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THE EU-RUSSIA CENTRE REVIEW

The electoral system of the Russian Federation

Issue Seventeen



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A study for the European Parliament by Professor Bill Bowring, Birkbeck College, London, member of the Advisory Board of the EU-Russia Centre¹.

Executive summary

This report, prepared at the request of the European Parliament, examines the development of the electoral system in Russia, with a particular emphasis on the evolution of political parties, after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It analyses changes during the Russian Federation's three presidential administrations (Yeltsin, Putin, Medvedev) and assesses what role successive presidents have played in moulding the constitutional and legal system to suit their interests. The financing of political parties and election campaigns is discussed, as is the issue of party membership. The sometimes controversial role of the media is examined. The report also considers how the international community has responded to elections in Russia, taking into account reports and statements of the EU, Council of Europe and the ODIHR/OSCE. Finally, it considers the prospects for the future of politics in Russia.

Hopes were high that Russia, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, would embrace the pluralist democracy which is one of the objectives of the EU and Council of Europe. This study, however, shows that Russia is far from being a fully functioning democracy. Russian leaders themselves talk of 'managed democracy' or 'sovereign democracy', the phrase coined by Vladislav Surkov in 2006. Surkov's circle draws on the intellectual heritage of the nazi ideologue Carl Schmitt.² It is no surprise therefore that some leading analysts even argue that Russia is regressing towards a more authoritarian state.³ While Russia undertook remarkable reforms in the early 1990s, especially with regard to freedom of expression, anti-democratic trends were already to be observed by the second half of the decade. Worried at the prospect of a communist or nationalist takeover, many in the West turned a blind eye to these developments and Russia was accepted into the Council of Europe and the G8.

The wars in Chechnya had a malign influence on the prospects for a liberal, democratic Russia. Under the influence of Vladimir Putin, the Russian political system has become highly centralised, with particular emphasis on the 'power vertical', i.e. a top down approach that serves the interests of the power elite. The security services are arguably more powerful than they were under the communist system: certainly they are much larger and better-paid, and draw not only on the heritage of the KGB and Cheka, but also the Tsarist Okhranka. The television mass media are

¹ With research assistance from Eva van Velzen, BA European Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam; MA East European Research and Studies, Università di Bologna, Researcher at the EU-Russia Centre, and Fraser Cameron, PhD, Cambridge, Director of the EU Russia Centre. The author also acknowledges helpful comments from other members of the EU-RC Advisory Board.

² See Krastev, I., 2006.

³ See statements by Mikhail Kasyanov and Lilia Shevtsova at the ALDE hearing in the European Parliament on 9.2.11



effectively controlled by the government although the internet, at present, remains free. Journalists are intimidated from carrying out any serious investigative reporting.

Since 1991, the political party system has undergone many changes and parties have emerged and disappeared with great frequency. The electoral system has been manipulated by Russia's leaders to ensure maintenance of the status quo. Personalities have been more important in winning elections than party labels or programmes. With the Kremlin's full support, United Russia, although not omnipotent or monolithic, has become the dominant political party. Its primary purpose is to mobilise support and legitimise the current system. Opinion polls and the results of the regional elections in 2010 suggest that the party, with Vladimir Putin as chairman, will maintain its control of the Duma in the elections in December 2011. At this stage there has been no decision on whether Vladimir Putin or Dmitry Medvedev will be the presidential candidate for the elections in spring 2012, or whether they might even compete against each other. It can safely be predicted, however, that whoever wins, the political system will not change.



Introduction

There will be parliamentary elections for the State Duma of the Russian Federation in December 2011, followed by presidential elections in March 2012. This study reviews the electoral system in Russia since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. It also provides an analysis of the multiparty system in Russia, examining to what extent the political parties are designed only for individual leaders and whether they have separate political programmes and loyal party members. The stability and behaviour of the electorate is also considered. Finally, the study outlines the prospects for the political and parliamentary system in Russia. The study draws on various academic sources as well as the surveys of the respected Levada Centre. It also takes into account the evaluations of the ODIHR/OSCE and the Council of Europe. The annexes contain some important survey results from Levada and the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections since 1991. The study also provides a list of suggested references.

Background

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened the door for a major reform of the political system. The RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics) was the largest component of the Soviet Union and in terms of international law it became the successor state to the Soviet Union, taking over, for example, the permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The legacy of seventy years of Soviet rule was much harder to change. The Soviet state had held regular 'elections' but there were no opposition parties and the vote was always a foregone conclusion. Following the end of the USSR in 1991, the very idea of competing political parties and free and fair elections was quite alien to the vast majority of citizens of the Russian Federation.

In the first elections in 1991, for a president of the RSFSR, while the USSR was still in existence, Boris Yeltsin emerged victorious. He set up a "convention" to draft a new constitution, including a new electoral system, although a new constitution was not adopted until November 1993, following the tearing up of the existing constitution of the RSFSR, and the storming of the White House where the Soviet-era parliament (Congress of Peoples Deputies and Supreme Soviet) sat. The new constitution adopted a model whereby the Russian Federation elects by popular vote a head of state - the president, from 1993-2008 elected for a maximum of two four year terms, and since 2008 for a maximum of two six year terms - and a legislature - one of the two chambers of the Federal Assembly (*Federalnoye Sobraniye*). The State Duma (*Gosudarstvennaya Duma*) has 450 members, 1993-2008 elected for four year terms, since 2008 elected for five year terms, all of them elected by proportional representation. The Federation Council (*Sovyet Federatsii*) has 166 members: two delegates for each region, who are appointed by the President.

Since the fall of the USSR, there have been five elections for the presidency and parliament. In the five presidential elections, only once, in 1996, was a second round required. There have been three presidents, with Boris Yeltsin elected in 1991 and 1996, Vladimir Putin in 2000 and 2004 (Yeltsin had already relinquished power to Putin on the last day of 1999) and Dmitry Medvedev in 2008. The candidate of the Communist Party has always come in second, first Nikolay Ryzhkov in 1991,



then Gennady Zyuganov in 1996, 2000 and 2008, and Nikolay Kharitonov in 2004. Only in 1996 has there been another candidate who gained more than 10% of the votes (in the first round), General Alexander Lebed (Independent candidate) with 14.5%.

The Communist Party was the biggest party in the 1995 (35%) and 1999 (24%) parliamentary elections. The only other constant participants have been the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), whose support has hovered between 5 and 15% of the votes, and Yabloko, which won 10% of the votes in 1995 and around 5% in the other three elections. Parties that have won more than 10% of the votes in the entire period were Russia's Choice with 16% in 1993, Our Home is Russia with 12% in 1995, the Unity Party of Russia with 23%, the Fatherland-All Russia party with 13% and the People's Deputies Faction party with 15% in 1999. United Russia, an alliance of the Unity Party of Russia and Fatherland - All Russia, became the biggest party with 38% in 2003.

Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s Russia's political system has been characterized by the presence of one party that supports the incumbent President, financed and staffed mainly by the presidential administration.

- 1993 – Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) – led by Yegor Gaidar
- 1995 – Our Home is Russia (*Nash Dom – Rossiya*) – led by Viktor Chernomyrdin
- 1999 – Unity (*Yedinstvo*) – led by Sergey Shoygu
- 2004 – United Russia (*Yedinaya Rossiya*) – led by Sergey Shoygu
- 2007 – United Russia (*Yedinaya Rossiya*) – led by Vladimir Putin

The evolution of electoral law

According to the 1993 Constitution, elections in the Russian Federation should be free and fair. By Article 97 of the Constitution, any citizen of the Russian Federation over 21 years of age and with the right to participate in elections (i.e. not in prison or certified as mentally ill) may be elected as a deputy of the State Duma. The principles governing elections and citizens' electoral rights were enshrined in the Constitution and clarified in the Federal Law "On Fundamental Guarantees of Electoral Rights of Citizens of the Russian Federation"⁴ of 6 December 1994, No.56 FZ. (A list of laws, judicial decisions and other materials can be found at <http://www.democracy.ru/english/library/laws/>.) In later years this law was amended several times, for example making it more difficult for smaller parties to enter the State Duma or to nominate a candidate. In the 1995 elections parties were required to gather 200,000 signatures and to register with the Ministry of Justice no later than six months before the election. 43 parties and coalitions contested the elections, but only four secured more than the 5% threshold to qualify for proportional seats. As a result, it was considered that more than 45% of electors could not vote

⁴ Law FZ – 56 – available at: http://www.democracy.ru/english/library/laws/bg_law_97_eng/index.html.



for the party of their choice. The Communist Party and its allies were greatly over-represented. The 5% threshold was upheld by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation in its judgment of 17 November 1998, No. 26-P.

In addition to legal difficulties many candidates have faced political and bureaucratic difficulties. In the 2008 presidential elections, only four candidates managed to register with the Central Election Commission, despite a large number of politicians declaring in advance they would make a bid for the post. Garry Kasparov, candidate for “Other Russia” and former chess champion, had to withdraw his candidacy when he was unable to rent a venue for a political meeting he was required to hold in order to register. Kasparov did not enjoy a nomination by a party with seats in the Duma and therefore needed to get support of at least 500 people at an “initiative group” meeting. There was no landlord in Moscow willing to rent him a room.⁵ A number of other candidates were denied registration. For example, former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov and leader of the People’s Democratic Union had initially registered his candidacy but this decision was revised when the Central Election Commission claimed that a large number of the signatures of support were forged. Appeals to the Supreme Court were in vain. Mr Kasyanov accused the Kremlin of holding a deliberate campaign to impede his political ambitions.⁶

For the parliamentary elections of 2 December 2007, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) reported that Russia had:

“[...] switched to a fully proportional system. Federal lists can contain up to 600 names, which allows well-known personalities to be added to party lists (e.g. the Head of State heading the federal list of the United Russia party). Russia is now a single constituency and votes are counted on a nation-wide basis. To be eligible for representation in the Duma, a political party needs to clear the 7 percent threshold (5 percent in 2003). This threshold, one of the highest in Europe and second only to that in Turkey, inevitably resulted in a number of political parties not being represented in the Duma.

