from 269–70. “Power differential” in this instance is defined as whether Medvedev is dependent on Putin politically (high differential), or acts as his own man (low differential).

slender, as in Cell D, the result would be a stable leadership duo—“until such time,” Breslauer adds, “as accumulating contradictions tempt one or both leaders to try to seize the initiative by embracing, cynically or not, either a reformist or a revanchist platform.” Breslauer’s elegant review of the possibilities, and of circumstances that might affect the probability of one outcome or another materializing, concludes that the present state of knowledge about the problem does not permit firm conclusions to be drawn: “We will just have to wait and see.”⁸

An unpublished paper by Timothy Colton of the Harvard University Government Department, commissioned by me for BODY LEADS, goes over much of the same ground, devoting rather more attention to Medvedev’s motivations.⁹ Making use of the open record, the Moscow rumor mill, and access to Putin and Medvedev through the annual sessions of the government-sponsored Valdai Discussion Club, Colton focuses on the gulf between words and deeds—between the ardently reformist avowals of President Medvedev and the timidity of the improvements actually undertaken. Like Breslauer and most close watchers of the Russian scene, Colton concedes that a few changes have taken place. Instances would include Medvedev’s dismissal of some arch-conservative officials (such as Yurii Luzhkov, the veteran mayor of Moscow, in September 2010); promotion of technocrats and businessmen to positions where Putin as president favored veterans of the security services; his unflinching criticism of the Stalinist past; legislation to end the pre-trial detention of individuals accused of economic crimes; some slackening of the administrative pressure on opposition parties, movements, and NGOs; and creation of a high-technology laboratory town (Skolkovo) outside of Moscow. Nonetheless, Colton is

⁸ Ibid., 274.

⁹ Timothy J. Colton, “Some Hypotheses Concerning Medvedev and Putin,” January 2010.

most struck by the disparity between these modest decisions and the soaring goals saluted in the president’s speechifying. Examples are easily found of Medvedev initiatives that have petered out or been stymied by bureaucratic and other resistance. And some prominent decisions have been ambiguous in content and are not necessarily choices that Putin would have eschewed or opposed.¹⁰

To account for the contradictions between word and deed, Colton advances five rival hypotheses. They are laid out in Table 2.

Table 2: Colton’s Rival Hypotheses about the Gap between Medvedev’s Rhetoric and Actions Taken

Hypothesis	Assumptions
Insincerity	Medvedev does not believe his promises or understand them at a deep level.
Lightweight	Although Medvedev may be sincere, he was selected as a political lightweight incapable of delivering on any program.
Smokescreen	Medvedev’s rhetoric is designed to imitate political debate and contention and help perpetuate the Putin group in power.
Frustration	Medvedev genuinely wants radical reforms. They are thwarted by the more old-school Putin.
Consensus	Medvedev and Putin agree on the need for change but want it to come about only in small, manageable doses.

In Colton’s diagnosis, Medvedev may or may not believe in his own rhetoric—the degree of his sincerity and depth of understanding is unknown. In the Insincerity, Smokescreen, and Frustration scenarios, the president is lacking in both honesty and

¹⁰ A case in point is the dismissal of Luzhkov in 2010. Putin’s relations with the mayor had always been strained, going back to the struggle to succeed Boris Yeltsin in the late 1990s. Luzhkov’s replacement, Sergei Sobyenin, is more closely tied to Putin than to Medvedev and served as chief of staff to him in both the presidential administration and the prime minister’s chancery. An example of a stymied initiative would be the lack of follow-up to the inquiry into the mistreatment of Sergei Magnitskii, the Moscow attorney for a group of defrauded investors who died in prison in November 2009. After the incident, Medvedev fired some officials and promised a thorough review, but little has happened since then.

understanding; in the Lightweight version, his commitments are real but hazy; in the Consensus mode, he favors change, only with the proviso that it must be the sort of unthreatening, unhurried change that is acceptable to his sponsor, Putin. Putin in turn figures in these hypotheses in varying ways. In the Insincerity and Lightweight hypotheses, he is the mastermind of the current situation, having selected a nominal successor who is incapable of engineering real change. In the Frustration hypothesis, Putin opposes changes Medvedev wishes to institute. Following the Smokescreen and Consensus hypotheses, Putin would be Medvedev's co-conspirator, working with him either to blunt reform or to confine it to baby steps.

On preferences, Colton takes note that now and then the duo has granted that they are not perfectly uniform. Asked about his alleged jibe vis-à-vis Putin in an interview with Fareed Zakaria of CNN in September 2009, President Medvedev pointed out, as he had before, that he had always considered himself a member of Putin's team and that the two attended the same law school, at Leningrad (later St. Petersburg) State University, a bit more than a decade apart. But there was more to the story, he said:

In this sense our convictions are very close. But if you talk about certain kinds of nuances, about penchants, then, sure, there can be some differentiation. I have my convictions and he has his. Over the course of eight years he [Putin] had the chance to put his convictions into effect, and in my opinion he put them into effect successfully. There are no identical persons and there are no identical leaders.¹¹

Colton is agnostic about where these "nuances" and "penchants" might lead, and who would prevail if their differences were to escalate. In sum, though, his judgment is

¹¹ At <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/5516>.

that differences will be contained and Putin will continue to have the advantage, barring crises that transform the broader context of high politics. Like Breslauer, he argues that only time will tell the tale.

