

# LECTURE

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## Why Vladimir Putin Is Immune to the American Reset

Garry Kasparov

### Abstract

*Vladimir Putin's regime is best understood in criminal terms. Minions and oligarchs are loyal to Putin because he offers them protection. They can commit any crimes they like, but as long as they stay loyal, they can get rich and take their money to the West. The Putin regime respects only strength. Talk of engagement slowly transforming Russia has been disproven. Twenty years ago, it was expected that Russia would eventually embrace the manners of the West, but now it is clear that the opposite has happened. Countries dealing with Russia have conformed again and again to the corrupt practices institutionalized by Putin: The system is not corrupt; corruption is the system. To remove a dangerous virus, a reset or a reboot is not enough. The entire system must be replaced.*

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/h1201>

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**The Heritage Foundation**  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 | [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

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Thank you for inviting me to attend this important event here at the Heritage Foundation today. My thanks to Speaker Boehner<sup>1</sup> and all the other participants for their interest and their comments.

For a little introduction of myself, there's one fact from my biography that is always omitted. Many here might not be aware that I myself am from the Deep South, right next to Georgia. I'm referring to the Deep South of the Soviet Union. My hometown of Baku, Azerbaijan, where I was born in 1963, is next to what is now the Republic of Georgia.

Of course, much has changed since then. There are no more Communists in the Republic of Georgia—much as there are no more Democrats in the state of Georgia—and Georgia is as good a place as any to begin my talk on the Putin regime's immunity to America's attempts at a "reset." Georgia is currently under great pressure from the U.S. and others to allow Russia to join the World Trade Organization, despite two large pieces of Georgian sovereign territory being occupied by Russian forces.

Many in the media and even some governments refer to Abkhazia and South Ossetia as "disputed territories," not occupied, ignoring the fact they were taken by military force.

### TALKING POINTS

- Twenty-five years ago, Ronald Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, and Gorbachev had an ambitious reset proposal. Reagan refused the offer categorically, refused to make concessions to a system he understood to be evil, refused to compromise on principles where they mattered most.
- This should be the model for a reset with Putin's Russia: Stand up for our principles and make a reset that supports the Russian people, not their oppressors.
- Every time American and other Western leaders betray their founding principles, it confirms Putin's belief that everything has a price, that political freedom is for sale.
- As in 1987, resolve is required. The West must never be afraid to confront dictators, because strength is the only language they understand.

Often, this is the same media that refers to parts of Palestine as “occupied” by Israel. Despite heavy pressure from Vladimir Putin’s Russia, Georgia has remained staunchly pro-democratic and pro-Western, and yet it appears that getting Russia into the WTO is of greater importance to this U.S. Administration than protecting the rights and territory of an ally.

Putin’s administration has been quick to boast of this success, celebrating how they kept Georgia and Ukraine out of NATO. WTO membership will be another feather in their cap. Putin is making no concessions on Georgia, and so far, his belief that doing business with Russia will trump protecting Georgia seems well founded. Even when a series of terrorist bombings in Tbilisi were tied to Russian intelligence, Hillary Clinton only politely hinted at this atrocity, at least in public.

### **A Display of Western Weakness**

This is just the sort of display of weakness, a fear of public confrontation, that feeds the sense of impunity that has empowered dictators throughout history. The American “reset” policy with Russia began after the Russian–Georgian war, spitting on the deal negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and giving a clear indication of the Obama Administration’s priorities in the region.

I have no qualms about using that word, “dictator,” when referring to Vladimir Putin, and nor should anyone else at this point. What has been clear to the Russian opposition for a decade should now be clear to any casual observer. Putin has no

intention of ever giving up power. That Russia has these spectacles they call elections does not change anything.

Here in the U.S., your elections have fixed rules and unpredictable results. In Russia, we have unpredictable rules and fixed results.

No new political parties have been registered in Russia since 2004. Putin’s United Russia controls every step of the process: registration of parties, finances, campaigning, the media—and, of course, the counting. With every avenue of political opposition shut down, the regime has turned to closing off every form of public protest as well. In our marches, we are frequently outnumbered by riot police 10 to one. Putin understands force and makes an overwhelming show of force whenever he has the chance.

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We are proud that all the force used in all of these protests was on the side of the police. We have been entirely peaceful, with not even a broken window, no burned cars.