[...] at least two parties have to be represented in the Duma. In the event that only one party passes the 7 percent threshold, the party that will come second in the electoral race will get seats in the Duma irrespective of the number of votes it gets. The minimum turnout threshold requirement (previously 50 percent) for elections to be valid has been abandoned. The possibility to vote against all candidates is no longer available.

[...] to qualify for registration, a political party must have not less than 50,000 members (previously 10,000), and regional branches, each with not less than 500 members in more than a half of the subjects of the Federation. Each one of the other regional branches must have not less than 250 members of the political party. A citizen of the Russian Federation may be a member of only one political party. A member of a political party may be

⁵ Kramer, A.E., 2007.

⁶ ‘Kasyanov Barred from Russian Poll,’ - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7211622.stm> (accessed 10 February).



registered with only one regional branch of the given political party at the place where he or she resides permanently or most of the time.”⁷

In addition, parties not represented in the Duma must pay a deposit of 60 million roubles (approx. €1,8 million) or collect 200,000 signatures, of which less than 10,000 signatures can originate from one particular region or from the expatriate community. Under the new legislation, the formation of electoral blocs is forbidden; members of the Duma can no longer change allegiances and leave their party to join another one without the risk of losing their seat in the Duma. Laws regarding campaign funding are extremely complex, if not dissuasive, and discourage smaller parties from running for election.⁸

The election legislation includes detailed provisions governing the conduct of electronic and print media during the campaign, inter alia providing for free and paid broadcast time and print space to all political parties registered in the elections on equal conditions for campaign purposes. The law also requires equal media access for all parties, and provides that news items on election events must be separated from editorial commentary.

Roles of legislative and executive branches

THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

The Federal Assembly has two chambers: the Federation Council (Upper House) with 166 members and the State Duma (Lower House) with 450 deputies. According to Article 95(2) of the Constitution the Federation Council consists of two representatives from each 83 subjects of the Russian Federation: oblasts, *krais*, (ethnic) republics, autonomous okrugs and oblasts and cities of federal importance: Moscow and St. Petersburg. In its early years, the Federation Council was elected by direct vote but after 2005 its members were appointed by the Kremlin. Of the 450 members of the Duma half were, prior to 2005, elected from single seat constituencies by direct general vote while the other 225 were elected on party lists based on the principle of proportional representation. In the 2008 election, all 450 Duma deputies were elected on party lists.

Draft laws may originate in either legislative chamber, or they may be submitted by the president, the government, local legislatures, the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, or the Superior Court of Arbitration. Draft laws are first considered in the Duma. The Federation Council is more a consultative and reviewing body than a law-making chamber.

PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

The powers and responsibilities of the President include:

⁷ Council of Europe – Doc 11473 – Observation of the parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation. (2 December 2007) - <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc07/edoc11473.htm>.

⁸ Council of Europe – Doc 11473 – Observation of the parliamentary elections in the Russian Federation. (2 December 2007) - <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc07/edoc11473.htm>.



- a) The appointment of the prime minister, subject to confirmation by the Duma;
- b) The appointment and dismissal of ministers proposed by the Prime Minister;
- c) Submission to the Federation Council for confirmation all senior judicial appointments;
- d) Chairing the Security Council;
- e) Defining the military doctrine of the Russian Federation;
- f) The appointment and dismissal of regional governors.

The powers of the President in the sphere of legal activities and in his interaction with the Parliament include:

- a) Calling elections to the Duma;
- b) Dissolving the Duma in certain cases;
- c) Calling referendums;
- d) Introducing draft legislation in the Duma;
- e) Signing federal laws.⁹

There is a consensus of informed opinion that the law has not been observed in recent elections. Indeed it appears that the proliferation of laws and changes in legislation is designed to make it extremely difficult for any new party to emerge. The legal system is also used wilfully e.g. to ban demonstrations which are allowed under the constitution.

Elections under each President

The Yeltsin years

NEW CONSTITUTION – PRESIDENT VERSUS PARLIAMENT

During 1992-1993, President Yeltsin attempted to secure greater powers for the presidency under the existing constitution of the RSFSR. He failed to persuade the Soviet-era parliament (Congress of Peoples Deputies and Supreme Soviet) and subsequently dissolved it by force, shelling the parliament building, in October 1993. Using his presidential powers to pursue his wish for strong executive powers for the president, he formed a drafting body sympathetic to his constitutional proposals. He then called a referendum on the new constitution in December 1993. According to official figures, the new constitution was approved by 58.4% of Russia's registered voters; and the 54.8% turnout met the requirement of a minimum of 50% participation. But a study by expert group headed by A. A. Sobyenin in May 1994 asserted that less than 46% of eligible citizens took part in the referendum.¹⁰

⁹ See a description at <http://www.russiaprofile.org/resources/structure/president>.

¹⁰ Sobyenin A.A. & Sukhovolskiy V.G., 1994.



The 1993 Constitution provides for a dual executive of a president and prime minister akin to the French system. The President as the head of state enjoys power in numerous policy areas such as foreign policy, relations with the regions, organs of state security, and partially the economy. However, most economic powers were transferred to the Prime Minister (Vladimir Putin) in 2008.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER YELTSIN

After the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet, and the adoption of the new constitution in October 1993, the first multiparty elections took place in the Russian Federation in December 1993. Numerous political parties and movements were set up during the early days of the new Russian state. There were, however, a number of difficulties for parties that greatly hindered them in reaching the voters. Lack of money was one large problem, but also the widespread negative association towards parties by the public.¹¹ Political parties were associated by many with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and its totalitarian methods. The result was that parties and political organisations were concentrated on individuals with a personal following. Some observers have noted that ‘political entrepreneurs tend to see parties merely as instrumental and therefore invest very little in strengthening party organisations, but instead rely on their own informal network.’¹² Since 1991 there has been a continuous change of parties and party labels (see Appendix II for the Duma election results 1991 – 2008).

After the 1993 and 1995 parliamentary elections five broad categories of party platforms emerged:

- a. Reformist parties: advocating liberal democracy and free markets (Union of Right Forces and Yabloko)
- b. Communist and communist-leaning parties: for a return to state control
- c. Nationalist parties: advocating Russian patriotism, with an anti-foreigner focus
- d. Fringe parties: eliminated by the 5% requirement for representation
- e. The “Party of Power”

THE FIRST THREE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

The first multiparty elections in the Russian Federation took place in December 1993 and elected half of 450 Duma deputies from national party lists on the basis of proportional representation. The other half of the deputies were elected locally, in single-member districts (SMD). There was a 5% threshold for parties entering the Duma. For the 1993 elections, 13 parties were declared eligible for the party lists, and 2047 individuals were selected to compete for Federation Council seats and Duma single-mandate seats (see Annex II). The parties soon formed themselves into blocs. The three main blocs emerging after the 1993 elections were: pro-Yeltsin reformists;

¹¹ Oversloot, H. & Verheul, R., 2006.

¹² Oversloot, H. & Verheul, R., 2006, p. 386.



centrists advocating a slower pace of reform; and hard-liners opposing reforms. The main reformist party was Russia's Choice. The main centrist parties were the Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin bloc, commonly referred to as Yabloko, and the Democratic Party of Russia. The main hard-line parties were the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDPR), the Communist Party (KPRF) and the Agrarian Party, which represented state and collective farm interests.

The next elections were in December 1995. Despite opposition from Yeltsin, the division of the Duma seats into party-list and single-member districts remained unchanged. The 5% threshold also remained unchanged. In total, 43 parties managed to get on the party-list ballot, while more than 2,600 candidates were registered in 225 single-member district races. The turnout of the elections in 1995 was 64.6%, compared to 54.8% in 1993. Out of the 43 parties on the party-list, only four passed the 5% threshold, the Communist Party (KPRF) with 22.3%, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) with 11.2%, Our Home-Russia with 10.1% and Yabloko with 6.9%.

During the 1995 elections, parties tended to be either for or against reform, with former centrists moving either left or right. After the elections the main party in the State Duma was Chernomyrdin's Our Home Is Russia, the advocate of Yeltsin's programmes. Yavlinsky's Yabloko coalition was highly critical of Yeltsin's approach to reform but supportive of reform principles. The main hard-line, anti-reform parties in the Duma were the KPRF, headed by Zyuganov, and the LDPR, headed by Zhirinovskiy. More than 40% of the deputies in the Duma were re-elected.

The third legislative elections in the Russian Federation took place in December 1999. Political parties that wanted to participate now had to be registered with the Ministry of Justice a year prior to the elections, instead of six months. Parties were still required to obtain 200,000 signatures or to pay a deposit of a little more than 2 million roubles that would be refunded if the party won at least 3% of the list vote.

The early election campaign was dominated by the contest between the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) and All Russia (*Vsya Rossiya*) parties. Eventually the parties joined forces and decided to support the candidacy of Yevgeny Primakov, who had been Prime Minister from September 1998 to May 1999. When the cooperation of Fatherland and All Russia became stronger, the incumbent president, Boris Yeltsin, and his supporters created a new bloc, Unity. The advantage Unity had over the Fatherland-All Russia bloc, was the leadership of a person linked to the central government; Sergey Shoygu, the Minister of Emergencies. The programme of the party was openly supportive of the government, whose Prime Minister at that time was Vladimir Putin. Although Putin refrained from openly engaging in party politics, he did not disguise that he preferred the Unity Party over the other parties. Parties connected to the Union of the Right Forces (*Soyuz pravyykh sil*), whose members included free-market liberals such as Boris Nemtsov, Anatoly Chubais, Yegor Gaidar and Irina Khakamada, tried to secure votes for the upcoming elections by in some way linking themselves to Unity. Yabloko declined an invitation from the Union of the Right Forces to join an electoral alliance. In the 1999 elections, Unity won 73 seats in the Duma. The Fatherland - All Russia coalition secured 66 seats, the Union of Right Forces (SPS) 29 seats, Yabloko 20 and KPRF 113 seats (see Annex II).



PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 1991 – 1996

The first presidential election in the Russian Federation was held on 12 June 1991. Boris Yeltsin received 57.3%, while his opponent Nikolay Ryzhkov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), received 16.9% of the votes. In total there were six candidates. Yeltsin's popularity dropped significantly during his period of office. While in September 1991, 81% of citizens approved of Yeltsin's performance, when he left office eight years later, the proportion had dropped to 8%.

Nevertheless, Yeltsin had set his mind on winning a second term for president. He secured the backing of oligarchs, principally Boris Berezovsky, to finance the 1996 campaign and used their media assets to promote his candidacy. While the electoral law limited campaign spending to \$3 million per candidate, oligarchs reportedly funded Yeltsin with \$500 million. He reduced the emphasis on the unpopular economic reforms, and during the campaign the IMF announced a loan to Russia of \$10 billion which was intended to be used to raise the wages of teachers and state workers, and to increase pensions.

Only in the 1996 presidential election was a second round needed. Yeltsin won 35.5% of the votes in the first round and the Communist Party leader Zyuganov, 32%. The second round was won by Yeltsin with 53%, against 40% for his opponent. During the campaign, some candidates called for reducing or eliminating the presidency, criticizing its powers as dictatorial. Yeltsin replied by claiming that Russians desired "a vertical power structure and a strong hand" and that a parliamentary government would result in indecisive talk rather than action. The presidential powers remained unchanged after the 1996 elections.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

The West, and in particular the United States, had openly supported Yeltsin's rise to power. It was hoped that Yeltsin would pursue a Western style democracy and a free-market economy. Furthermore there was a wish to keep the ultra-nationalist Zhirinovskiy out of power. The West, therefore, largely turned a blind eye to the massive spending by some oligarchs on behalf of Yeltsin. In 1996 Russia was permitted to join the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe had expressed concern about the development of Russia's democracy, and the First Chechen War was still raging. But a French member of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) stated, 'Russia's joining will give our organisation a new impetus and authority. We shall be the only pan-European organisation [...] We shall be the only forum for dialogue embracing all countries of a Europe whose division we shall have at last healed.'¹³

The presidential election of 1996 was the first with an OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) observation delegation present in Russia. The OSCE was critical of the conduct of the election noting that:

¹³ Massias, J-P., 2007, p. 7.



(1) the media in general, and the television channels in particular, were both quantitatively and qualitatively biased in favour of President Yeltsin.

(2) money spent on President Yeltsin's campaign overspent the legal limits.

(3) although Article 37 of the electoral law specifically states that an incumbent president may not make use of his office when running for a second term, President Yeltsin blurred the distinction, travelling widely to many regions in the period before the first polling day, often promising considerable sums of state funds for local projects.

(4) Article 38 (1) of the electoral law explicitly forbids public officials from taking a partisan role in the electoral process but there were a number of examples of officials of the Presidential Administration openly involved in the electoral process on behalf of President Yeltsin.¹⁴

Attention was also drawn to weaknesses in the electoral law, particularly articles allowing for absentee ballots to be cast without adequate safeguards. These provisions were used, for example, in what observers judged to be “excessive” steps taken to boost turnout.

The OSCE was also critical of the 1999 Duma election. The final statement included the following issues:

- Lack of discipline and ethics was rife among the participants.
- Russia’s civil code failed to provide sufficient and timely penalties for violations of the electoral code.
- Campaign expenditures regularly exceeded the legal limits.
- Executive authorities frequently interfered in the electoral process.
- Candidates from opposition parties were often prevented from arranging public meetings.
- Supporters of opposition parties were threatened with dismissals from employment.
- In a number of regions, broadcast media and regional editions of national newspapers had great difficulty expressing views critical of local power structures.
- In at least four regions, broadcasters and publishers lost their leases on premises controlled by the local administration, and some journalists lost their jobs; other measures included special tax investigations, administrative fines and criminal investigations.

¹⁴ OSCE/ODIHR, Presidential Election, 16 June and 3 July 1996, Final Report <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/16288>.



- Military personnel were encouraged to vote for the pro-Kremlin Unity Party, in clear violation of the electoral laws.
- Members of the electoral committees frequently were involved in actual campaigning.
- Finally, and most importantly, Russian state television, which alone reaches households across all of Russia, sustained scandalously libellous media attack on key opposition figures, especially Moscow Mayor Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Primakov, that carried over into the presidential campaign of January - March 2000.¹⁵

PACE reported that ‘commercial groupings and political circles had used their influence on certain media to mislead the voters.’ PACE concluded that the campaign was not fair, clean or honest.¹⁶ The European Council statement, however, welcomed the presidential elections as ‘a demonstration of Russia’s firm commitment to democracy’. The Council considered the elections had been successfully completed and expressed hope for an ‘even better basis for the continued development of the relations between the European Union and Russia.’¹⁷

ASSESSMENT OF THE YELTSIN PERIOD

Boris Yeltsin’s period in office was characterised by initial freedoms that were later curtailed partly because he manipulated the system to remain in power. While the Communist Party remained the largest party, there was a proliferation of smaller political parties based usually on a charismatic leader, such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky, rather than any detailed political programme. All the new parties found it very difficult to develop a nationwide presence. Most were funded by various economic interests. Corruption and disregard for the electoral law was evident from the mid 1990s. There remained considerable autonomy and powers with regional governors who resented any attempts at interference by Moscow. With help of a large international loan, and a clever and expensive media campaign organised and financed by oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky, Yeltsin managed to win a second term as president in elections that were reported as free but not fair. There is little doubt that the 1996 elections marked a turning point in how to manipulate the electorate and buy elections. Yeltsin may also be criticised for having started a new tradition; the selection of a presidential successor.

¹⁵ OSCE/ODIHR Elections to the State Duma 19 December 1999, Final Report - <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/16293>

¹⁶ Council of Europe – Doc. 8623 - Ad hoc Committee to observe the Russian presidential election (24 January 2000) - <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc00/edoc8623.htm>.

¹⁷ Council of the European Union - Florence European Council – Presidency Conclusions (21 and 22 June 1996) - http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/032a0002.htm.



The Putin years

Why Putin? Vladimir Putin came from obscurity to become first Director of the FSB, then Prime Minister, and then acting President after Yeltsin's sudden resignation on 31 December 1999. He had been an intelligence officer for the Soviet KGB for 16 years, and then assistant to Anatoly Sobchak, Mayor of St Petersburg. His rise was orchestrated by Boris Berezovsky, who, as noted above, had financed Yeltsin's election campaign. To the public Putin made himself known as the prime minister who took a tough line on Chechnya. He played a skilful role during his time as acting President in the first half of 2000, gaining broad support from regional leaders, the military and business tycoons.

Putin declared early in his first presidential term that he was in favour of changing the constitution to further strengthen the president's power. He also advocated an extension of the presidential term to seven years in office. On his first day in office as acting President, Putin signed a decree that pardoned Yeltsin and his family for any possible misdeeds and granted him total immunity from prosecution. Many Russians believe he was chosen specifically to perform that service.

RISE OF UNITED RUSSIA

United Russia was created through a merger of the Unity party and the Fatherland-All Russia Movement in April 2001. The first chairman was Boris Gryzlov (elected for two four year terms), followed by Vladimir Putin in April 2008. The party has local and regional offices in all of Russia's regions. Since its foundation United Russia has performed the role of the "party of power", ensuring support for the president's initiatives. It is essentially a broad coalition of national and regional political and economic interests. Presenting itself as a discussion platform where different ideological backgrounds can find a place, the party has a structure containing various political clubs and nationalistic think tanks, institutions of expertise and youth groups following the strategy and ideology of United Russia. One example is the Nashi, United Russia's youth support movement. Nashi members are trained to participate in demonstrations supporting the policies of the president and prime minister.

United Russia aims to improve Russia's economy by a mix of private enterprise and state controlled industries. In the Manifesto adapted in 2003 the party stated that it wanted to ensure "nationwide progress", aiming at being a party with majority support in all parts of the Russian Federation. However the party remains highly centralised and lacks a strong institutional position in the provinces. Despite the growing dominance in regional elections the regional leaders are not as powerful as the main figures in the Kremlin. The centralisation of the party's decisions and power provides the Kremlin with a mechanism by which governors or candidates for legislative elections are actually chosen. At the same time, a number of regional executives have shown a certain resistance to the party's dominance in the regions. Some claim that independence of United Russia is not in the Kremlin's interest, rather it cleverly uses the party as an instrument of hiding who is actually pulling the levers.



PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2000 - 2004

From 1 January 2000 until 7 May 2000, Vladimir Putin was acting President of the Russian Federation. He was elected President for the first time in 2000, in the midst of the extremely bloody Second Chechen War, receiving 52.9% of the vote and was re-elected four years later with 71% of the vote. In both elections most candidates were attached to a political party. Putin openly supported United Russia but did not at that time register as an United Russia candidate. During both election campaigns Vladimir Putin refrained from participating in public debates. In the 2000 presidential elections 11 candidates took part. The Communist Party leader Zyuganov was Putin's strongest opponent, receiving 29.2% of the votes. During the 2004 elections only six candidates were registered. The candidate of the Communist Party, Nikolay Kharitonov, came second with 13.7%, after incumbent President Putin gained 71.3%.