An Alternative Methodology

The premise of BODY LEADS is that meticulous attention to nonverbal signals—to the physical movement of the body and its parts, as distinct from speech¹²—yields insights into the behavior of individuals, including for present purposes political leaders. In much recent research and in the present essay, the main tool I employ is Movement Pattern Analysis (MPA), a technique that evolved between the 1930s and 1960s as a result of synergy between two founding figures: the brilliant Hungarian choreographer Rudolf Laban, who started the ball rolling with a system for notating dance; and Warren Lamb, an inventive British management consultant who found applications for the evolving method in industry and white-collar office work. MPA and much nonverbal/movement analysis in general posits that the study of bodily movement gives the analyst otherwise unavailable information about the man or woman beneath the skin. As Lamb's collaborator, Carol-Lynne Moore, expresses it, "Normally invisible thoughts and feelings become perceptible as they assume a form in movement. . . . One could say that movements are translucent wrappers for the flow of inner moods and intentions . . . a pigment through which something of the mover's inner process may be seen."¹³

¹² In earlier research phases, *Body Leads* correlated speech to motion after the movement baseline was established. This process was undertaken in the credibility validation study and in leader profiles relative to level of certitude on political topic.

¹³ Carol-Lynne Moore, *Movement and Making Decisions: The Body-Mind Connection in the Workplace* (New York: Dance Movement Press, 2005), 60.

MPA models bodily movement in two principal domains and envisions a multistage decision process toward which each individual is thought to have an idiosyncratic, ingrained orientation. One dimension, EFFORT, which was Laban's focus, describes how energy is brought to bear on a physical task; it involves factors of focus, pressure, and time. The second axis, SHAPE, made more central to the venture by Lamb, delineates where the action takes place and relates movements to the cardinal planes of three-dimensional space (horizontal, vertical, and sagittal). In the domains of effort and shape, there are three types of movement: POSTURE, or habitual body attitude; GESTURES, or isolated actions confined to one part of the body; and POSTURE-GESTURE MERGERS (PGMs), integrated movements of peak performance¹⁴. MPA measures PGMs only to determine decision style.

Profiling through expert inspection of PGMs does not presume access to detailed biographical or psychological information about the subject. MPA uncovers decision preferences from the movement actions. This makes MPA an especially attractive angle for the analysis of persons such as foreign political leaders who can be studied on video/cd and for whom reliable bio and psychological information is simply unavailable. An additional advantage of PGMs is that they are believed to reveal authenticity—they cannot be faked by the person or by propagandists out to burnish his reputation. Correlating nonverbal patterns and verbal statements can reveal not only veracity on a topic but can also indicate the degree of certitude a leader may embody on a topic.¹⁵

¹⁴ Peak performance in the project has referred to moments of heightened intensity, for example during a speech –when a leader in performance pulls out all the stops throughout the body *and* in terms of context. PGMs, by definition indicate total involvement from head to toes that manifests in integrated posture gesture mergers.

¹⁵ Brenda Connors, *Body Leads, A Non-Traditional Approach to Understanding Leadership and Performance Style*, Naval War College, 2002.

MPA conceptualizes people making decisions in three sequential stages, each linked to telltale body expressions. At every stage, there is a pair of overarching ways in which the decision process is approached. The ASSERTIVE approach, the more tactical and operational of the two, has to do with applying effort and energy to make the process occur. PERSPECTIVE is more strategic in outlook and has to do with positioning oneself and shaping the environment to achieve the desired result. The combination of three stages and the two general modes yields six action motivations altogether. See Table 3 for a summary of the types.

The Logic of Movement Pattern Analysis

Table 3: The Logic of Movement Pattern Analysis

Decision stage	Action motivation	
	ASSERTIVE	PERSPECTIVE
<i>Attending</i>	Investigating	Exploring
	Making the effort to probe, scan, and classify information within a prescribed area Outcome: systematic research, establishing method, defining standards	Gaining perspective by perceiving the scope available, uncovering, encompassing and being perceptive to information from many areas Outcome: discovering alternatives, new approaches
<i>Intending</i>	Determining	Evaluating
	Making the effort to affirm purpose, build resolve, forge conviction, justify intent Outcome: persisting against difficult odds, resistance to pressure	Gaining perspective by perceiving relative importance, weighing up the immediate needs, and sizing up the issues Outcome: clarity of intention, crystallization of issues, realism
<i>Committing</i>	Timing	Anticipating
	Making the effort for implementation, to adjust the moment-to-moment timing of action Outcome: alertness to tactics and time priorities for opportune implementation	Gaining perspective by perceiving the developing stages of action and foreseeing the consequences of each stage Outcome: setting goals, measuring progress, and updating plans

The first MPA stage is known as the ATTENDING phase. Here the body's movement orients toward preliminary consideration and structuring of the problem at hand. If the individual varies focus assertively either directly or indirectly in the horizontal plane, the motivation is considered to be one of INVESTIGATING. In

investigating, the person curiously examines a problem by probing directly or scanning and categorizing indirectly. If perspective rather than assertion is the dominant approach, the motivation is one of EXPLORING, which involves searching out new ideas and alternatives among a broad gamut of information. As in the other two phases, MPA analysts have observed a consistent correlation between physical movement and the mental activity of decision making. Investigating “requires the capacity to utilize space effort, varying the focus between directing (with its pinpointing and probing quality) and indirecting (with its scanning and scrutinizing quality).” Exploring “requires the ability to shape in the horizontal plane, varying one’s relationship to the fields of available information by enclosing (gathering in ideas from a variety of sources) and spreading (making oneself open to a range of views).”¹⁶

