DMITRY MEDVEDEV
President of the Russian Federation since May 2008

The latest Presidential elections in Russia, held in March, 2008, were preceded by a huge mass-media debate over the future successor of Vladimir Putin. The end of 2007 marked the period of one year and seven months during which Putin’s public approval ratings did not drop below 50%. For many people his strong political leadership gave rise to the misapprehension that he was going to amend the Constitution and stay on for a third term. Political experts, in turn, were prophesying a great power vacuum if Putin were to step down. The uncertainty came to an end on 10 December 2007 when Putin officially announced his support for Dmitry Medvedev as the Russian presidential candidate. By that time, Medvedev was occupying the post of First Deputy Prime Minister and was thus in charge of several national projects aimed at social development. In general, it would be unfair to say that Medvedev was unknown to the Russian public in 2008. Nonetheless, his image of an average politician merging into the background of Putin’s administration did not usually attract much attention. However, in December, 2007 public interest in him skyrocketed and for the rest of the electoral campaign he remained the centre of public attention.

Dmitry Medvedev was born on September 14, 1965 in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). Both his parents were university professors and they encouraged their son’s interest in science from an early age. In 1982 he enrolled in the Law Department at Leningrad State University (LSU), from which he successfully graduated in 1987, majoring in civil law. In his student days he continued with his weightlifting training and once even won the university contest in his weight category. During this period he also developed a liking for photography and western rock-music. After graduation Medvedev continued with post-graduate studies at the same university, combining this with his work as an assistant to the Chairman of the Department of Civil Law. Before obtaining his PhD in 1990, he took part in Anatoly Sobchak’s successful campaign for the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Republic. Sobchak was Medvedev’s civil law professor at LSU and was often cited as an ardent supporter of the free market and political pluralism.

During the 1990s Medvedev ran a private practice in law, co-founded or advised several businesses and worked in the government. In 1990 he accepted the position of Sobchak’s legal advisor when the latter was first elected to the City Council of Leningrad and later, in 1991, as Mayor of the city. After 1991 Medvedev also worked in the City Council of Leningrad (later St Petersburg) as a legal consultant to the Committee for External Relations, which was headed by Vladimir Putin. In 1996 Medvedev left this office after Sobchak lost the mayoral elections. Furthermore, from 1990 until 1999, Dmitry Medvedev gave lectures at his alma mater and contributed to writing a textbook on civil law, for which he received a state award in the sphere of education in 2001.

In 1993, Medvedev joined Ilim Pulp Enterprise, a timber processing company, as the legal affairs director. The company was later to develop and become one of the leaders in

Biographies of the political leaders of the Medvedev Administration
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Immediately after his graduation in 1985 he was sent to Dresden, then in East Germany, where he worked undercover as the Director of the Soviet-German House of Friendship. He returned from Germany in 1990 and, in 1991, left the KGB with the rank of colonel.

From 1991 until 1996 Putin was Chairman of the Committee for External Relations at the St Petersburg Mayor's Office under Anatoly Sobchak. From 1992 to 1994 he also worked as a deputy-mayor and, from 1994 to 1996, he was the first deputy-mayor of St Petersburg. After Sobchak’s unsuccessful campaign for the mayorsship, Putin moved to Moscow to become the Deputy Chief of the Presidential Budget and Management Office. In 1997 Putin received a PhD in economics. His thesis was titled “The Strategic Planning of Regional Resources under the Formation of Market Relations”.

Along the way to achieving the position of Prime Minister, he also worked as deputy head of the Presidential Administration (March 1997 - 1998), first deputy head of the Presidential Administration (May-July 1998), head of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation.

VLADIMIR PUTIN
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Putin was born on 1 October 1952 in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). His father was a foreman in the metal factory and his mother a housewife. In 1975 he graduated from Law Department at the Leningrad State University, majoring in international law. While still a student he joined the Communist Party and left it only in 1991. By then, he was a top-ranking judoist and sambo (a kind of martial arts based on judo techniques) fighter.

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(July 1998 – August 1999), and Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (April – August 1999). In August, 1999 Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. He was the fifth person in a period of seventeen months to occupy this position. On December 31, 1999 the Second Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared his intention to leave the office, appointing Vladimir Putin as Acting President.

Putin’s political figure had tremendous political repercussions within the Russian population. In a situation in which the country was intimidated by a series of terrorist attacks in Moscow and other cities in the autumn of 1999, when the Chechen Republic was torn apart by the second great wave of insurgency, and when country’s economy was still in dire straits and its external public debt was soaring to 90% of GDP, the public approval rating of Putin’s actions skyrocketed. In the period from August to November 1999 it shot up from 31% to 78%. By comparison, Boris Yeltsin’s approval rating for the same period remained at 6% with minor fluctuations.

On March 26, 2000 Putin won the presidential elections, receiving 53% of the votes. In 2004 his victory was even more convincing, secured by 71% of the votes. On May 8, 2008 he handed over the administration to Dmitry Medvedev, his former colleague from the Sobchak era, and took over the office of Prime Minister of the country. The period of Vladimir Putin’s Presidency is characterised by rapid economic growth, which was mostly maintained by high oil prices. On the basis of the huge influx of petrodollars, a new Stabilisation Fund was established with the aim of securing future economic development. The practical value of this move was especially appreciated during the period of the global financial crisis, which started in 2008.