In Moscow and St. Petersburg in particular, the voice of the opposition is rarely if ever allowed at all in public. Last week, President Dmitry Medvedev spoke at the Moscow State University journalism department, the famous *zhurfak*. Except Medvedev did not speak to University students there. The 300 members of the audience had all been brought

in from outside groups loyal to the Kremlin, while the actual students were not allowed to attend. Three students, three brave girls, who did try to get into the event were detained.

This sort of circus is very much along the lines of the return to Soviet methodologies mentioned by Speaker Boehner in his remarks. These policies are promoted both internally and externally.

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And please don’t tell me about Putin’s supposed popularity in Russia as a way of diminishing his oppression of the Russian people. How do you know? Hosni Mubarak enjoyed 90 percent approval in last December’s Egyptian elections. Libya’s Muammar Qadhafi was probably near 100 percent. The high price of oil allows Putin to make payoffs and to increase the budget for internal security forces and propaganda even while the economic infrastructure collapses. If you must do business with Putin’s Russia, that is business, But do not provide him with democratic credentials.

### **Criminology, Not Kremlinology**

The systematic destruction of Russia’s nascent democracy by Putin has increased its pace in recent years. This acceleration took place as soon as Putin realized he would face no real opposition in the West,

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1. See The Honorable John Boehner, “Reasserting American Exceptionalism in the U.S.–Russia Relationship,” Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1198, January 10, 2012 (delivered October 25, 2011), at <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/2012/01/reasserting-american-exceptionalism-in-the-us-russia-relationship>.

no matter how many journalists were killed, how many activists were jailed, how many times gas to Europe was shut off. Here in the West, there is a tragic assumption that dictators follow the same political logic as exists in democracies. In return, Putin's mentality has always been that democracy in the West is just another form of control, a successful model of keeping people in line. That is, he doesn't believe it is really about the power of the people or representation, but that the object is to make people think they have a voice, which makes them easier to control.

And you know what? Putin now thinks he has been proven correct. Every time American and other Western leaders betray their founding principles, it confirms Putin's belief that everything has a price, that everything is negotiable, that democracy and human rights are just chips on the table along with gas rights, trade treaties, and weapons agreements. Political freedom is for sale, just like the former German chancellor he hired to work for Gazprom, or the 10 percent of Facebook now owned by Russian oligarchs, or the New Jersey Nets.

Putin is happy to trade some small chips, things he doesn't really care about, as long as he concedes nothing on the things that really matter to him and his allies. He gives you something in Afghanistan, and maybe you do not complain about rigged elections. He gets what he wants, and he doesn't have to worry about getting congressional approval (not to give your Administration any ideas). Putin was a KGB lieutenant colonel, and you can view his regime's history as a series of case files.

Most of you will be familiar with the famous cases of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his company

Yukos. Eight years ago, on this very date, Yukos chairman Khodorkovsky was arrested and jailed. The richest man in Russia was sentenced to eight years and would have been freed today had the Kremlin not decided to invent further charges against him in 2007, then this year finally sentencing him for another 12 years. In 2003, he was imprisoned for not paying taxes on the oil his company sold. This year, the charges were that he had stolen the oil he was arrested for not paying taxes on. Yukos was dismantled, its assets quickly sold off to Putin's cronies, and the money cleaned with a Western IPO. Now Exxon has been brought in to share the benefits in an Arctic exploration deal with Rosneft, the main protagonist in the looting of Yukos.

By the way, this troubling collusion of American companies does not end with oil. There are serious concerns that the Kremlin is pressuring Microsoft to hand over the encryption keys to their popular online communication service Skype. We in the opposition in Russia, and those resisting many other dictatorships around the world, rely on Skype for our only secure communications.

You know Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen warlord who boasted of killing his first Russian soldier at the age of 15, now put in charge of the devastated region by Putin. Kadyrov's agents have assassinated his enemies in other Russian cities as well as on foreign soil. It is hard to compare what Putin has done to the Russian Caucasus to anything else anywhere. He is not interested in attempting to better integrate these peoples, who are, after all, Russian citizens. Putin only wishes to ensure that the unrest does not affect the flow of money into the Kremlin.