The intermediate decision stage in the MPA lexicon is the INTENDING phase, the bridge between initial contemplation and taking action in response to the designated problem. In DETERMINING mode, under assertion, the individual builds resolve to ensure there is sufficient resolution to proceed. This is displayed physically in movement in the vertical plane, expressed in either a light or decreased pressure upward or a strong or increased pressure downward to assert force or personal weight. Alternatively, in EVALUATING, under perspective, the individual establishes the relative importance of the action and ranks issues in order to have a realistic sense of priorities and a clear perspective. The body gains perspective on a problem by rising in the vertical plane to look an issue over, so to say, or by descending to penetrate beneath its surface to get a different sense of proportion.

¹⁶ Ibid., 81.

The third and culminating MPA stage is COMMITTING, which is the implementation piece of the decision process. Committing is about choosing the right moment to act and seizing opportunities to stage the action and deliver results. It centrally involves either TIMING or ANTICIPATING. The assertive variant, timing, entails managing the pace of implementation and selecting the opportune moment to proceed. It is echoed physically in acceleration or deceleration of cycling movement in the sagittal plane. Perspective-oriented anticipating involves strategically controlling the ongoing process of timing each decision stage to reach long-term objectives and avoid negative consequences. In Moore's words, "This requires the ability to shape in the sagittal plane, controlling the deployment of action by retreating (temporarily withdrawing for strategic reasons) and advancing (proceeding when an avenue for forward motion becomes open)."¹⁷

When Lamb and his colleagues have applied MPA to corporate executives, they normally undertake an interview of two hours with the individual on company premises. Anywhere from one hundred to several hundred PGMs will be detected in the typical interview, live and on videotape; these are recorded and then coded by the analyst along a number of axes of measurement related to time, pressure, energy, and space. The outline of a subject's MPA portrait is formed by estimates of the relative occurrences devoted to the various coded tasks. These sum to 100 percent, and may be interpreted as representing the intensity of the person's behavioral investment in the specified segments of the decision process.

For political figures, the logic is identical, although the implementation will vary because a foreign leader cannot be subjected to a sit-down interview on terms set by the

¹⁷ Ibid., 82.

analyst.¹⁸ As a proxy, MPA exploits video recordings of the statesman being interviewed, delivering speeches, conversing with subordinates and fellow leaders, at press conferences or answering journalists' questions, and so on. The aim is the same—to sift out systematic movement clues about innate, irreducible decision proclivities. Studying a leader's PGMs in context riddled with high stress which is more typical of the decision environment is seriously taken into consideration.

Action Man and Chess Player

For the tandem in power in the Russian Federation, we are fortunate to have MPA workups of both of them executed for BODY LEADS by the MPA pioneer Warren Lamb. Lamb analyzed Medvedev in the spring/summer of 2008, as he settled into his new position, basing it on video of him in action from files compiled at the USNWC. Putin was studied by Lamb in 2004-2005 for the project and his MPA was reviewed for pattern stability at this time. Lamb and I then corresponded at length about his findings. MPA score charts for Medvedev and Putin are reproduced as Tables 4 and 5 (indicators rounded off to the nearest 5 percent). I will start by explicating the core information about each individual's action motivation.

¹⁸ A methodological distinction, Body Leads has sought to study leaders in high stress since the project's inception. The MPA method derives decision signature elicited from a no stress interview in which conditions support the most natural elicitation of the individual's movement. This aspect of measurement will be further refined in the work ahead.

Table 4: MPA Profile for Medvedev ^a

Decision stage	Action motivation	
	ASSERTIVE – 55%	PERSPECTIVE – 45%
Attending – 15%	Investigating – 5%	Exploring – 10%
Intending – 40%	Determining – 20%	Evaluating – 20%
Committing – 45%	Timing – 30%	Anticipating – 15%
Dynamism – 8 (on a scale of 1–10)		

a) Estimated by Warren Lamb, May–September 2008

If a single phrase captures Dmitrii Medvedev’s approach to decisions (see Table 4), it is *Action Man*. In terms of the three stages of decision making, he is motivated most strongly to committing to action, which accounts for 45 percent of the Medvedev PGMs coded by Lamb. Intending, or building purpose, is a little less prominent in his profile, with a score on that component of 40 percent. By far the most neglected of the three stages for Medvedev is the first, attending, or preliminary weighing and analysis of the problem confronting him. Attending occupies him a mere 15 percent of the time.¹⁹ As between the assertive as opposed to the more contemplative perspective modes, Medvedev has a measurable bias toward the former. This asymmetry is especially evident in the committing stage, where Medvedev expends about twice as much effort on timing than on anticipating long-term consequences and striding toward ultimate goals. As Lamb and I construe the movement evidence, Medvedev is inclined to size up situations quickly and to do so in black and white terms, shunning subtler shades of gray. The wide-angled spectrum of what his proposed initiatives will give rise to substantively may be of little

¹⁹ It is relevant to note here that Medvedev’s ability to move about in an integrated way relative to space is low. That capacity is synonymous behaviorally with focus and attentiveness to information. He has said he passed over Putin’s 1999 offer to work as head of the Russian securities commission because he would have found this detailed administrative work boring. See Marina Nikolay and Svandize, “Dmitriy Medvedev: Governing a Country Like Russia is Always Going To Be Trickier Than Other Countries, translated by <https://www.opensource.gov/portals/server/.pt/gateway>, New Book Cites Medvedev on Past Life, Law, Democracy, Putin, Siloviki, p. 12.

conscious interest for him, and he will seek justification for what he promotes as change only retrospectively, once he has acted.