CHANGES DURING PUTIN'S PRESIDENCY

During Putin's presidency a considerable number of changes were pushed through in relation to electoral laws and media laws. Until the elections of 2003, Duma deputies were elected under a mixed system of plurality voting and proportional representation. In the elections for the single-member districts, party candidates were competing against individuals, or independents (*nezavismiye*). Most heads of the regions, presidents (of ethnic republics) and governors, were not connected to any party. Therefore, the constituency of the political parties in the regions was rather low during the development of the party system in the Russian Federation. Today the Duma deputies are elected solely by party list. This might have a positive effect on parties as they have to secure more voters in the regions. With no more competition from independents, those interested in being elected for the Duma must join a political party.

Other changes during the Putin presidency included:

- Amendments of the 2001 Law on Basic Guarantees in 2004, so that in order to receive a valid registration:
 - A political party is required to have at least 50,000 members (instead of 10,000);
 - A political party is required to have branches in no less than half of the 83 federation subjects;
- Tightened control over media and repression for the emergence of critical media and reporters.
- Immediately after the Beslan school massacre, Putin announced that regional leaders would be appointed rather than elected to the Federation Council, and governors lost their collective veto over federal policies toward the regions.
- A party is required to get an official registration in order to participate in the federal parliamentary elections. Political parties are required to pass a 7% (instead of 5%) threshold to be elected to the State Duma.



- Parties are no longer allowed to form election blocs as to receive seats in the State Duma.
- The reforms eliminated the – highly popular - possibility of a vote ‘against all candidates’ on the ballot paper.
- Reduction of the minimum number of parties to be represented in the State Duma from four to two.

While many governors before the 2005 amendments were either independent or affiliated to a smaller party in the region, by May 2008 all regions were governed by United Russia supporters. The fact that the Kremlin selected candidates to become regional governors made it essential for anyone seeking such a position to become a member of United Russia.

CONTROL OF THE MEDIA

While freedom of the mass media survived during Yeltsin’s presidency, President Putin quickly reduced the freedom for independent television media to exist, using the war in Chechnya as an excuse. Today literally all (national) television networks are state owned and controlled or are economically and politically dependent on the government. Furthermore the government created the technical system called “System for Operative Investigative Activities” (SORM), a government programme to monitor e-mail and other electronic forms of communication. The internet remains free so far but the vast majority of the population, especially in the regions have no or very limited access to the internet or a variety of sources of opinion.¹⁸ The relatively free central newspapers and magazines have little circulation outside the largest cities. Anti-media activities, violence and even murder of government critical journalists have been evident in the past 10 years.¹⁹ Additionally a new media project which commenced in May 2009 ensures that regional media outlets will be provided information on international and domestic issues by the news agencies RIA Novosti and Interfax, both state-controlled.²⁰ The media concentrate on promoting the actions and policies of the government. Opposition parties and activists are either ignored or denigrated in the media.

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

In 2000, the PACE observers delegation concluded that ‘the unequal access to television was one of the main reasons for a degree of unfairness of the campaign’ and that ‘independent media have come under increasing pressure and that media in general, be they state-owned or private, failed to a large extent to provide impartial information about the election campaign and candidates.’²¹

¹⁸ Reporters without borders, 2009.

¹⁹ Politkovskaya, A. & Crowfoot, J, 2001.

²⁰ Jonsson, A, et. al, 2009, p. 69.

²¹ Council of Europe – Doc. 8693 - Ad hoc Committee to observe the Russian presidential election (26 March 2000), Chapter IV, paragraph 54 - <http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc00/edoc8693.htm>.



PACE also criticised the requirement to collect two million signatures to register as a candidate as an “unreasonable hurdle”.

The OSCE in 2004 reported that “the election process overall did not adequately reflect principles necessary for a healthy democratic election process: essential elements of the OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards for democratic elections, such as a vibrant political discourse and meaningful pluralism, were lacking. The election process failed to meet important commitments concerning treatment by the state-controlled media on a non-discriminatory basis, and secrecy of the ballot.”²² The OSCE report furthermore stated that the state-controlled media had failed to meet its legal obligation to provide equal treatment to all candidates, instead there had been particularly favourable screening of Putin. Access to primetime programmes and current affairs programmes on state-controlled broadcasters had been limited for other candidates. Observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States, however, reported the election as “free, democratic and fair.”²³

On 17 March 2004 the EU congratulated President Putin in a statement on winning a second term as President of the Russian Federation. The EU considered the high turnout (61%) as a signal for a strong mandate for Putin’s second term. The EU referred to the positive findings of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) and praised the organisation and administration of the elections. The statement also contained a critical note towards the findings of the IEOM concerning the state controlled media being clearly biased in favour of the incumbent. The EU called on Russia to improve its standards to the level of the Council of Europe and OSCE, including a free media. The statement furthermore referred to President Putin’s alleged commitment to continue building and strengthening a multi-party system.²⁴

PACE issued a report in 2005, focusing on the obligations and commitments the Russian Federation made in 1996 when it joined the Council of Europe. The report criticised the package of reforms that were introduced in the autumn of 2004 leading to the vertical reinforcement of power, stating that these developments undermined the system of checks and balances. The report further expressed concern about a possible restriction of political competition caused by changes in the legislation concerning the elections to the Duma and the organisation of political parties. ‘The significantly higher electoral threshold (7%), the prohibition of electoral coalitions and the reduction, from four to two, of the minimum number of parties to be represented in the lower chamber, as well as new, restrictive rules for parties entitled to contest Duma elections, will significantly raise

²² OSCE - Presidential Election, 14 March 2004 , OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, p. 1 - <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/33101>.

²³ <http://lenta.ru/vybory/2004/03/15/observers/> (accessed 8 February).

²⁴ 7459/04 (Presse 86) ‘Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Presidential elections in Russia’ - 17 March 2004 <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/04/st07/st07459.en04.pdf>.



the entry barrier to the parliament, in clear favour of the parties already represented in the current Duma.’²⁵

The 2007 legislative elections, and the 2008 presidential elections, where only a limited number of OSCE observers were present, were reported as not fair. The joint statement of the OSCE and PACE about the 2007 legislative elections declared: ‘In general, the elections were well organised and observers noticed significant technical improvements. However, they took place in an atmosphere which seriously limited political competition and with frequent abuse of administrative resources, media coverage strongly in favour of the ruling party, and an election code whose cumulative effect hindered political pluralism. There was not a level political playing field in Russia in 2007.’²⁶ Moreover, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) did not find an agreement with the authorities upon sending 20 experts and 50 observers to be present before and during the Duma Elections. ODIHR declared that entry visas for the observers had continuously been denied. Due to the non co-operative position of the Russian authorities ODIHR stated it could not fulfil its mandate.²⁷

Reuters reported in Brussels on 4 December 2007 that the EU "was in disarray ... over Russia's widely criticized parliamentary election after French President Nicolas Sarkozy telephoned ... Putin to congratulate him. The French leader's gesture put him at odds with close ally Germany ... and most other EU governments," which question the legitimacy of the vote. The news agency added that "after two days of wrangling over the wording, the EU's Portuguese presidency issued a mild rebuke over the conduct of the election." The statement said that "the EU regrets ... that there were many reports and allegations of media restrictions as well as harassment of opposition parties and [nongovernmental organizations] in the run-up to the elections and on election day, and that procedures during the electoral campaign did not meet international standards and commitments voluntarily assumed by Moscow. The EU hopes that investigations will clarify the accuracy of these allegations." On December 4, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi likewise congratulated Putin on his victory in the course of a telephone conversation, Interfax reported.²⁸

ASSESSMENT OF PUTIN'S PRESIDENCY

There was a significant curtailment of basic freedoms during Putin's years in the Kremlin. The media was muzzled, civil society restricted and obstacles placed in the way of any political movement that was critical of the Kremlin. These developments were also apparent in the political

²⁵ Council of Europe - Resolution 1455 (2005) - On the honouring of obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation made in 1996, paragraph 7 -

<http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?link=/documents/adoptedtext/ta05/eres1455.htm>.

²⁶ Council of Europe – Press Release – 1799 (2007) Russian Duma elections ‘not held on a level playing field’, say parliamentary observers. - <http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Press/StopPressView.asp?ID=1979>

²⁷ Press Release ‘ODIHR unable to observer Russian Duma elections’ (16 November 2007) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/49175>.

²⁸ ‘Putin says Iran's nuclear program should be transparent.’ *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Newslines*, 5 December, 2007 - <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144007.html>, (accessed 9 February 2011).



arena where the Presidential administration reinforced its position as the dominant political force in Russia. The system was manipulated to promote the party in power. The right to elect regional governors was removed and the Duma became little more than a rubber stamp for Kremlin policies. Despite international organisations and NGOs reporting a reversal of Russia's democratisation, Putin's popularity on a national level has been consistently high. Since Putin came to office, public approval ran on average at 72.3%, never falling under 60% - and in November 2006, approval of Putin was 81%. The achievement of stability, dependability and a modest standard of living, even though aggregate figures for real income growth do not correctly reflect the increasing social inequalities and regional differences, are, and were, the public's core expectations of their President, and for most of them, these expectations have been fulfilled. For this reason, in May 2006, some 59% of Russians were for a change to the constitution that would allow Putin to stand as a candidate in the 2008 presidential elections. Satisfaction with Putin's presidency and a desire for stability are the main characteristics of majority Russian public opinion.²⁹ According to one analyst this can be explained by several factors: an improvement in the general economic climate in Russia; Putin's domination of the media, bordering on the cult of personality; the lack of an alternative; and the crack down on the opposition.³⁰

Medvedev's Presidency

In 2007 Dmitry Medvedev was handpicked by Putin to succeed him as President of the Russian Federation in 2008. The two men were friends and business colleagues in their early careers in St. Petersburg. Soon afterwards United Russia formally nominated Medvedev as their candidate in a near unanimous decision. On 11 December 2007, Medvedev declared that if elected, he would ask Putin to serve as his Prime Minister. In the 2008 presidential elections Medvedev won 70.3% of votes with a turnout of over 69.8% of registered voters and became the new President of the Russian Federation. The fairness of the election was disputed, with official monitoring groups giving conflicting reports. Some reported that the election was free and fair, while others reported that not all candidates had equal media coverage and that Kremlin opposition was treated unfairly. Monitoring groups found a number of other irregularities, but made no reports of fraud or ballot stuffing. Most agreed that the results reflected the will of the people.

