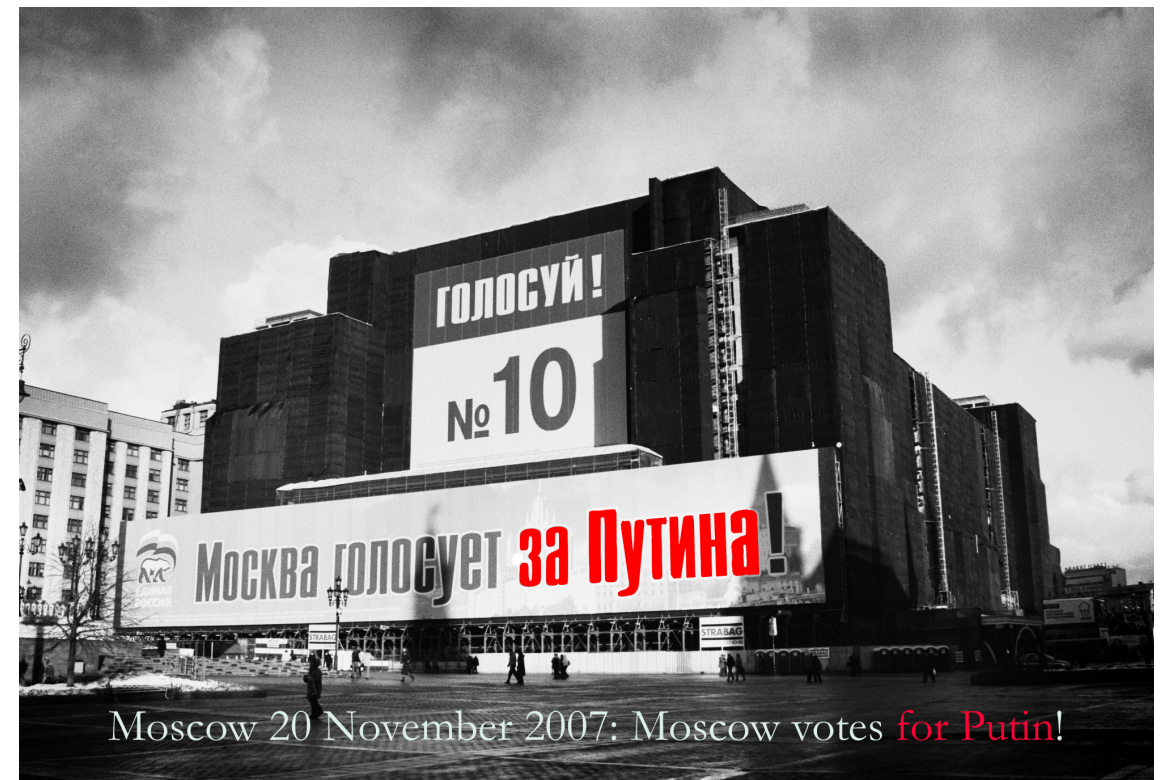


CARL HOLMBERG

Managing Elections in Russia

Carl Holmberg



Moscow 20 November 2007: Moscow votes for Putin!

FOI, Swedish Defence Research Agency, is a mainly assignment-funded agency under the Ministry of Defence. The core activities are research, method and technology development, as well as studies conducted in the interests of Swedish defence and the safety and security of society. The organisation employs approximately 1000 personnel of whom about 800 are scientists. This makes FOI Sweden's largest research institute. FOI gives its customers access to leading-edge expertise in a large number of fields such as security policy studies, defence and security related analyses, the assessment of various types of threat, systems for control and management of crises, protection against and management of hazardous substances, IT security and the potential offered by new sensors.

Carl Holmberg

Managing elections in Russia

Mechanisms and problems

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Sammanfattning

Rapporten analyserar det politiska systemet i Ryssland med fokus på valet till Statsduman 2007 och visar hur det nuvarande systemet styrs av makteliten. Systemet är komplext och kan inte styras av endast ett fåtal individer utan styrs av och tjänar många olika politiska och ekonomiska intressen.