It is notable that Medvedev himself has referred to some of these qualities. In an interview with the journalist Nikolai Svanidze in early 2008, he confided that he tends to see life in stark terms: “I am often overly harsh in my judgments. . . . Unfortunately, this is the case, and it sometimes comes out pretty sharply. It is hard for me to struggle with this.” He also volunteered that he prefers to get down to making choices without delay. “On many everyday questions,” he said to Svanidze, “I have always made my decisions quickly. And, speaking frankly, I have almost never been mistaken. . . . It is just that I understand that if I do not make a decision, I will end up expending extra time on the issue. And once I have made a decision, I carry it out immediately and almost never agonize over what I have done. Life is short.”²⁰

²⁰ Nikolai and Marina Svanidze, *Medvedev* (St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2008), 310–11.

Table 5: MPA Profile for Putin ^b

Decision stage	Action motivation	
	ASSERTIVE – 40%	PERSPECTIVE – 60%
Attending – 45%	Investigating – 25%	Exploring – 20%
Intending – 35%	Determining – 10%	Evaluating – 25%
Committing – 20%	Timing – 5%	Anticipating – 15%
Dynamism – 7 (on a scale of 1–10)		

b) Estimated by Warren Lamb, 2004-5; May–September 2008

Vladimir Putin has very different predilections, nearly the reverse of his associate so far as the three decision stages and the two general modes go (see Table 5). His movement signature discloses Putin to be more of a shrewd, forward-looking *chess player* than an action man. Unlike Medvedev, he invests the bulk of his effort (45 percent) in attending activity—as might well be appropriate for someone who began his career as a KGB officer specializing in intelligence gathering abroad. For intending, Putin’s score (35 percent) is roughly the same as Medvedev’s, but he gets around to building intent after systematically investigating and exploring the situation and the choice options. The evidence suggests that Putin methodically cycles back to aspects of the problem facing him, continually revisiting data to verify his research and confirm his priorities. Committing (20 percent) is the least accentuated stage of decision for him, whereas it is the most accentuated in Medvedev’s profile. Putin takes the initiative to commit only when satisfied that he has left no stone unturned.²¹ Another contrast with Medvedev is that Putin favors the strategic perspective mode over the more tactical assertive mode. At the intending and committing stages, he functions in perspective mode

²¹ My earlier research, reported in *Vladimir Putin: Movement Patterning and the Decision Making Process during Crisis*, argues when Putin perceives threat such as during a crisis, he may react quickly and react to control versus deliberating.

two or three times more frequently than in assertive mode. For Putin, evaluating and anticipating activity overshadows determining and timing activity; for Medvedev, determining is privileged as often as evaluating, and timing is privileged over anticipating.

One overall criterion on which Putin and Medvedev are fairly similar is in terms of DYNAMISM, which Lamb and his group define as “the number of simultaneous novel or non-routine cycles of decision an individual will initiate and continue.”²² On a scale of 1 to 10 (constructed by counting the number of simultaneous effort and shape changes the individual makes), Putin scores 7; Medvedev registers 8 out of 10. Medvedev is slightly higher than Putin in his capacity to undertake simultaneous and novel decisions.

The MPA methodology prompts some conclusions at variance with the conventional wisdom about the Russian duumvirs. It is Medvedev, not Putin, who is marginally the more dynamic of the two and the more proficient at pursuing multiple assignments at the same time. Putin is the more imaginative and strategic member of the duo. He is hardwired to shape in order to gain perspective on his agenda. Despite his image as an authoritarian strongman, his language of the body implies that he expends much more energy on strategizing than he does on strong-arming. Putin persistently postpones getting on the slope to action. The danger is that he may be excessively disposed to collect, process, and store information and may wander off mentally rather than focus on the practical choice set. For example, Putin has talked off and on since 2000 about the need to reduce corruption in Russia. As president and prime minister, nevertheless, he has done little concretely to make headway toward this goal.

²² Moore, *Movement and Making Decisions*, 90.

Medvedev, often pictured as a weak underling of Putin's, is in fact the more action-attuned of the two. He puts much more energy than Putin into committing, most of which flows into tactically-alert timing choices. Medvedev is in some ways more reminiscent of a Western corporate executive than of a typical head of state: he is motivated to begin making decisions by committing to action based on the implementation of his beliefs and priorities. His preference is to get hold of something he values and get right down to doing it.