Contrary to his predecessor, whose popularity has been linked to the economic growth during his presidency, Medvedev took office in a period of economic crisis. He also inherited a number of social and economic problems that were hindering Russia's development. In several speeches as presidential candidate Medvedev had criticised problems such as the absence of independent courts and legal culture, and what he described as "legal nihilism"; the endemic corruption of Russian society including the state administration; the weakness of "civil society", the weakness of the political party system, and democratic institutions at the local and regional level. Medvedev did not mention the political passivity of the population, nor the deeply-rooted distrust of public institutions.

²⁹ Mangott, G., 2007, p. 15.

³⁰ Lilia Shevtsova speaking the ALDE hearing in the European Parliament on 9 February 2011.



In 2009 he attempted to launch a modernisation policy of which the basic ideas were formulated in an article published on the internet version of *Gazeta* on 10 September 2009, called “Russia, forward!”³¹ Recent comments have suggested that while Putin is the primary exponent of TV media, Medvedev has made the internet his own. However, the end of Medvedev’s third year in office is approaching, but promises of modernisation have yet to be realised. Many of Medvedev’s commands, *porucheniye*, are ignored by officials and by the parliament. Instead of extensive, structural reforms in the electoral legislation, he has proposed some small changes that would facilitate access for smaller parties to representative bodies at the regional and local levels. At the same time, Medvedev has done little to help the development of a civil society or help free the media from state control.

ELECTORAL CHANGES UNDER MEDVEDEV

In December 2008 President Medvedev, with Putin’s full support and probably on Putin’s initiative, pushed through an amendment to the 1993 Constitution extending the presidential term from four to six years and lengthening Duma terms from four to five years. He also introduced a number of other minor reforms including allowing parties that were not represented in the Duma and regional parliaments to participate once a year in the plenary meetings of the legislative committees. He further suggested reducing the membership requirement to 40,000 and lowering the threshold to 5%, or allowing parties with 5 – 7% of the votes to have one or two representatives in the Duma. On these last suggestions no legislation has been introduced so far.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The latest regional elections in March and October 2010 were for the most part dominated by United Russia, which was able to draw on substantial government resources. Despite this the party struggled to achieve majorities in several cities including Kaliningrad and Irkutsk. The prospects for the Duma elections in December 2011 are likely to reflect the outcome of these latest regional elections. Current polls show that only some 36% of the electorate are ready to support United Russia. There have been modest if uneven improvements for opposition groups. The rise of a blogger community, car and housing protest associations and the astonishing coalition of protest groups which have united, with the help of Facebook, Live Journal and Twitter, against the building of the highway through Khimki forest are examples of increasing protest voices in public life.³²

ASSESSMENT OF MEDVEDEV’S PRESIDENCY

Medvedev came to office with opinion divided as to whether he would simply be ‘Putin’s puppet’ or would be able to carve out his own power base. The optimists pinned their hopes on the fact that he had a very different background to Putin; unlike Putin who was a KGB officer, he was a

³¹Russian version available at http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2009/09/10_a_3258568.shtml.

English version available at <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/298>.

³² Bowring, B., 2010.



university teacher. But three years in office have shown who pulls the strings on all major decisions. Medvedev has talked much about the need to tackle ‘legal nihilism’ and corruption. There have been few improvements to the rule of law, as was shown by the December 2010 verdict and sentence on Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Planton Lebedev. Although he has spoken often about the damaging effects of the widespread corruption in Russia, and announced a series of measures to combat corruption, the results have been minimal. He has also attempted to press politicians to disclose their assets but with limited success. Nor has he been able to make much progress with the modernisation agenda. The more conservative groups around Putin who prefer a reinforcement of the status quo rather than any fundamental reforms seem to have the upper hand.

It remains to be seen whether Putin or Medvedev will stand for the presidency in 2012. It can be argued that Medvedev’s appointment was not a succession to Putin but a twist of institutional machinery. The twist would make it possible to Putin to stay on in a revamped position of head of government and leader of the party of power.³³

Political parties and electoral support

RUSSIA’S PARTY SYSTEM

Until recently, the Russian party system as it has evolved during the past 20 years has been unstable, with a continuous change of parties and party labels. Russia does not have a multi-party system of the kind to be found in EU member states, but it has developed its own system. In a multi-party-system, as a rule, parties bring forward candidates for leadership positions. In Russia access to the highest echelons is achieved by being co-opted by those who hold superior rank in the state apparatus, possibly, but not necessarily, after a period of ‘outplacement’ in a party-position perhaps coupled with membership of the legislative branch of government via the party of power. The system is thus inherently non transparent with political disputes fought out behind closed doors. There is no real accountability as political parties are unable to play the role of critical opposition in normal democratic countries.

LAW ON POLITICAL PARTIES

The key legislation governing the formation and registration of political parties in Russia is the Federal Law “On political parties,” of 11 July 2001, No.95 FZ.³⁴ This law defined a political party as an organization that consistently takes part in elections, has a membership of at least 10,000 and branches in at least 50 regions, with each branch having a membership of at least 100. An amended version of the law which came into force at the beginning of January 2006 requires each political party to have a minimum of 50,000 members and more than 45 regional branches with a minimum membership of 500 each.

³³ Oversloot, H. & Verheul. R., 2006, p. 400.

³⁴ English translation at http://www.medialaw.ru/e_pages/laws/russian/polit-part.htm (accessed on 8 February 2011).



FUNDING OF PARTIES

Parties have found it difficult to recruit paid members. Instead they have always been dependent on external contributions mainly from industrial and financial groups. Before all media was subjected to state control, some parties were also able to have specific media access. The parties of power, additionally, were able to use the public apparatus as an organisational resource. Moreover they had easier access to public media and business contacts. In particular on the regional level this was useful.³⁵ Although the law requires transparency as to financial income, accurate and up-to-date figures for political parties are often difficult to obtain.

The Russian daily *Vedomosti* recently reported that United Russia receives large contributions from different sources.³⁶ According to official information, during the period 2005-2009 United Russia collected about US \$16.7 million in party dues, about US \$54 million from the state budget, and more than US \$200 million from private donors. The list of the main donors of the United Russia for the five past years includes the metallurgical giant NLMK, owned by Vladimir Lisin; a poultry farm owned by the son of former Minister of Fuel and Energy Victor Kalyuzhny; the Moscow developer MTZ Rubin, the Eurocement Group, the mining and metals company Mechel, plus Gazprom, Svyazinvest, Severstal Group and the oilfield service company Geotech.³⁷

In the discussion on amending the law on parties, the question of state funding was also raised. Before the 2004 amendments, electoral associations were entitled to modest compensation of their campaign expenses. The previous party law envisaged permanent state funding for parties that obtained at least 3% of the list vote in Duma elections or had at least single-member district candidates elected. Today, oligarchs and large business structures, even state-owned companies such as Gazprom, sponsor political parties. According to a recent report by the Swedish Defence Ministry it is not easy to determine whether state funding occurs. The same report comments that sponsorship of political parties is not necessarily voluntary. For example a medium-size business owner close to Moscow was asked for money from local leaders of both United Russian and Just Russia.³⁸ According to a Council of Europe report the Russian Federation still lacks proper regulation regulating party financing. Donations by foreigners or stateless persons are prohibited, and also donations by a Russian entity of which more than 30% of its capital is controlled by foreigners.³⁹

³⁵ Hadenius, A., 2002, p. 44.

³⁶ 'Businesses to Donate Funds to Russian Political Party in Power' available at <http://russia-briefing.com/news/businesses-to-donate-funds-to-russian-political-party-in-power.html/> (accessed on 8 February 2011).

³⁷ 'Businesses to Donate Funds to Russian Political Party in Power' available at <http://russia-briefing.com/news/businesses-to-donate-funds-to-russian-political-party-in-power.html/> (accessed on 8 February 2011).

³⁸ FOI-R—2473—SE, Holmberg, C., 2008., pp. 56-7.

³⁹ Election law art. 62 (Russian Federation) in Council of Europe - Doc. 9077 – Report of Political Affairs Committee 'Financing of political parties' (4 May 2001), Chapter III, paragraph 30.



ROLE OF PARTIES

Oversloot and Verheul suggest that ‘It is the government, or rather the administration – the “true” party of power, with its domain first of all in the executive branch – that “defines” the “ruling party”, and not the other way around.’⁴⁰ A high degree of “personalism” has also played a part in most parties which are usually controlled by the leader and a select elite. This has been observed in the case of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and may well be a trait common to post-Soviet states.⁴¹ Ensuring support and accountability from below has not been a main priority for most parties. Nevertheless surveys have shown that party supporters have no trouble in orienting themselves on the party map. Russian parties thus function well as political labels. United Russia uses this knowledge to set up a differential organisational structure in order to receive support from as wide a range of voters as possible.