And Operation Reset: what a great KGB success! You thought it was an American plan, but that is why it has been so effective. You have been kept busy with working groups, summits, and other superficialities while Putin changes nothing. The most successful part of it has been Operation Medvedev. It was a variation of the old Soviet game, letting the West think there is a chance of promoting moderates, of a rift in the hierarchy. Putin's announcement that he would be reclaiming the presidency makes it clear it was always the trick many of us said it was, that Medvedev has never been anything more than a shadow.

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But the U.S. spent considerable time trying to strengthen the supposed Medvedev faction, dreaming about a split between Putin and Medvedev, fantasizing about liberal reform despite all evidence to the contrary. A very successful operation indeed.

The success of Putin's Magnitsky operation is not yet guaranteed, and you here in this room have a say about its success or failure. The young Russian attorney, active against the Putin administration, died in police custody on November 16, 2009, just days before the one year he could be held without trial was due to expire. He had been tortured and denied visits and medical treatment. There was an

impressively impassioned reaction to this horror both inside Russia and abroad. Two years later, we are seeing Russia's success at watering down these responses on the international front.

There have been moves here to take steps that would actually have an impact on the Putin regime by banning visits from officials who were complicit in the Magnitsky case, possibly extending it to the Yukos case as well. This is the sort of tough action that would actually have an impact on the vertical power in Russia as the low-level bureaucrats begin to feel that Putin might not be able to protect them and all the money they have stashed in the West.

This is the key. The Putin regime is best understood not in political terms, but in criminology terms: not Kremlinology, criminology. The minions and the oligarchs are loyal to Putin because he is the *capo di tutti capi* and he offers them protection. They can commit any crimes they like in Russia, but as long as they stay loyal, they can get rich and take their money to America, to London, wherever. This is why the possibility of a strong bill hitting such people caused such panic in the Kremlin. Top Putin fixer Vladislav Surkov even came here personally to threaten officials with reciprocity. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has promised Russia will make a ban list even longer than the Magnitsky list. Take these reactions as a good sign you are moving in the right direction.

### **“They Respect Only Strength”**

Pushing back hard and setting a firm, even confrontational line is the only message the Putin regime

will respond to. They respect only strength. All this talk of engagement transforming Russia slowly has been disproven. Twenty years ago, it was expected that Russia would eventually embrace the manners of the West, but now it's clear the opposite has happened. Countries dealing with Russia have conformed again and again to the corrupt practices institutionalized by Putin. As I said in my testimony on the Hill last June,<sup>2</sup> the system is not corrupt; corruption is the system. So if you are going to go after these guys, you have to use banks, not tanks. Hit them in their wallets, because that is what they care about.

Senate Bill 1039, titled the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, would do exactly that. It is a bill that has the real teeth that Speaker Boehner referred to. Just one bureaucrat punished for his participation in crimes against human rights and the rule of law would have a huge ripple effect in Russia.

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Sadly, the State Department has attempted to preempt such tough action by issuing their own “secret” list for a travel ban on select Russian officials. This should be seen for what it is: watering down a serious effort with a superficial one. The entire point must be to publicize the list, to name names, to confront the criminals and their crimes, make it clear there are standards that will be defended.

Resolution and openness are the best weapons against a mafia structure.

Jackson–Vanik is an obsolete structure, of course, but do not trivially discard it without putting something in its place that makes clear America's commitment to human rights and its willingness to defend them. Senate Bill 1039 is such a piece of legislation, and I would urge everyone to make it a reality.

Twenty-five years ago, Ronald Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik, and the last Soviet leader had an ambitious reset proposal. I remember this meeting well. Reagan refused the offer categorically, refused to make concessions to a system he understood to be evil, refused to compromise on principles where they mattered most.

How about this as a model for a reset with Putin's Russia? Stand up for your principles. Make a reset that supports the Russian people, not our oppressors. Make that distinction clear. As in 1987, resolve is required. You must never be afraid to confront dictators, because strength is the only language they understand.

To remove a dangerous virus, a reset or a reboot is not enough. The entire system must be replaced, and that is what we hope to do.

### **Question & Answers**

**QUESTION:** I'm a Russian journalist here with TASS. My name is Andrei Sitov. I was listening to this, and I thought it's a good speech, and what's also good about it is it's available in Russian to the Russian public.