The flip side of this characteristic is that Medvedev is given to moving without a general strategic design in mind. His speeches and pronouncements often lack intellectual depth, specifics about how his program might come about in practice, and a strategic vision as to how the parts fit together and the sequence in which they might unfold. Concerning action outcomes, he seems more fixated on pacing than on content or on realizable targets. His statements sometimes contain glaring contradictions. In the "Go, Russia!" manifesto, for example, Medvedev lamented Russia's dependency on energy extraction but then said the first vector of economic modernization should be about remaking Russia into "one of the leading countries in the efficiency of the production, transportation, and use of energy." On occasion, Medvedev may begin to develop an inclusive design only after he has committed to a policy. His hasty decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Moscow-protected enclaves in Georgia, as sovereign states in August 2008, only two weeks after Russia's war with Georgia, illustrates this tendency.

A Complex Partnership

Putin the Chess Player and Medvedev the Action Man are dissimilar human beings. Politically, one owes his position entirely to the other, the established national leader. This dissimilarity is mirrored in their movement signatures. Initial proxemics analysis by BODY LEADS of appearance at Medvedev's swearing-in ceremony in May 2008 indicated that, while Medvedev was seeking to forge ahead on his own, he did so with an acute degree of spatial respect and deference to the older man.²³ He literally fell back into step whenever Putin edged ahead as the two presented themselves in combination to the world. Our assumption is that Putin retains the upper hand in terms of raw power and standing within the tandem.

A Team of Two That Works

That, however, is not by a long shot the only line in the story, as traced by MPA. It should not detract from another insight—that in many ways Putin and Medvedev form a



complementary and quite compatible leadership team. In a preliminary look at Putin's movement pattern in 2004, Warren Lamb surmised that, due to Putin's low committing function, "he benefits from trusted aides who

²³ Proxemics, a term coined by anthropologist E.T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1982) refers to the study of the use of space and distances that can affect people as they relate to one another socially and professionally in business relations, cross cultural interaction, and architecture.

complement him in encouraging work progress toward implementation and create an operational work environment.”²⁴ This statement is a near perfect description of Medvedev, who at the time was serving as Putin’s Kremlin chief of staff. Lamb conjectured in 2008, when he revisited Putin’s profile in more detail and examined Medvedev’s for the first time, that Putin was attracted to Medvedev because Medvedev is a strong pacer of implementation, which Putin is not. Medvedev, for his part, has praised Putin publicly for his extreme attention o detail, which Medvedev leans toward skipping over.²⁵

Tandem Decision Preferences

One measure of the goodness of fit emerges if we average the respective strengths and weaknesses of the president and prime minister between the first and second columns of Tables 4 and 5. Their combined preferences even out rather nicely, with each man compensating for the other’s deficit in the attending category (for Medvedev) and committing (for Putin); they do not differ markedly in the intending category. Together, they dedicate 30 percent of their efforts to attending (15 percent Medvedev, 45 percent Putin); 37.5 percent to intending (40 percent Medvedev, 35 percent Putin); and 32.5 percent to committing (45 percent Medvedev, 20 percent Putin). As between the assertive (tactical) mode of action and the perspective (strategic), they are only slightly biased toward the perspective mode (by 52.5 percent to 47.5 percent). This distribution of inner

²⁴ Warren Lamb, memorandum to Brenda Connors, December 18, 2004.

²⁵ Medvedev said of his mentor, “You know what struck me first was his meticulous attitude towards information and how he tries to investigate to the most thorough degree every problem that he comes across - and came across, even in that period. And how he takes decisions only on the basis of such a complex and overarching analysis. I think this is very important for any leader, and even more so for a president. And here there is something for many people to learn from President Putin.” See Lionel Barber, *Financial Times* Interview with Dmitrii Medvedev, 24 March 2008.

motivation represents an evenhanded perspective on any political agenda—provided that their decision preferences are really shared. The balance is especially evident at the intending stage, where Putin, transfixed by his appetite for information, is only half as motivated as Medvedev to get on the bully pulpit.

Further leverage on Medvedev and Putin is provided by MPA’s framework for gauging the quality of INTERACTION between individuals. Tables 6 and 7 convey the extent to which Medvedev and Putin fulfill the potential for SHARING and PRIVATE styles of decision making.

These measures are derived from movement observation and the calculation of the matching or consonance between effort and shape movements, for sharing, or the mismatching or dissonance of effort and shape movements, for private.

In a sharing style, the individual feels the need to carry out initiatives with and through other people; in the private style, the desire is to go



it alone. If a person’s movement consonance is higher than 50 percent of potential, and movement dissonance is lower than 50 percent, MPA considers her or him to have a sharing style. If these ratios are reversed, the individual is deemed private in style. If both consonance and dissonance come out as less than 50 percent, the individual is classified as NEUTRAL in style, or reliant on the interactional initiatives of others. Lamb’s scheme

also provides for a fourth style, VERSATILE, in which the individual wavers between sharing and private decisions.²⁶

Here again we witness a significant discrepancy in movement profile between the two principals in the tandem. Medvedev (Table 6) presents a highly sharing exterior in two of the three canonical stages (intending and committing). In the attending stage, he comes across as neutral and disinclined to create either privacy or sharing; his sharing instinct exceeds his private instinct, while neither clears the 50 percent mark. Medvedev’s neutrality at one out of three stages and propensity for sharing at the other two help explain his quintessential and ineffectual rhetorical habits.²⁷