The Russian media has played a large role in political persuasion among voters. The unstable party system and weak partisan attachment provided the media more space for this kind of persuasion. As all TV channels are under full state control, United Russia profited strongly from direct access to media channels for the 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections.⁴² Until the beginning of the 2000s Russia’s political parties were very fractured and institutionalised. In particular the frequent change of party labels and the merging of various parties into wider platforms reduced the clarity of party ideology. As a consequence, parties failed to aggregate social interests, represent specific constituencies, structure votes during elections, or serve as intermediaries between state and society. After the 2003 parliamentary elections it became evident that party competition would for the next elections concentrate on two parties, United Russia and the Communist Party. Research has also made clear that contrary to the 1990s, voters no longer choose parties based solely on the personalities of party leaders. Rather voters are choosing parties based on assessments of economic performance and a general evaluation of the incumbent president.⁴³

A number of issues have to be taken into account when looking at the stability of electoral support. The number of parties has varied from 1993 to 2007. The Communist Party is the only party that passed the 5–7% threshold for all parliamentary elections. Parties have appeared and disappeared at regular intervals. Until the rise of United Russia, and the requirement of a minimum number of members for party registration, party membership was not a common feature in Russian politics. In the beginning of the 2000s the Communist Party claimed the highest number of members – 500,000, while other parties remained vague about their figures. In general parties were also facing low participation by party activities. Another problem for most parties, with the Communist Party as the exception, was the question on how to obtain a nation wide presence and support. Many parties lacked support in regional, rural areas and were thus dependent on media attention, which was limited for small parties. United Russia has been the most successful in building a nation-wide structure and organisation.

⁴⁰ Oversloot, H. & Verheul, R., 2006, p. 400.

⁴¹ Ishiyama, J., 2008.

⁴² Myagkov, M., 2009.

⁴³ Treisman, D., 2010, p. 6.



Research conducted from 2000 to 2004 in Russia shows that party attachment did foster political participation, but only participation connected to elections. It did not necessarily encourage people to get actively involved in political organisation, petitions or demonstrations. Russians have relatively low levels of party activity, protest activity, and even consumer participation. It appears that most Russians do not wish to participate because they do not believe that through collective action they can affect outcomes. More recently, there are signs that this behaviour is changing. Indeed, each manifestation of protest appears to exacerbate the regime's "Orange paranoia": the – to date ungrounded – fear that Russia could go the way of Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia or Egypt.

Regarding the social composition of party voters, the Communist Party has mainly been supported by people with low incomes and low levels of education, especially pensioners. Its rather elderly members tend to live in medium-sized towns and have limited access to organisational networks. Supporters of the Liberal Democrats show similar characteristics, and are moreover primarily male. Right Forces and Fatherland-All Russia both receive support from a larger group of well-educated people, mainly female, mostly living in big cities with access to large organisational networks. Right Forces stood out as receiving support from younger voters but also from urban professionals with high incomes, which was also the case for Fatherland-All Russia. Voters for Unity were put on an average scale, though most of its supporters seemed to be earning more than average and having access to a large organisational network.⁴⁴

In 2000 Stoner-Weiss found that party factions in Russia were active and somewhat enduring within the State Duma. At the same time this research showed that there was a failure of parties to have significantly penetrated the political institutions of most of Russia's (then) 89 regions. The representation of national parties in both regional legislatures and executives was, before the rise of United Russia, strikingly low. Stoner-Weiss argued that the reason for the slow penetration of politics in the periphery was that regional political elites worked against party development in order to control the pace and scope of political inclusion and to protect their early transitional winnings. In particular in the 1990s many all-Russian parties (both relatively old and new) were focused on a single personality and should the leader abandon the party, it would likely dissolve. Nonetheless, there is also evidence of the persistence of older parties, like Yabloko and the KPRF in particular, that have consistently run candidates in national legislative and presidential elections since 1993. These organizations appear bigger than their leaders. Stoner-Weiss warned that the fleeting existence of many of political parties, and the fluidity of elite membership in them, would work against deep institutionalization of the Russian party system. This Report associates itself with these conclusions.⁴⁵

Voter turnout

Voting is not obligatory in the Russian Federation. The voter turnout for both the executive and legislative elections has been relatively stable in the Russian Federation in the past 20 years. The

⁴⁴ Hadenius, A., 2002.

⁴⁵ Stoner-Weiss, K., 2000.



lowest turnout was for the constitution election in 1993, when only 54.8% of the registered decided to vote. According to the Council of Europe, in general, in rural areas the turnout rate is higher than in urban areas (in the 1995 election 70% and 61% respectively). The local authorities' control over the population is much stronger in rural areas and in the called national republics. The Council of Europe also observed an unusual high turnout (average more than 90%) in five North Caucasus republics during the 2004 presidential elections.⁴⁶

Since 2007 the minimum turnout of 50% for presidential and 25% for Duma of the registered electorate was abolished. The turnout for presidential elections has ranged between 69.6% (1996 and 2008) and 64.39% (2004). In general the turnout for presidential elections is higher. The support for Vladimir Putin in 2004 was much higher than four years earlier. While he received 52.94% in 2000, in 2004 71.3% of the electorate voted for him. Dmitry Medvedev received the same percentage of votes in 2008.

Research concerning the 2000 presidential elections showed an interesting trend. Strong support for Vladimir Putin was also evident among those supporting a party other than United Russia. Among those who had supported the Liberal Democrats in the Duma, Putin obtained 55% of the vote, as against 36% for the party leader. The corresponding figures for Yabloko were 61% and 34%. Among adherents of the Communist Party, 41% supported Putin, and 55% the party leader. The proportion supporting the party leader was higher among those stating a party identification. For the Communist Party the figure was 60% for the leader, 35% for Putin; for the Liberal Democrats it was 42% and 47% for Putin; and for Yabloko it was 39% and 57% for Putin.⁴⁷

Annex II gives a more detailed overview of the parties that have taken part in the legislative elections during the past. Annex III contains a number of Levada surveys that address questions concerning Russia's electoral situation.

Voter attitudes

ON POLITICAL OPPOSITION

In November 2010 the Levada Centre asked the question whether Russia needs an opposition now. Of its respondents 55% answered 'yes', 16% 'no', while 29% declared they had difficulty answering the question. Yearly polls over the past seven years show that there is steady support for the importance of a political opposition. While most Russians would welcome an opposition there is a significant minority opposed to any opposition parties. Tables 9 to 15 give an overview of public opinion towards the main political parties. United Russia stands out with the highest percentage of a positive reply (59%).

⁴⁶ Council of Europe – Doc. 10150 – Ad hoc Committee to observe the Presidential election in the Russian Federation (14 March 2004) -

<http://assembly.coe.int/main.asp?Link=/documents/workingdocs/doc04/edoc10150.htm>.

⁴⁷ Hadenius, A., 2002, p. 29.



ON ELECTORAL RULES

Since the abolition of the direct elections for governors the Levada Centre has issued several polls. Four polls between June 2008 and July 2010 show that the majority would prefer governors directly elected rather than appointed by the President, with outcomes ranging from 54% (January 2010) to 63% (June 2008). Regarding lowering the 7% threshold for parties to enter the Duma, polls show that there is quite an even division among those in favour, those against and those who find the question difficult to answer (Table 5).

ON A PERSONAL CULT OF PUTIN

Since 2006 there is an obvious upward trend in public opinion as to the existence of a public cult of Vladimir Putin. While in 2006 only 10% answered yes to the question whether they believed there was a personal cult of Vladimir Putin, in July 2010 this figure had risen to 27%. Additionally 28% believed that the prerequisites for such a cult were there but that it was not obvious yet (Table 7).

International reaction

During the 1990s international reactions following Russian elections were fairly positive and optimistic about democratic development despite flaws in the 1996 elections. Since Vladimir Putin became President there has been increasing international criticism of the conduct of Russian elections. A joint delegation from the PACE and the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE observed the December 2007 legislative elections with 70 parliamentarians. They concluded that the elections were not fair and had failed to meet many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections. The PACE report stated that “the extensive abuse of administrative resources (state infrastructure, funds and personnel on public payroll) on behalf of United Russia is a clear violation of paragraph 1,2,3 of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters”. Various international human rights organisations were very critical about elections that took place in 2007 and 2008. On 28 February 2008 Amnesty International published a report in which it expressed its concerns relating to the exercise of the rights of freedoms of expression, association and assembly in the Russian Federation. In the report it was furthermore stated that all three fundamental rights had been curtailed in previous years.⁴⁸

Dmitry Medvedev’s election to president was welcomed by the European Commission. President Barroso stated that he was convinced that under President Medvedev the Russian Federation and the European Union would consolidate and develop their strategic partnership. While the Commission had earlier criticised the absence of proper monitoring of the elections, Barroso said he was looking for more engagement with Russia on issues as media freedom, democracy and freedom of assembly. Criticism of the EU’s weak response to election irregularities has often been defended with the argument of keeping the door open to dialogue.⁴⁹ Most European states also refrained from openly criticising Russia’s presidential elections. The UK and Italy followed the EU in

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, 2008, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Grajewski, M., 2008.



sending congratulations. Germany and France stated that despite the victory of Medvedev seeming to reflect the will of the Russian population, they did not consider the election met democratic standards.⁵⁰

The European Parliament had joined the OSCE in November 2007 in not sending any observers to the elections due to the restrictions that had been placed on the Vienna-based human rights watchdog. Several MEPs expressed concerns in relation to the elections. Some were critical towards the general process of the elections, but also hoped for ‘a more liberal approach by Russia in foreign affairs, promotion of democracy, respect for human rights, the fight against corruption and improvement in the quality of life of the Russian people’⁵¹ A resolution adopted by the European Parliament 13 March 2008 repeated certain concerns that were brought up by various MEPs after the elections, but also stated that it “welcomed the stated commitment by the newly elected President of Russia to guarantee the rule of law and democracy, and expresses the hope that he will give priority to the deepening of relations with the European Union.”⁵²

The regular critical statements by the OSCE about Russia’s electoral process are one main reason why Moscow dislikes that body and seeks to minimise its oversight of elections.