The case has been made many times over the years, yet if and when we claim that the regime is not popular at all, it's not true. If we claim

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2. See “Testimony by Garry Kasparov, Chairman of the United Civil Front, Co-Chair of Russian Solidarity, U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs,” June 16, 2011, at <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/james-denton/chess-champion-garry-kasparov-us-congress-put-putins-russia-check>.

that the opposition is more popular than the regime, it's not true. So my question to you is: Why is it that the case that is made to the Russian public in their own language finds the response that you're probably hoping for?

You also said, when you finished your speech saying the entire system must be replaced, I think this is what the Russians are afraid of, that these guys want to come in again, do another revolution, uproot everything again, make life hard again. And they never showed that they can do better than even these guys. We did have a few moments when Former Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko was appointed.

**MR. KASPAROV:** I have nothing to do with Kiriyenko or anybody who was in power. I was never elected in any position in Russia, never was a member of the parliament. As for the availability of everything in Russian, can you tell the audience when was the last time Garry Kasparov was interviewed by Russian television Channel One, Two, Three, or Four? You don't know because your memory doesn't go that far.

I remember when I was arrested in 2007. There was only one camera next to me, CNN, and of course I made comments during my arrest in English. Vladimir Putin paid attention to that, blaming me for complaining in English. I'm very happy to prove that my Russian is far superior to Putin, Medvedev, and all their cronies. Unfortunately, we cannot talk to them because they only participate in staged conferences like the one I mentioned. It was taken as a great shame, even for many of Putin's loyalists. The girls, from the journalist faculty in Moscow State University, just wanted to ask Medvedev a question which was not rehearsed.

I don't know how popular Mr. Putin is. I know in some regions his popularity goes to 109 percent, as we saw already in Chechnya or some other places where the rules of mathematics have been simply broken by the iron fist of Ramzan Kadyrov or his like. I would be delighted to see the real results.

The problem is—maybe you didn't hear it—from 2004, no single political party, new party, was registered in Russia. There were a number of attempts, not only by liberals, but also by the nationalists or by the left wing. No political party that is playing by Kremlin rules has a chance to go through the process of registration. So we have the same menu. It's an old-fashioned Soviet menu, and you should not be mistaken that there are seven parties instead of one, because they're all part of the same puppet show.

I think that Mr. Putin enjoys certain popularity in the country. There is no doubt about it. But in order to measure this, we have to make normal debates where we can talk about a number of things. For instance, the fact is that one of the greatest records of my country during Putin's rule was the number of billionaires on the *Forbes* list and the speed with which close friends of Mr. Putin have been accumulating enormous wealth. Genady Timchenko, known as a very close friend of Vladimir Putin since the late '80s, trades roughly 35–40 percent of the entire Russian oil, even being a citizen of a foreign country. There are many other interesting things that we would like to discuss. We just want to get this chance.

Will the Russian democratic opposition, liberal forces, win the election? I don't know. I think that if we have a free and fair election today, there will be a split parliament.

Russians have no clear ideas about the future of our country. What they know is that they've been denied, constantly denied, the voice to participate in the formation of their government. No doubt we will have maybe a second round for the presidential elections, and one thing I'm confident of: Mr. Putin, if he goes through the normal process of registration, probably will not survive his own test, because he will be caught lying in every statement that he's making about his personal wealth, about his connections to other Russian oligarchs, and about certain dubious actions that he committed as the leader of Russia for so long.

**QUESTION:** I'm the spokesperson of the Confederation of Iranian Students. I have the honor of representing millions of young Iranian students who seek freedom and democracy in Iran, and I just want to know if you have a message to those young people in Iran that are struggling for freedom and democracy today.

**MR. KASPAROV:** I have one message to people from Iran, Venezuela, and countries where dictators are prevailing temporarily. The dictators are working together. We can see Putin, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hugo Chávez, and the like getting together and working frantically to extend their rules. We have to build relations to make sure that people who cherish freedom will be also having the chance to share the experience and work. Eventually, I hope that Russia and Iran—not Putin and Ahmadinejad—will make friends in the future.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Kasparov, a number of people have mentioned today that Mikhail Khodorkovsky is eight years in prison as of this very day, and you've been arrested at various times. Something that puzzles a lot

of us: What is the mechanism, what is the formula by which the Putin regime decides who is going to be sitting in prison and who's going to be allowed to speak and for how long?

You're speaking out here, and what you're saying is going to trouble some people in this regime. How do you know what happens when you go back home? What are the rules, and how are they different from the Soviet era?