Det har ofta hävdats att Putins stöd är brett och stabilt och att han likaså har skapat ett stabilt politiskt system, men även att valen i Ryssland inte är fria och rättvisa. I rapporten visas att Putins stöd inte är så högt som ofta hävdats. I Dumavalet 2007, som gjordes till en förtroendeomröstning för Putin som person, utgjordes det aktiva stödet från de med rätt att rösta av som mest knappt hälften och möjligen så lågt som en tredjedel. Stödet var generellt sett lägst i de ekonomiskt mer utvecklade delarna av landet. Uppenbart fusk och manipulation av valresultatet inträffade i många delar av landet utan att myndigheterna vidtagit åtgärder. Det politiska systemet är vidare inte heller så stabilt som ofta ansetts. I dess natur ligger att konflikter döljs under ytan, men val har även förenat klaner av olika politiska och ekonomiska intressen i allianser, såsom det dominerande partiet Enade Ryssland. Detta förhindrar att den interna maktkampen inom makteliten avspeglas i det formella politiska systemet.

Det politiska systemet och val i Ryssland styrs på en mängd olika vis, både direkt och indirekt. Det viktigaste resultatet av detta är att de ryska väljarna inte ges något alternativ till den nuvarande makteliten under valen, eftersom alternativa politiska krafter inte kan verka inom systemet. Den politiska oppositionen är antingen passiv eller, per definition, destabiliserande för systemet.

Nyckelord: Ryssland, Putin, Medvedev, politik, inrikespolitik, val, Duma, president, demokrati, opposition, regioner, fusk, Enade Ryssland, valdeltagande, väljarkår, GAS Vyborgy, rösträkning, suverän demokrati, styrd demokrati

Summary

This report analyses the political system in Russia with the focus on the Duma election in 2007 and shows how the current system is managed by the power elite. It also reveals the complex nature of the system, which is managed by more than just a few individuals and which serves the interests of many different economic and political interests.

It is often suggested that Putin's support is broad and stable and that he has created a stable political system, but also that elections in Russia are not free and fair. However through scrutinising the facts available, this report shows that Putin's support is not as large as is generally perceived. In the Duma election of 2007, which was made into a vote of personal confidence in President Putin, the active support from the electorate was at most slightly less than half, and possibly as low as one-third, and was generally lowest in more economically developed parts of Russia. Obvious fraud and manipulation occurred in many parts of the country without adequate countermeasures being taken by the authorities. The political system is also not as stable as is usually claimed. Its nature is to hide conflicts under the surface but elections also unify various clans of economic and political interests in alliances, such as the dominant party United Russia. This prevents the internal struggle for power within the power elite from being reflected in the formal political system.

The political system in Russia is managed in a great variety of ways, both directly or indirectly. The main result is that the voters are not presented with any alternative to the power elite during elections, because alternative political forces cannot act within the system. The political opposition is either passive or, by definition, destabilising for the system.

Keywords: Russia, Putin, Medvedev, politics, domestic policy, election, Duma, president, democracy, opposition, regions, fraud, United Russia, turnout, electorate, GAS Vyborg, vote counting, sovereign democracy

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1 Main conclusions

To contribute to a deeper understanding of the personal and institutional actors and their role in Russian domestic policy, this report analyses the formal political system in Russia, i.e. the officially registered political parties, organisations and elections, with the focus on the Duma election in December 2007. It is generally considered in the West that Putin's popular support is broad and stable, but also that the last Duma election was not free and fair. Therefore further analysis of these somewhat contradictory assumptions is justified.