Conclusion

The conclusion to this Report starts with the views of two highly qualified Russian politicians. Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov has recently commented:

‘The success of economic modernization in Russia depends to a large extent on the creation of the kind of political party system that would help the authorities to avoid erroneous decisions. A characteristic feature of such a system is party pluralism. Its normal development in Russia is being obstructed by two factors. These are ruthless control from above directing the processes of party organizational development; and the administrative clout that the strongest of the parties, United Russia, enjoys to an incomparably greater extent than other parties...; the creation of a mono-centric party and state system, even if there are many parties in the political arena, blocks the democratic process.’⁵³

Former President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, has also commented:

‘Russia will only advance with confidence if it follows a democratic path. Recently, there have been a number of setbacks in this regard. The democratic process has lost momentum; in more ways than one, it has been rolled back. All major decisions are taken

⁵⁰ Stott, M., 2008.

⁵¹ European Parliament, Press Release, *Russian delegation MEPs give Medvedev a guarded welcome*, 4 March 2008, available at - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20080229STO22574+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN> (accessed 11 February 2011).

⁵² European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2008 on Russia (Texts adopted :P6_TA(2008)0105): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0105+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>.

⁵³ Primakov, Y., 2010.



by the executive branch; parliament just gives formal approval. The independence of the courts has been thrown into question. We do not have a party system that would enable a real majority to win while also taking the minority opinion into account and allowing an active opposition. There is a growing feeling that the government is afraid of civil society and would like to control everything.⁵⁴

This study concurs with these strong statements by former leaders, and shows that Russia is far from being a fully functioning democracy. Under the influence of Vladimir Putin, Russia has become increasingly authoritarian. The security services are arguably more powerful than they were under the communist system.⁵⁵ Corruption is endemic, as President Medvedev himself has pointed out. The broadcast media are effectively controlled by the government although the internet remains free for the present. Journalists are intimidated from carrying out any serious investigative reporting or criticism of senior government figures. The electoral system is manipulated to ensure maintenance of the status quo. It is difficult and often dangerous to engage in political protest activities. Organising a referendum would require the collection of two million signatures, an almost impossible task.

Political parties have emerged and died with great frequency. Indeed, the only political parties in existence through the whole period under review are the KPRF (Communist Party of the Russian Federation) and the LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia), and these are now the only parties apart from United Russia represented in the State Duma. Attempts at forming a social democratic or free-market liberal opposition party have all foundered, sabotaged mostly by internal disputes and personal egotistical squabbles. As this report is written, yet another party has appeared, the “Party of People’s Freedom” (PARNAS), led by Mikhail Kasyanov, Boris Nemtsov, and Vladimir Ryzhkov, who have agreed to unite their respective parties. Yabloko, however, now under Sergei Mitrokhin, has refused to take part in the new party: this is consistent with Yabloko’s policy since its inception of “going it alone”. It remains to be seen whether this new formation has any greater success. The Kremlin has manipulated the political system to favour United Russia which has become the dominant political party. Opinion polls show that United Russia remains popular as a political party and the regional elections in 2010 have probably only anchored its presence nation wide. All but one regional assembly is controlled by United Russia.

Professor Darrell Slider has recently⁵⁶ argued that:

The Kremlin has no interest in creating a truly independent political party with the structures and mechanisms needed to become more fully functional and capable of enforcing its own internal discipline. Such a party would reduce the opportunities for ‘manual control’ (*ruchnoe upravlenie*) – the discretionary intervention that typifies post-Soviet Russian politics. In the present system the Kremlin has the ability to intervene in any decision it chooses, and compromise or accept the positions of other players only when

⁵⁴ Gorbachev, M., 2010.

⁵⁵ Soldatov, A. & Borogan, I., 2009.

⁵⁶ Slider, A., 2010, p. 272-3.



there is no alternative. In this process the United Russia party can sometimes be a useful instrument or it can provide a curtain behind which the Kremlin can pull the levers.

The author of this report agrees entirely with his assessment. Professor Slider continues:

A brief experiment in within-system elite competition on a party basis was conducted in many regions in 2006–7 through the formation of a ‘loyal’ alternative party of power, Just Russia (or Fair Russia). The new party attracted a number of disaffected regional elites, including many who had been members of United Russia. The experiment with Just Russia ended badly... The Kremlin’s efforts to destroy an emerging multiparty system have paradoxically had a negative impact on the development of United Russia as a dominant party. Elite conflicts in the regions now must be played out within the party, since it is the only permissible arena on the political landscape.

The Russian political system is thus inherently non transparent with political disputes fought out behind closed doors. There is no real accountability as political parties are supposed to support not criticise the government. The absence of a free media is also a major factor in reducing any opposition voices. It is thus extremely unlikely that the Duma and Presidential elections scheduled within the next thirteen months will lead to any major changes. Vladimir Putin has complete control of United Russia, which due to control of the media and financing can once again expect to be the largest party in the Duma.

At this stage there has been no decision on whether Vladimir Putin or Dmitry Medvedev will be the presidential candidate. The reality is that it hardly matters as Vladimir Putin in fact controls power in Russia. Indeed, the authoritative Russian scholar Olga Kryshtanovskaya, the head of the Center for the Study of Elites at the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Russian Federation, has in an interview in February 2011⁵⁷ provided strong evidence that people loyal to Vladimir Putin occupy 73 of the 75 “key positions” in the Russian state, a number that means only two are primarily loyal to Dmitry Medvedev. Her interview is summarised by the analyst Paul Goble as follows:⁵⁸

This is a balance that gives Putin the whip hand in making arrangements for the future... Under Boris Yeltsin, the president directly led the *siloviki*, but now part of the functions of control of the force agencies have been transferred to Vice Prime Minister Ivanov. That is, they have been shifted “even not to Prime Minister Putin but still lower down the power vertical.” Putin’s people still run the *siloviki*, she says, but she adds that in her view, “Putin has decided to put them in the place which they occupied before his presidency – as commissars attached to a commander, people who play a second-level role in our political system. This is the position, by the way, they occupied in Soviet times.”

⁵⁷ “Putin returns, like a Mafia don” *Svobodnaya Pressa (Free Press)* (accessed 11 February 2011) at <http://svpressa.ru/politic/article/38451/>.

⁵⁸ <http://windowoneurasia.blogspot.com/>.



Political parties, even 'spoiler parties' like Just Russia are essentially created and governed from above. The current political system makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to challenge the power elite. One major consequence of an unchanging elite staying in power through elections which are clearly manipulated is that the general population lose trust in the electoral process. This in turn could lead to situation where there are not only no checks and balances in the political system but also a system open to extremism. This is perhaps the most worrying scenario as regards the future of Russia.



Annex I: Presidential Election Results 1991-2008

Russian Presidential Election Results 2 March 2008

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominated Parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Dmitry Medvedev	United Russia, Fair Russia, Russian Ecological Party – “The Greens” and Civilian Power	52 530 712	71.25
Gennady Zyuganov	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF)	13 243 550	17.96
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	6 988 510	9.48
Andrey Bogdanov	Democratic Party of Russia	968 344	1.31
Invalid ballots		1 015 533	0.9
Total turnout		74 746 649	69.7

Russian Presidential Election Results 14 March 2004

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominating Parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Vladimir Putin	None – but supported by United Russia	49 565 238	71.31
Nikolay Kharitonov	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) (candidate member of Agrarian Party of Russia)	9 513 313	13.69
Sergey Glazyev	None – but supported by Rodina	2 850 063	4.10
Irina Khakamada		2 671 313	3.84
Oleg Malyshev	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	1 405 315	2.02
Sergey Mironov	Russian Party of Life	524 324	0.75
Against all		2 396 216	3.45
Invalid ballots		578 824	0.5
Total turnout		69 504 609	64.3

Russian Presidential Elections Results 26 March 2000

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominating parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Vladimir Putin		39 740 467	52.94
Gennady Zyuganov	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	21 928 468	29.21
Grigory Yavlinsky	Yabloko	4 351 450	5.80
Aman Tuleyev		2 217 364	3.84
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	2 026 509	2.70
Konstantin Titov		1 107 269	1.47
Ella Pamfilova	For civil dignity	758 967	1.01
Stanislav Govorukhin		328 723	0.44
Yury Skuratov		319 189	0.43
Alexey Podberezkin		98 177	0.13
Umar Dzhabrailov		78 498	0.10
Against all		1 414 673	1.88
Invalid ballots		701 003	0.6
Total turnout		75 070 776	68.6



Presidential Election Results 3 July 1996 (second round)

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominating parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Boris Yeltsin		40 203 948	53.8
Gennady Zyuganov	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	30 102 288	40.3
Against all		3 604 462	4.8
Invalid ballots		780 692	1.0
Total turnout		74 791 290	68.8

Presidential Election Results 16 June 1996 (first round)

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominating parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Boris Yeltsin		26 665 495	35.8
Gennady Zyuganov	Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)	24 211 686	32.5
Alexander Lebed		10 974 736	14.7
Grigory Yavlinsky	Yabloko	5 550 752	7.4
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	4 311 479	5.8
Svyatoslav Fyodorov	Workers Self-Government Party (PST)	669 158	0.9
Mikhail Gorbachev		386 069	0.5
Martin Shakkum	Socialist People's Party of Russia	277 068	0.4
Yury Vlasov	People's Party	141 282	0.2
Vladimir Bryntsalov	Russian Socialist Party	123 065	0.2
Aman Tuleyev			
Against all		1 163 921	1.6
Invalid ballots		1 072 120	1.1
Total turnout		75 587 139	69.7