In the political domain his main achievement was the consolidation of the so-called vertical power structure, although this was marred by media scandals arising from the assassination of several opposition journalists, law suits against the head of the Media-Most holding and the head of the Yukos Oil Company, and human rights infringements in the North Caucasus region.

Nevertheless Vladimir Putin managed to maintain incredibly high levels of approval ratings among the Russian population. According to the Levada polling centre, during his eight years as President, the index never went down below 61%. This fact is especially important, taking into consideration his vague responses as to the prospects of his participation in the 2012 Presidential elections.

IGOR SHUVALOV
First Deputy Prime Minister

Igor Shuvalov was born on 4 January 1967 in Bilibino, then in the Magadan Region, which is now known as Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Russia.

After serving in the Soviet Army from 1985-1987, he enrolled in the Law Department of the Moscow State University in 1987. After graduation in 1992 he worked as an attaché at the Legal Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 1997 he was appointed head of a Department of the State Register of Federal Property. Over the period of the next three years he rose to the top of the career ladder to become Chairman of the Russian Federal Property Fund.

In the years from 2000 to 2003 Shuvalov worked as the Government Chief of Staff with the rank of the Federal Minister. In May, 2003 he became an aide to the President, also serving as the Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff from October 2003 to March 2004. After Putin’s victory in his second presidential elections, Shuvalov was reappointed as his aide. On January 4 2005 he was also appointed Russia’s Sherpa (the head of state’s personal representative who prepares the agenda and agreements at the talks) at the G8 summit.

On 12 May 2008 Shuvalov became a First Deputy Prime Minister in Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s Second Cabinet. His range of responsibilities covers Russia’s foreign trade, economic development and management of state ownership, programmes of regional development and some other areas of the state policy.

VICTOR ZUBKOV
First Deputy Prime Minister

Victor Zubkov was born on 15 September 1941 in the town of Arbat in the Sverdlovsk Region. In 1965 he graduated from the Leningrad Agricultural Institute having majored in agricultural economics, and went on to serve in the army for the next eighteen months. Between 1985 and 1991 he held the post of the First Secretary of the Communist Party Committee in the town of Proizvorsk in the Leningrad
Alexey Kudrin
Minister of Finance of the Government of the Russian Federation
Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Russian Federation

Alexey Kudrin was born on 12 October 1960 in Dobele, Latvia (then USSR).

In 1983 he graduated from the Department of Economics at the Leningrad State University. Two years later he continued with post-graduate studies at the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Having received a PhD in Economics, Kudrin started his political career in the Leningrad City Council in 1990, first working on its Executive Committee’s Committee for Economic Reform and then becoming Chairman of the Mayor’s Financial Committee by 1996. In August 1996 Boris Yeltsin appointed him Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff and later, in March 1997, First Deputy Finance Minister of the Russian Federation.

In January 1999 he became a member of the administration in the Russian Joint Stock Company UES, which is the biggest electrical energy supplier in Russia. Since August 2007 Kudrin has also been chairman of the largest Russian diamond-producing company, Alrosa.

On 18 May 2000 he was appointed to the position of Finance Minister of the Russian Federation and was reappointed several times, retaining this position to the present day. The notorious social welfare monetisation reform was carried out in 2005 during his term of office, this setting off a huge wave of popular protest. He was reprimanded by the President but has managed to retain his office so far.

Igor Sechin
Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Russian Federation,

Of all Putin’s aides and deputies, Igor Sechin is the only one who has accompanied him all the way since his period of working in St. Petersburg. In 2009 the Russian edition of Newsweek named him “politician of the year”, since the
current Prime Minister entrusted him with the most pressing issues.

Igor Sechin was born on 7 September 1960 in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). He studied at Leningrad State University (1979 - 1984), majoring in Romance languages, namely French and Portuguese, and worked as an interpreter for Soviet missions in Mozambique and Angola.

He started working with Vladimir Putin in 1994, when the latter occupied the position of the First Deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg. Over the eight years of Putin’s presidency, Sechin worked as Deputy Presidential Chief of Staff.

In May 2008 he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and, at present, is mainly concerned with supervising the work of governmental committees in the spheres of industrial development and energy resources. Furthermore, since 2004, Sechin has occupied the position of chairman of the board of directors of the state-owned oil company Rosneft, which acquired the assets of the former oil giant Yukos in 2007.

SERGEY LAVROV
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Sergey Lavrov was born on 21 March 1950 in Moscow. In 1967 he enrolled at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). As a student in the Eastern Department, he learned the Singhalese language of Sri Lanka. He also studied English and French. Immediately after his graduation in 1972 he was offered a position as an interpreter at the Soviet Embassy in Sri Lanka.