Support for Putin and United Russia

- The official election result was a great victory for the pro-Putin political parties, especially United Russia, which gained more than a two-thirds majority of the seats, with an official turnout of 64%. Many of those elected abstained from taking their seats, passing their mandate to others further down the list of candidates. This was particularly true for United Russia, where 31% of the elected MPs abstained, including most of the top candidates such as President Putin and most governors (25% of all elected MPs abstained). This was likely planned beforehand and probably diminishes the democratic legitimacy of the Duma in the eyes of the voters, although it increased the number of women in the Duma.
- The support for Putin is probably not as massive as is often suggested. The results of the last Duma election as well as those of previous elections show that the support for Putin and the largest pro-Putin party, United Russia, tended to be greatest in areas where extensive fraud and manipulation seemed to have taken place. The active support, as shown in the official election results, was much more modest in areas with less fraud and manipulation.
- The support for United Russia and Putin is generally lower in larger cities, including Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where the turnout is significantly lower than the national average. Since Putin's support is lower in the mostly richer and more developed urban areas, his popularity cannot simply be explained by support from those who have gained most from the economic development of recent years.
- Perceived threats from the West were used in the election campaign to boost the support for United Russia and the political leadership.

Support for other political forces

- There is no political opposition force with massive public support. This is most likely due to many factors, such as corruption, absence of a wider public debate on political issues and bad historical experience of public politics, which means that most Russians have very low expectations of politicians and authorities. Most important, however, is that the current political system makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any political force to challenge the power elite.

Political power in Russia

- The President and the Presidential Administration dominate political life in Russia. The Duma (one of the two chambers in the Russian parliament) has little political influence and lacks established ways to hold the Cabinet and the President accountable. However according to the constitution, there are some means that could be used in the future, especially if the struggle for power increases. The outcome of the Duma election will probably not have any significant impact on policy-making in Russia but the Duma could become a platform if the struggle for power within the political leadership intensifies.
- The Kremlin is more dependent on the regional power elites than is usually assumed, even though the control over regional governors has tightened under Putin. The regional elites control the administrative resources necessary to manage the elections. These resources have not been used to an equal extent in all regions and there are also significant differences on local level within regions. Some incumbent governors have been elected with an unrealistically high percentage of votes, while some have remained at their posts for a long time, in some cases even since late Soviet time.
- The political stability achieved in Russia under Putin is to a large extent only a perceived stability. The monolithic façade ensures that the struggle for power between different groups takes place below the surface. Elections are won and the political system is managed as a result of alliances between the Kremlin-based and region-based power elites.

The political parties and movements

- The political parties are essentially created and governed from above. They are largely of a volatile nature, with the Communist Party CPRF as an exception. The parties, like the whole political system, are based on influential individuals and their networks rather than on formal structures and

political programmes. The current party of power, United Russia, is a merger of central and regional political elites. No legal, i.e. officially registered, party can act independently of the Kremlin and its different clans, but the degree of influence over Yabloko, the CPRF and possibly some other parties is probably lower.

- Most of the 15 officially registered parties are best described as ‘fake’ parties and some of them are ‘spoiler’ parties, created by the Kremlin with the purpose of stealing votes and fighting other parties with a similar image, while at the same time contributing to the impression of a functioning multi-party system.
- A large part of the most active political opposition is unregistered, which means that it cannot participate in elections. Some political opponents cooperate in a mix of nationalistic, populist, capitalist, liberal, communist and revolutionary interests. In response to these, the Kremlin has created groups such as ‘Nashi’ (Ours), which includes street fighting gangs that have been used for ‘street politics’. The Kremlin is possibly also using highly unpopular ‘spoilers’ who join the opposition with the purpose of discrediting it in the eyes of the common people.