**MR. KASPAROV:** As I pointed out, it's no longer the Soviet Union. It's more like a very sophisticated mafia structure, and the success of a mafia boss depends very much on his ability to read the law enforcement officers.

Putin was very good in creating the psychological playground where he could outwit Western leaders. I think that he understands that there are certain limits, and under no circumstance can he go into open, Stalin-type repression, because, unlike Stalin, he and his cronies keep money in the West. That's a trick that makes the whole equation very different. So when Western leaders keep asking the same questions, we don't have any bargaining chips. How can we negotiate, because Putin has everything. He has gas, oil, aluminum, metals, timber—but the proceeds from these sales are all in the Western banks.

And don't tell me that the FBI or MI-5 are not aware of all these bank accounts. If you want to get serious by pressing Putin and prevent him from selling nuclear technology to Iran or helping Chávez sell drugs to Mexico, hit them where they feel it. Just start investigating Roman Abramovich. Or find out who is this mysterious third person in the infamous Hamburg company with Timchenko, a Swedish guy, and a certain name that is not known. Just start

looking into what is really important for Putin.

Just understand that Putin is always trying to find a silver lining. He knows that there are certain cases where he must use force, and he does it, but at the end of the day, he doesn't feel that it's necessary to go all the way down to the very bottom by using brute force if it doesn't bring results. I think he's very good at measuring the balance. The Khodorkovsky case was sort of a brilliant execution of his true intentions. It sent a clear message to all our oligarchs: You should not pay taxes to the Russian treasury; you should deal with me. That was the message, and they got it.

So the Russian oligarchy is under full control, which, by the way, was proven recently by the very short-lived political career of Mikhail Prokhorov, who seemed to be an independent guy. Unlike many others, he cashed in, in 2008, most of his fortune—I don't know how much, but probably 80–90 percent—which is elsewhere, not in Russia. Not Putin, but Surkov just put on the pressure, and Prokhorov was dissolved as a political entity. With all his billions of dollars, he knows that unless he plays by the rules, he might be in real trouble.

That's what makes Putin unique. Let's give him credit. He's very good in reading human psychology and creating an atmosphere where his plans can prevail.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two Georgian occupied territories. I understand there is not an easy answer to that question, but I was wondering if you could give us your opinion: How do you see the ways of resolving this problem?

**MR. KASPAROV:** Abkhazia and South Ossetia should not be,

probably, viewed separately from the overall problems of the Soviet borders. We had many conflicts—Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan—and many other places where Stalin just created borders that caused the future effects of putting nations or nationalities, different ethnic groups, one against another.

I think that any attempt to change the borders was and still is very dangerous, because there's no end. I have to admit, some of them were not just. Many of these borders were wrong, but you cannot start from scratch. You have to avoid what's happening in ex-Yugoslavia, for instance. Some nations may not be happy about that. It's like in Crimea. I wasn't sure why Crimea was part of Ukraine, because I feel myself a Russian citizen, but at the end of the day, it happened. So it's like looking for a lesser evil. Any attempt to reconsider leads to bloodshed.

Putin's action against Georgia and takeover of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in my view, actually was not a demonstration, as many believe, of imperial powers. After Putin gained rights to organize the Winter Olympics in the south tropical resort of Sochi, the war against Georgia was inevitable. The Olympic Village in Sochi is located about five miles away from the official border with Georgia, the Abkhazian border, so there was no chance that Putin could afford to have the Olympic games so close to the Georgian territory.

So annexation of Abkhazia, I believe, was the main purpose. North Ossetia and South Ossetia was a good pretext to do that, but Abkhazia was the main target. And he succeeded in building a very nice piece of real estate. For Putin, Sochi is like St. Petersburg for Peter the Great: He chose a very warm city in a better climate.

Also, Abkhazia has been serving as the supply route for all the construction materials. Putin's engineers recognized that it would not be possible to bring a hundred million tons of construction materials from the North, because the landscape of the region is such that you have to spend tons of money just building the roads. So Abkhazia is important both politically and as a material factor to secure Putin's dream project, Sochi.

If you look at the relations between Putin and Georgia, Ukraine, Belorussia, it's not a classical imperialist approach, because he wants businesses of his friends to be successful. For him, the difference between Mikheil Saakashvili and Alexander Lukashenko is almost the same. Both are very tall.