Table 6: Interaction for Medvedev ^a

Decision stage	Sharing potential	Private potential
Attending: Neutral	40%	20%
Intending :Versatile	85%	55%
Committing: Sharing	75%	35%
Identifying – High		

a) Estimated by Warren Lamb, May–September 2008

The MPA data demonstrate Putin (Table 7) to be strongly private and independent-minded, and probably disinclined to share ideas and confidences, in two of the three decision stages (attending and committing). Indeed, Putin is one of the most private-regarding leaders studied over the whole span of BODY LEADS. It follows that early and late in the decision process he is not apt to be influenced much by anyone—the

²⁶ Versatile interaction is reported when both sharing and private are 55% or more. Versatile Intending which Medvedev falls under combines sharing and private styles. The Versatile intender is able to present his or her opinions and invite reciprocal sharing with the aim of establishing an agreed-upon joint purpose; also versatile intenders are able to preserve independence in determining and evaluating so that the process of forming an intention is managed without being influenced by the views of other people.

²⁷ In other recent work for BODY LEADS, I have noted Medvedev’s inability to focus through the relevant coding of his head and eye subsystems in interview and speech behavior.

president of Russia included. The nonverbal evidence also suggests how, whatever their relations in the past, Putin could hold great influence over the information platform of the current-day tandem, especially since Medvedev himself is so unmotivated to focus on the information-gathering (attending) stage at all. By implication, Medvedev could be being used by Putin to broadcast policies that do mollify Kremlin opponents—as they often charge.

Table 7: Interaction for Putin ^b

Decision stage	Sharing potential	Private potential
Attending:Private	45%	90%
Intending:Sharing	55%	35%
Committing:Private	45%	55%
Identifying – Medium		

b) Estimated by Warren Lamb, 2004-5; May–September 2008

Intending, i.e., the middle of our three successive decision phases, is of special interest vis-à-vis interaction, since it is here and only here that Medvedev and Putin are both predisposed to operate through sharing. Medvedev’s sharing is scored at 85 percent of the potential. Although Putin’s rating is noticeably lower, at 55 percent, at this stage he is just as noticeably less private and more sharing-minded than anywhere else in his portfolio. This concurrence is a potential foundation for cooperation—or also, conceivably, for stress. The merits of this or that policy option aside, they may not always feel comfortable with approaching the decision process per se in such different fashions. Yet, this is the decision area where they do have the greatest prospect for getting together.

With regard to the general MPA parameter of IDENTIFYING with others, Putin and Medvedev are cut from different cloth (see the bottom row of Tables 6 and 7). Identifying refers to the degree of spontaneity an individual retains in their relationships with others and the environment. The frequency of variation of the free-bound effort flow and growing-shrinking of shape flow indicate high, medium or low identifying. Medvedev's movement retains a high amount of what is known in MPA parlance as shape flow, meaning he enthusiastically identifies and engages with others. Putin is moderate in identifying or engaging with others and the surrounding milieu. His movement's effort flow is more bounded or restrained, which tends to make his perspectives tightly structured and contained. Bringing aspects together is more Putin's forte than expanding outwards. He exercises discretion about whether and when to get involved with others.

Complementarity and the 2012 Watershed

The complexity of the Medvedev-Putin partnership is considerable. They are different persons, with different assets and liabilities. As Lamb has underscored in his



studies over the years, there is more than one way for any leader to do his or her job, and there is more than one way to constitute a leadership team.

From this vantage point, the Moscow tandem, while hardly perfect or without its tensions, has a ring of ordinariness to it. The programmatic preferences of Medvedev and Putin diverge somewhat in points of emphasis but, at least up to now, have been typified

more by overlap and agreement. Although Medvedev has pilloried facets of the status quo, he does not advocate sudden or radical change—considering revolutionary change to have been lethal to the well-being of the Russian state and society in the past. In “Go, Russia!” he expressed his view this way:

Not everyone is satisfied with the rate at which we are moving. . . . They talk about the need to force the pace of change in the political system and sometimes about going back to the “democratic” 1990s. No, it is inexcusable to return to paralysis of the state. I have to disappoint the supporters of permanent revolution. We are not going to rush. Hasty and ill-considered political reforms have more than once in our history led to tragic consequences and pushed Russia to the brink of collapse. We can’t jeopardize social stability or the safety of our citizens for the sake of any kind of abstract theory. We have no right to sacrifice a stable life, even for the highest of goals. . . . Changes will come, but they will be steady, well-conceived, and step by step.

There is little in this passage Putin would find objectionable.

When it comes to decisional style, I would highlight the basic complementarity of the co-leaders’ stances. They, in a sense, have the indispensable requirements of sound decision making covered. Their most manifest strengths and weaknesses tend to offset one another, with Medvedev distinguishing himself in committing and Putin in attending. The two converge on a healthy interest in intending, and it is precisely at this stage they are both at their most interactive. In other words, contrary to much analysis in Russia and abroad, I see grounds for supposing that the Medvedev-Putin partnership is reasonably healthy and productive.

Will the team remain intact in and past the election year 2012? Here is what Medvedev said to Zakaria:

If we are talking here about responsible politicians who represent a single political force—and Premier Putin and I naturally represent a single political force—then in making such decisions, be it in 2012 or in 2017, we have to look at the real situation. . . . When, let us say, a party takes a decision whom to put forward for the position of president, it bases it on what condition this person operates on, how viable he is, whether he is capable of winning. This is what happened when Vladimir Putin answered this question [in 2007–8]. The most mundane indicators, like popularity ratings, have to be taken into account. So far we have good ratings. That's why we undoubtedly will come to agreement between ourselves.