Fraud and manipulation

- The whole political system is managed by the current power elite, which leads to the opposition being passive either within or outside the system. This contributes to political apathy but could also strengthen radical political opposition, since no change from within the system seems possible.
- The computerised vote counting system GAS Vybory is operated by the Federal Centre for Information Management (*informatizatsiya*), which is most likely controlled by the Federal Protection Service (FSO). The FSO is controlled by the President and has monitored Russian society and conducted opinion polls for years. The handling of GAS Vybory is largely non-transparent and the system contains data on the whole population that according to law can also be used for other unspecified purposes.
- The Central Election Commission as well as the leading public opinion institutes and the most important parts of the media are under the direct or indirect control of the Kremlin. Opinion polls generally cited in the press are therefore not fully reliable and are possibly used to create a false picture of public opinion to justify the current political system and its leaders.
- Changes in legislation, although not always objectionable in theory, have made life more difficult for the political opposition.
- Fraud and manipulation of elections have been going on throughout the whole post-Soviet period but seem to have increased in the last elections. The

‘fingerprints of fraud’ are more evident in some regions and more so in rural areas than in larger cities.

- Turnout has been manipulated, sometimes by forcing people to vote but also by inflating the figures, sometimes up to 100%, to create more votes. These votes are then added to a certain party or candidate. In several elections Putin and United Russia have done better in areas with a high turnout.
- The size of the electorate seems to have been inflated for the same purpose, since it has not fallen in the same way as the population has, but has instead increased. However there are some potential natural explanations for this that have to be taken into account.

2 Introduction

This FOI study was carried out to provide the Swedish Ministry of Defence with analysis and information contributing to a deeper understanding of the personal and institutional actors and their role in Russian domestic policy, especially in connection with the Duma election of 2007 and the presidential election of March 2008.

The report analyses the political system in Russia, i.e. formal political institutions, political parties, organisations and elections, with the focus on the Duma election in December 2007.

Other mechanisms and structures essential for understanding how Russia is ruled, such as the power struggle manifested in the fight for control over the state bureaucracy and economic resources, will be discussed in a forthcoming FOI report. Together, these three aspects provide a better understanding of political developments in Russia and of what can be expected in the future when, as seems likely, Vladimir Putin's heir Dmitry Medvedev is installed as president in the spring of 2008.

The study was carried out with the support of the FOI project on Russian Foreign, Defence and Security Policy (RUFS) under the auspices of Jan Leijonhielm, Head of Bureau. The report was reviewed at a seminar headed by Stefan Olsson, to whom I am grateful for his constructive comments on the structure and content of the report. I am also greatly indebted to Carolina Vendil Pallin who acted as opponent at the seminar and who in an encouraging and constructive way made many useful comments which improved both the structure and the content of the report. Furthermore, I am grateful to my colleagues at FOI who further contributed towards improving the quality by their the critical and useful comments; especially Jan Leijonhielm, Fredrik Westerlund, Robert L Larsson, Jakob Hedenskog, Jan T. Knopf, Ingmar Oldberg and Ann Ödlund. However, any remaining errors, misinterpretation or other mistakes are naturally mine alone.

2.1 Objectives of the study

It has become a more or less established truth in the West that Putin's popular support is broad and stable but also that the last Duma election was not free and fair. There are ample reasons to scrutinise these somewhat contradictory assumptions.

This report comes at a time when several factors seem to play a role for how elections in Russia are judged. Sharpening criticism from the West and international organisations such as OSCE has coincided in time with Russia growing economically stronger, mainly due to increased income from energy resources and the world's growing dependency on these resources. At the same time, Russia has consequently been acting with increasing self-confidence on the international scene. Criticising Russian elections is therefore sometimes interpreted as a way to counter growing Russian economic influence by political means. Russia, in its turn, has countered by promising to monitor democracy in the West and by criticising the so-called double standards used by the West to judge the political systems in different countries. Russia has also been actively working to define its brand of democracy, known as 'sovereign democracy'.

This report describes the political system in Russia and how it is managed but also explains a complex system that cannot easily be managed by President Putin or just a few powerful individuals. The report also shows that the success of the current system is not because Putin has broad popular support and because people in general are more or less supporting the system. Instead, the system requires the formation of alliances within the power elite and a whole range of methods are used in order to prevent the political opposition from competing in the elections. The report discusses the consequences this has for the way in which Russia is ruled, the nature of the struggle for power and the weak political opposition.