In 1976 he moved back to Moscow and started working at the Department of International Organisations under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

From 1981 until 1988 he worked in the Permanent Delegation of the USSR for the UNO, moving up from the position of secretary to the office of Senior Advisor. In 1988 he became Deputy Head of the Department of International Economic Relations and, two years later, Director of the Department of International Organisations and Global Issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1992 Lavrov was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozirev, resigned two years later, Lavrov was mooted as the main candidate to succeed him, but the position was eventually given to Evgeny Primakov.

Lavrov was appointed the United Nations Ambassador of the Russian Federation. He held the position until 2004, when he was offered the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, which he still occupies.

Lavrov is a renowned specialist in the sphere of international diplomacy. His considerable experience of working at the UNO and active participation in discussions on the most pressing issues, for example the conflict in Kosovo, the Iranian nuclear problem and the problem of international terrorism, has secured for him the image of an ardent supporter of the principles of international law and multilateral diplomacy.
RASHID NURGALIYEV
Minister of the Interior of the Russian Federation

Rashid Nurgaliyev was born on 6 October 1956 in the town of Zhetigar of the Kustanai region in Kazakhstan (then the USSR). His parents worked for the police. By the time Rashid was finishing school his family were living in the town of Nadvoitsy in the Republic of Karelia. In 1974 he enrolled at the O. V. Kuusinen Petrozavodsk State University. Five years later he graduated, having majored in Economics and two years after his graduation he was working as a physics teacher at a school in the town of Nadvoitsy. Some time later he would also receive a PhD in Economics.

The year of 1981 marked the beginning of his career in the KGB. He started as a police agent in the Kostomuksha city branch and, after several years of service, became head of the Medvezhyegorsk regional department and head of the Counter-terrorism Department of the Republic of Karelia. From 1982 to 1994 he served under Nikolai Patrushev, who later became head of the Federal Security Service (FSB). In 1995 he was transferred to the central body of the Federal Counter-intelligence Service, which was later transformed into the Federal Security Service.

In 1998-1999 Nurgaliyev was Chief Officer of the Main Supervisory Department in the Presidential Administration. In 1999-2000 he was appointed to the position of Head of the subdivision within the Department of Economic Security, which was dealing with issues of drug-trafficking and smuggling.

ANATOLY SERDYUKOV
Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation

Anatoly Serdyukov was born on 8 January 1962 in the town of Kholmksy in the Krasnodar region. In 1980 he moved to Leningrad (now St Petersburg) to enrol in the Department of Economics at the Leningrad Institute of Soviet Trade. Following his graduation in 1984, he served one year in the army and, in 1985, started working in the Leningrad Furniture Company. By 1991 he was employed as deputy head for commercial affairs in the company. In 1993 he started working as marketing director in the Furniture-Market Company. Two years later he became Chief Executive Officer of the company and held that position until 2000.

After receiving a PhD in Economics, in 2000 he obtained the position of deputy head of the St Petersburg branch of the Federal Tax Service, which was then headed by Victor Zubkov. Upon Zubkov’s promotion in November 2001, Serdyukov took over his position as head of the St Petersburg branch. That year he also completed his second degree, this time in Law at the St Petersburg State University.

On 27 June 2004 Serdyukov was appointed head of the Federal Tax Service and held that office until 15 February 2007 when he was appointed to the position of Defence Minister. By that time he was married to Victor Zubkov’s daughter and, when in September 2007 his father-in-law was appointed Prime Minister, Serdyukov handed in his resignation to the President. However, it was not accepted and in May 2008 he was reappointed as Defence Minister.
From 2000 until 2002 he occupied the position of Deputy Director of the FSB. In 2002 he was appointed as First Deputy Minister of the Interior of the Russian Federation, as well as head of the Criminal Police Service.

Since March, 2004 Nurgaliyev has occupied the position of the Minister of the Interior of the Russian Federation. During his office, the Ministry of the Interior has been criticized on several occasions and is currently facing the need for substantial reforms.

ALEXANDER BORTNIKOV
Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB)

Alexander Bortnikov was born on 15 November 1951 in Perm. In 1973 he graduated from the Leningrad Institute for Railroad Transport Engineers and the next two years worked for the railroad enterprises in the Leningrad region. By 1975 he had also completed courses at the Higher School of the KGB under the USSR Council of Ministers and joined the operative and management personnel in the subdivisions of counterintelligence in the Leningrad Region KGB Directorate. He took part in dozens of counterintelligence operations.

By June 2003 Bortnikov was occupying the office of Deputy Head of the Directorate of Federal Security Service (FSB) for St Petersburg and the Leningrad Region. On 8 June 2003 he was promoted to become the Head of the aforementioned Directorate.

In March 2004 he was offered the position of Deputy Director of the FSB, as well as the position of the Chief Officer of the Department of Economic Security of the FSB. The same year due to the reorganisation of the FSB, the department headed by Bortnikov was converted into the Service for Economic Security. Since 2004 Bortnikov has also been a member of the board of directors of the state-owned shipping company Sovkomflot, which deals mostly with oil and gas maritime transport.

In December 2006 he received the title of Army General. When Dmitry Medvedev officially became President on 12 May 12, Alexander Bortnikov was appointed Director of the FSB. The same month he took office as the chairman of the Council of Directors of Security and Special Service organs of the CIS countries.

Sources:

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