The classical case, I think, is Ukraine. You couldn't imagine a more pro-Russian government in Ukraine than that of Viktor Yanukovich, but at the end of the day, Putin is pressing Yanukovich and his oligarchs to share the industries they control, and even Yanukovich is resisting, because they understand it's not about friendship. Putin doesn't care about friendship or the restoration of the Soviet Union. For him, Gazprom and Rosneft are far more important. That's why I think that in the years to come, Putin will not use force anymore, because the Sochi Olympiad is too close.

But we can see that now another Russian oligarch of Georgian origin is trying to enter Georgian politics. So we may see other attempts of Putin to take over control of Georgia the same way he's trying to take control of Ukraine and Belorussia: business, nothing personal.

**QUESTION:** I wanted to mention that Kadyrov is mentioned in the Magnitsky Act. It's not very well known, partly because of the name of the act, and I also wanted to ask you about the effects of the extremism law on Russian civil society and religious communities.

**MR. KASPAROV:** It's an excellent question, because when people in the West hear the word "extremism," they think about terrorists blowing up trains, planes, creating havoc among peaceful civilians. The so-called E-Department of Extremism in Russia, which we call "E-stapo," is aimed only—and I have to emphasize *only*—at curbing the activities of the political opposition, and you can't come up with any fact of political opposition groups being involved in some kind of violent activities. This is what we succeeded in preventing in any form and shape.

These guys who are working in this E-Department, they're not even hiding their agenda. They're filming the activists, they're collecting the materials, they're trying to disrupt our peaceful activities. We don't see any results of this extremism law in the North Caucasus, in the regions like Dagestan or Chechnya or Ingushetia, where every day, literally every day, we have reports of people being killed. It seems that these officers find it far more comfortable to operate in the environment of Moscow or St. Petersburg rather than trying to fight terrorism—not extremism, terrorism—in the forests and the hills of Dagestan or Ingushetia.

**QUESTION:** I think that in some ways, Gorbachev's period was very successful, because the Soviet Union collapsed. If you have mafia and corruption as a system, do you have a

positive program on how to struggle with mafia and not to destroy the state?

**MR. KASPAROV:** Your question contains an assumption that there is a state. Actually, we don't have the state in Russia as people used to know elsewhere, because it's privatized. Every segment of the state is in the charge of people who are appointed by Putin.

Do you believe that Chechnya is a part of Russia? Can you tell me that the Russian law can be applied to Chechen territory? Do you have any kind of accountability of billions of dollars siphoned to Kadyrov from Moscow? No. The same happens with ministries. So do you believe that there is any accountability on the federal level or on the regional level, where bureaucrats are given rights to benefit from the ministries or entities they are given just for temporary use? It's more like a feudal system, with the center and regions and dues being paid to the centralized power.

The best number comes from Medvedev. When you want to look at the corruption, official numbers presented by Medvedev about corruption in the system of state procurement, the state orders, it's \$35 billion. That's what Medvedev said a year ago. We all believe the numbers are much higher. When you look at the Transparency International report, the actual size of the corruption in Russia is way over the entire budget of my country.

They're people. They're not ghosts from Mars; they're real people who are stealing this money and buying penthouses in Miami or a soccer club in London. But nothing happens. That's a clear demonstration there's no state in Russia, because

“state” assumes there’s certain measures taken. If, technically, the head of the executive in the country is coming out with such a strong statement, some actions must follow. No. So that’s my conclusion. We do not have a state, and what we should do is start this cleansing operation.

Do I believe that we can succeed and this process will bring Russia back to normal? I’m not sure. It might be too late. But every day we’re losing makes the end of the Russian state inevitable. I’ve been saying it

for many years. The survival of the Putin regime means the end of my country.

So that’s why dismantling the Putin regime is the only chance for Russia to survive. It might be too late, because we have problems on the east side, where China is gradually grabbing territories. The popular joke in Irkutsk, for instance, is that the Chinese are crossing our borders in small groups of one hundred thousand each. With the boiling temperature in the North Caucasus, I don’t

know whether we can succeed. But we have to try, because the continuation of this rule means that the country will be wiped out from the map.

*—Garry Kasparov is a chess grandmaster and a leader of the Russian opposition. These remarks were the concluding keynote address at the conference “The Risks of the Reset: Why Washington Must Watch Its Step With Moscow,” presented by The Heritage Foundation on October 25, 2011.*