Contrary to what many have been writing about the tandem, I predict that sheer pragmatism and a kernel of shared beliefs will keep the team in harness in 2012. The odds are that each will retain his present institutional role. The presidential term has been elongated by constitutional amendment to six years, starting in 2012, and so the tandem may well be on the scene until 2018 or even beyond. The present formula is more favorable to Putin's interests than to Medvedev's, and that is the wild card in the game.²⁸ It is possible, though less than likely, that Medvedev will lose patience with the duo's joint inaction and attempt to stage a political breakout.

²⁸ Some recent polls have reported that slightly more Russians would prefer Medvedev to be re-elected in 2012 than to see Putin return. But all these soundings take for granted that Medvedev and Putin remain on the same page politically. If Putin were to go on the attack against Medvedev, the situation would be very different.

Back to the Puzzle

The rich composite picture of the Russian duumvirs drawn by MPA enables us to reflect anew on the puzzle of how the tandem functions that was raised early in this paper.

Let us begin with the *Breslauer* paper, with its two-by-two matrix of possibilities for interpretation, defined by axes for ideological and power differentials between our two heroes. Of his four categories, *Cell A* features Medvedev as Putin's political satellite, with an autonomous point of view but no ability to put it into effect, and hence vulnerable to being dumped or demoted. In my opinion, this overstates the policy differences between Putin and Medvedev. In *Cell B*, Medvedev concurs in Putin's opinions but puts on a show of independence. I am dubious about this possibility because Medvedev's bold call for accelerated transformation of the system gives every sign of being authentic. MPA makes the assumption that as a practical matter integral movement cannot be counterfeited by the subject. Medvedev likely gives voice to notions he holds true, without him being fully heedful of the empirical consequences or challenges they imply. The inference is that the rhetorical generalities and overstatement in which Medvedev indulges have to do at root with his inadequate motivation and communicative liabilities and not with his inner sense of purpose.

In *Breslauer's Cell C*, Medvedev has both a countervailing political base and discrete opinions. We should be awake to this possibility, but as much in terms of decision style as of policy positions. The prospect is mitigated by Medvedev's and Putin's reciprocal openness to interaction at the stage of determination of intent. Finally, in the situation of *Cell D* according to *Breslauer*, the tandem is a stable diarchy, or it is

unless and until one principal seizes the initiative, innovates programmatically, and shoves his counterpart aside. In theory, there is something to the combustive potential of such an amalgam of power and principle. MPA instructs that the odds militate against it, as I have explained.²⁹

Turning to Colton's hypotheses about the gap between Medvedev's presidential rhetoric and the meager results achieved, movement analysis gives us some purchase on all five.

Is Medvedev *insincere* in his promises of change? From the MPA data, we can infer that he in all probability is not. What he is, though, is cursory in his approach to matters of state and not much driven to delve broadly or profoundly into information and ideas. Moreover, he is neutral when it comes to expounding his ideas, such as they are, which makes him pedantic, detached, and inept at imparting and sharing them. He inherently prefers grandiose, either-or concepts and values, often disconnected from the substance of what he would do about them in real life—and from his own heart. Since adolescence, he has exhibited a physical armoring or disunity which inhibits harmonious movement.³⁰ Today, this partly explains why he can trumpet comprehensive change and yet be out of touch with failure of his rhetoric to stir excitement and stick.

²⁹ Earlier project reports argue additional behavioral reasons suggest Putin's preference is to occupy de jure number two positions as long as he can conveniently access top power. See Brenda Connors, *Movement Patterning and the Decision-Making Process During Crisis: Vladimir Putin- An Exceptional Case*, Strategic Studies Group, December, 2008. Brenda Connors, *An Act of Trust to Move Ahead: Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, A Behavioral Movement Analysis with Isomorphic Links to Policy*, Strategic Research Department, Naval War College, 2008 .

³⁰ Brenda Connors, *Dmitrii Medvedev: A Study in Political Leadership and Decision-Making Style*, April 2010 , Strategic Studies Group, for discussion of the psychophysical features of nonverbal style and personality.

Colton's second theory hinges on Medvedev being a mediocrity, a political *lightweight* whose convictions are a kind of personal hobby project and do not matter one way or the other. Putin, in this version, deliberately selected Medvedev as a placeholder, passing over intimates from his inner circle of *siloviki* (officials with a background in the secret services) and forceful personalities who might have resisted the ex-president or stood in the way of him reclaiming the Kremlin in 2012. The MPA evidence does not jibe with Medvedev as weak or passive, although his sharing propensity does imply some reliance on others to make decisions. His guru, Putin, is the most important other in Medvedev's professional and political life and must be the person on whom he leans the heaviest. On the positive side, Medvedev is more dynamic and capable of innovating than Putin and is more resolute and tactical. As recompense for his sharing tendency and for other reasons, he acts assertively, which on occasion can yield impulsive and even aggressive decisions. The notion that Medvedev's ideas are no more than a personal hobby is implausible. Individuals are incapable of simulating the behavioral prototypes from and about which Movement Pattern Analysis makes inferences.