Russian Presidential Election Results 12 June 1991

<i>Candidates</i>	<i>Nominating parties</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Boris Yeltsin/ Alexander Rutskoy	Democratic Party of Russia	45 552 041	57.30
Nikolay Ryzhkov/ Boris Gromov	Communist Party of the Soviet Union	13 359 335	16.85
Alexander Lebed		10 974 736	14.5
Grigory Yavlinsky	Yabloko	5 550 752	7.3
Vladimir Zhirinovskiy/Andrey Zavidiya	Liberal Democratic Party of Soviet Union	6 211 007	7.81
Aman Tuleyev/Viktor Bocharov		5 417 464	6.85
Albert Makashov/Aleksey Sergeev		2 969 511	2.02
Vadim Bakatin/Ramazan Abdulatipov		2 719 757	0.75
Against all		1 525 410	1.92
Invalid ballots		1 716 757	2.16
Total turnout		79 489 240	74.66



Annex II: State Duma Election Results 1993-2007

Russian Duma Election Results 2 December 2007

<i>Parties and coalitions</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>
United Russia	44 714 241	64.30	315
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	8 046 886	11.57	57
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	5 660 823	8.14	40
Fair Russia	5 383 639	7.74	38
Agrarian Party of Russia	1 600 234	2.30	-
Russian Democratic party "Yabloko"	1 108 985	1.59	-
Civilian Power	733 604	1.05	-
Union of Right Forces	699 444	0.96	-
Patriots of Russia	615 417	0.89	-
Party of Social Justice	154 083	0.22	-
Democratic Party of Russia	89 780	0.13	-
Invalid ballots	759 929	0.70	
Total turnout	69 537 065	63.78	450
Eligible voters	109 145 517	100.00	

Russian Duma Election Results 7 December 2003

<i>Parties and coalitions</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total Seats</i>
United Russia	22 779 279	37.57	223
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	7 647 820	12.61	53
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	6 943 885	11.45	36
Coalition Rodina	5 469 556	9.02	37
Russian Democratic party "Yabloko"	2 609 823	4.30	4
Union of Right Forces	2 408 456	3.97	3
Agrarian Party of Russia	2 205 704	3.64	2
Coalition (four parties)	1 140 333	1.88	3
People's Party of the Russian Federation	714 652	1.18	17
Unity	710 538	1.17	-
Others and non-partisan	2 328 483	3.84	70
Seats not filled			3
Invalid ballots		2.1	
Total turnout	60 712 299	55.75	450
Eligible voters	108 906 244	100.00	

Russian Duma Election Results 19 December 1999

<i>Parties and coalitions</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total Seats</i>
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	16 196 024	24.29	113
Interregional Movement "Unity"	15 549 182	23.32	73
Fatherland - All Russia	8 886 753	13.33	66
Union of Right Forces	5 677 247	8.52	29
Zhirinovsky Bloc	3 990 038	5.98	17
Yabloko	3 955 611	5.93	20
20 parties < 5% votes		+/-13.34	14



Independents (self-nomination)			107
Seats not filled			9
Invalid ballots	1 296 992	1.95	
Against all	2 198 702	3.30	
Total turnout	66 840 638	61.85	450
Registered voters	108 073 956	100.00	

Russian Duma Election Results 17 December 1995

<i>Parties and coalitions</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total Seats</i>
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	15 432 963	22.30	157
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	7 737 431	11.18	51
Our Home - Russia	7 009 291	10.13	55
Russian Democratic party "Yabloko"	4 767 384	6.89	45
Russia's women	3 188 813	4.61	3
Communists Labour Russia	3 137 406	4.53	1
Congress of Russian Communities	2 980 137	4.31	5
Women of Russia		4.6	3
Forward Russia!		1.9	3
Ivan Rybkin Bloc		1.1	3
Pamfilova-Gurov-Lysenko Bloc		1.6	2
Communists of USSR		4.5	1
Workers' Self-Government Party		4.0	1
Union of Labor		1.6	1
Stanislav Govorukhin Bloc		1.0	1
Russian Unity and Concord Party		0.4	1
Independents (self-nomination)			77
Seats not filled			3
Invalid ballots	1 320 619	1.91	
Against all	1 918 151	2.77	
Total turnout	69 614 839	64.76	450
Registered voters	107 496 856	100.00	

Russian Duma election results 12 December 1993

<i>Parties and coalitions</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total Seats</i>
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	12 318 562	22.92	64
Russia's Choice	8 339 345	15.51	64
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	6 666 402	12.40	42
Women of Russia	4 369	8.13	21
Agrarian Party of Russia	4 292 518	7.99	37
Yavlinsky-Boldyrev-Lukin	4 233 219	7.86	27
Party of Russia's Unity and Concords	3 620 035	6.73	22
Democratic Party of Russia	2 696 533	5.52	14
5 small political parties < 5% votes	4 684 201	8.72	21
Independents			130
Against all	2 267 963	4.22	
Invalid ballots	3 946 002	6.84	
Total turnout	58 187 755	54.81	450



Registered voters	106 170 835	100.00
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Annex III: The Levada Centre surveys – Public Opinion

Table 1

September - 2010: If there would be elections next Sunday for the Russian State Duma, which party would you vote for? ⁵⁹

	April.10	July.10	Sept.10
United Russia	38%	44%	41%
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	14	13	10
LDPR	8	7	5
Fair Russia	5	3	5
'For Russia without arbitrariness and corruption' ⁶⁰	.*	.*	2
Yabloko	1	< 1	1
Russian Patriots	< 1	< 1	< 1
Right Cause	< 1	< 1	< 1
Others	< 1	< 1	< 1
none of these	9	9	6
I wouldn't vote	12	10	14
Don't know	14	13	15

* - wasn't one of the possible answers

Table 2

November 2010: Does Russia needs an opposition now?⁶¹

	окт.10
Yes	55%
No	16
Don't know	29

Table 3

November 2010 - Does Russia currently need political opposition? ⁶²

	July.04	July.05	June.06	July.07	July.08	July.09	July.10
Definitely Yes	32%	34%	27%	25%	27%	25%	23%
To some extent	29	30	29	34	34	32	44
Probably not	12	9	14	9	14	15	12
Definitely not	5	5	6	5	7	5	4
Don't know	22	23	24	27	17	24	16

Table 4

August 2010 - Are you personally in favour or against the return of direct elections of regional governors? ⁶³

⁵⁹ Levada Survey – 11 -17 September 2010- <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010092902.html>

⁶⁰ Author's translation – official name in Russian: За Россию без произвола и коррупции

⁶¹ Levada Survey – 22- 25 October 2010 - N 1 600 - <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010111705.html>

⁶² Levada Survey – 22- 25 October 2010 - N 1 600 - <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010111705.html>



	Nov.08	June 09	Jan.10	July.10
definitely in favour/mostly in favour	63%	57%	54%	59%
mostly against/definitely against	19	20	21	20
Don't know	18	23	25	21

Table 5

August 2010 - Are you personally in favour or against the lowering of the threshold of 5% for parties to enter the Duma? ⁶⁴

	June.09	Jan.10	July.10
definitely in favour/mostly in favour	36%	33%	36%
mostly against/definitely against	30	31	31
Don't know	34	36	33

Table 6

August 2010 - Are you in favour or against the return of electing at least part of the deputies of the Russian Duma in single mandate districts? ⁶⁵

	June 09	Jan.10	July.10
definitely in favour/mostly in favour	42%	36%	41%
mostly against/definitely against	18	21	20
Don't know	40	43	39

Table 7

July 2010: Do you think there is a personal cult around Putin in Russia? ⁶⁶

	March.06	Oct.07	Oct.09	July.10
Yes, all signs are already evident	10%	22%	23%	27%
Not yet, but the prerequisites are there more or less	21	27	26	28
No, there are no signs of such a cult	57	38	38	33
Don't know	12	13	13	12

October 2009 – survey on opinion about political parties⁶⁷:

Table 8

How do you think about the Communist Party (CPRF)?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	34
Indifferent	38
Rather negative/very negative	21
Not aware about their existence	>1
Difficult to answer	7

Table 9

⁶³ Levada Survey – 23 – 26 June 2010–N 1 600 - <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010080600.html>

⁶⁴ Levada Survey - 23 – 26 June 2010– N 1 600- <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010080600.html>

⁶⁵ Levada Survey 23- 26 June 2010 – N 1 600 <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010080600.html>

⁶⁶ Levada Survey2- 5 June 2010 – N 1 600 <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010070904.html>

⁶⁷ Levada Survey – 16 – 19 October 2009 - N 1 600 <http://www.levada.ru/press/2009102905.html>



How do you think about 'United Russia'?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	59
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	23
Rather negative/very negative	12
Not aware about their existence	>1
Difficult to answer	6

Table 10

How do you think about the party LDPR?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	26
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	40
Rather negative/very negative	28
Not aware about their existence	>1
Difficult to answer	6

Table 11

How do you think about the party "Fair Russia"?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	28
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	44
Rather negative/very negative	15
Not aware about their existence	3
Difficult to answer	10

Table 12

How do you think about the party "Right Cause"?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	7
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	37
Rather negative/very negative	21
Not aware about their existence	18
Difficult to answer	17

Table 13

How do you think about the party "Yabloko"?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	8
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	41
Rather negative/very negative	31
Not aware about their existence	4
Difficult to answer	16



Table 14

How do you think about the party ‘Solidarnost’?

	%
Very positive/fairly positive	5
Neither one thing or the other/Indifferent	32
Rather negative/very negative	16
Not aware about their existence	28
Difficult to answer	19



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