What of the third hypothesis floated by Colton, which is that Medvedev is charged with throwing off a *smokescreen* that imitates diversity and change and masks the continuance in power of Putin and his clique? The MPA estimations provide partial validation for this hypothesis, inasmuch as the tandem is a well-adjusted team whose members are on the whole mutually supportive and redress some of one another's deficiencies. Still, their unity of purpose should not be exaggerated. Putin, in his closed and value-driven way, is prone to conducting himself as the "bad cop," spouting harsh statements about individuals and other actors who do not comply with his expectations.

Medvedev has on occasion telegraphed reservations about Putin's proclamations—most recently in his unmistakable expression of unhappiness with a remark by the prime minister insinuating that the business magnate, Mikhail Khodorkovskii, was guilty as charged in his second trial for economic crimes.³¹ If there is a division of tasks between the co-leaders in this area, Medvedev takes more to the part of “good cop”—in my estimation owing to his underlying psychological tendency to be a pleaser and sharer. But Medvedev's body from time to time speaks to a well of suppressed anger that could find outlet in bad-cop behavior.

Yet another possibility would be that the main narrative about the tandem is about *frustration*, that is, Medvedev genuinely wants ambitious reforms and they are systematically obstructed by Putin. There is no denying that the junior leader's rhetoric, especially since the autumn of 2009, has been increasingly censorious about Russia's failings and increasingly adamant about the need to remedy them through reform. Nor can it be denied that Medvedev is politically dependent on a senior leader who has the resources to veto change he disapproves of. That said, not every “nuance” or “penchant” (as Medvedev put it to Zakaria) will breed bitter discord, and to date any micro differences have been embedded in a macro context of broad concord on fundamentals. Even if divisions occur and Medvedev, on the one hand, grows discontent, he will be inhibited by his lack of spontaneity and his lack of the capacity for energetically unified nonverbal aggression—in short, the power to telegraph his appeal for change and consistently mobilize others behind the cause is limited. When Putin, on the other hand,

³¹ Medvedev made his thinly veiled reprimand on December 24, 2010, saying no official should have the right to comment on a criminal case before a verdict is reached. This was shortly after Putin stated that Khodorkovskii was a thief who should “sit in jail.” The week after Medvedev's intervention, a Moscow court found Khodorkovskii guilty and tacked a long prison sentence onto the one he was already serving.

puts the brakes on tandem action, some of the time this will be due to his habit of continually returning to information gathering before forging ahead in the decision cycle. By nature a deeply private person, he can be counted on to keep his political calculations to himself until the last possible moment for venting them.

Scenario number five for Colton, leadership *consensus*, would take with equal seriousness Medvedev's credentials as a reformer and Putin's more conservative instincts, while synthesizing them into a grand bargain whereby change is introduced, but only in small, controllable doses. The lens of MPA confirms this hypothesis up to a point. By the same token, it shows that the co-leaders have stylistic attributes that contribute to the present stalemate. Putin owns the legitimacy and authority to push through changes; only to a limited extent does he make the commitment to do so. He is sluggish in studying any situation and forming intent to make choices; his weakest suit of all is implementation. Medvedev is more receptive to change but less able to effectively conceive of it. As he comes up short in getting to the heart of the problems on his agenda, he often finds himself struggling to carry out vague and anodyne initiatives. Medvedev's defects as a communicator and his emotional neutrality are obstacles to rallying the intelligentsia and the middle-class Russians who otherwise would be his natural audience.

Recommendations for U.S. Action

The foregoing analysis offers action pointers for USG policymakers and diplomats.

For American representatives who wish to engage the Russian tandem of Action Man and Chess Player effectively, an appeal to their intending preferences is the best

point of entry. Presenting where the USG stands, on a solid knowledge base, is strongly advisable. Sharing at the intention-forming stage is a common channel for both Russian leaders individually as well as between them. It may open the door to a fruitful three-way interchange.



On substance, meaty policy research and white papers are most recommended for the information-craving Putin. The format should speak to new data and to options that lend themselves to evaluation and prioritization, without asking for the firm action commitments he is loath to give without drawn-out prior consideration. Putin the private decision maker cannot be expected to enter into public exchanges with others on information interpretation or a final course of action. He may, all the same, be a fine sounding board relative to Russian intentions—although he will likely want to revisit the information stage to verify before crystallizing his goals or strategy. When establishing goals, he may be ready to get into a searching exchange of ideas.

With Medvedev, I recommend that the USG present priorities that both resonate with his values and declared objectives and contain a timeline for commitment, the stage where he is most at home. Medvedev may be keen to participate in high-level dialogue in the spheres of intending and committing, for example, on issues like Afghanistan and missile defense. He is apt to engage substantively with whatever partner gets him to respond to his stated beliefs, half-formed as they may be, and his action plan to date.

If I am right in my analysis, the bicephalous leadership in Moscow will persevere for some time to come—which is not to say that the chances of it unwinding are zero. At a minimum, it will direct Russian foreign policy for the next year and a half, as American policy navigates through choppy waters and our own 2012 election approaches. Whether the tandem persists past then, comes apart, or is refigured, it will bear careful monitoring and analysis. It behooves us to make full use of all the conventional and unconventional instruments available for the job.