Gleb Pavlovsky, one of Russia's most famous *politologs* (political strategists, mostly serving the political elite and drawing up the lines for how the political system should be managed), made some interesting remarks in 2002,¹ more than a year before the Duma and presidential elections of 2003/2004, which are still relevant to a large extent and which outline some of the central aspects of

¹ Pavlovsky, Gleb (2002), 'Politika upravlyayemoy demokratii ne podderzhivayet vyborov prezidenta, a prezident Putin perezhivet i eti vybory, i etu politiku', www.kreml.org/options/4426034, last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet.

political life in Russia treated in this report. Pavlovsky can be seen as one of the architects of today's political system and his remarks are therefore of special interest.

He claimed that in order for the 2003/2004 elections to be as stable and as predictable as they were in 1999/2000, seven conditions had to be fulfilled:

- Putin's rating should be *perceived* as high
- The absence of a second, alternative leader
- The absence of 'mass-ideologisation' of society
- The absence of an influential non-Communist opposition
- A static stability in the mass media, keeping silent about any signs of instability
- A system of 'mass stereotypes', for example: 'stability', 'Russia is now being respected', 'managed democracy'
- A strong so-called administrative resource, meaning the use of the bureaucratic system against political opposition

These seven factors were fulfilled in 2003/2004 and, as is shown in this report, are still perfectly relevant for understanding the Duma election in December 2007 and the forthcoming presidential election in March 2008.

Pavlovsky also described in 2002 what he saw as the weaknesses of a system based on these factors. The main weakness was the regime's inability to handle 'actors', especially crowds that did not play according to the rules. At the same time, mobilisation of the masses is needed for the 'turnout machine' (*mashina yavki*) that gives legitimacy to the elections.

2.2 Approach and method

This study was carried out under the assumption that manipulation of the political system occurs in Russia. A different approach would have seemed naïve, but the ambition was to use as much hard evidence as possible, such as official data from the Central Election Commission and statements from politicians and public officials, to illustrate this. The pre-election period was scrutinised rather closely through the Russian media. Less attention was paid to opinion polls, because of doubts about their reliability.

Considerable efforts were also made to analyse the situation on a regional and sometimes even on a local level, in order to detect patterns that are not always distinguishable only by looking at figures on an aggregated national level.

The assessment of how managed the political system is was thus based on analysing the official figures but also on studying the participants, the electorate and the ways and means available to manage the political system, including the election process.

This report does not try to define how democratic Russia is and it does not compare the Russian political system with systems in other countries. It goes without saying that many of the phenomena described in this report are not restricted to Russia. These phenomena (many of which are far from the democratic ideal) also exist, to a greater or lesser degree, in other countries, including some in the West.

The study starts by examining the formal power structures most relevant for discussing elections in Russia. Since there are two national elections in Russia, to the presidency and to the State Duma, it is natural to discuss the formal role of the President and the State Duma. It is also natural to discuss the role of the Cabinet, both because it falls somewhere between the President and the Duma and because President Putin is likely to become Prime Minister later this spring. This report also devotes considerable attention to the regional level of Russian politics. This aspect is not always sufficiently taken into account in election analyses and, as is shown here, it is of great importance when it comes to judging how stable the system is and how it is managed.

The political party system is examined from various aspects to determine its significant traits and the ways in which it is managed. However, the political system also consists of other types of organisations. Two types of political organisations are treated in this report: organisations managed by the Kremlin that can be used against the political opposition and the political opposition, which exists outside the political party system.

The Duma election in December 2007 is then discussed by looking at the official figures, comparing them with data on previous elections and analysing the whole environment in which they took place. Ways and means to set the scene, including the use of perceived threats from democratic states in the West and methods of fraud and manipulation of the election results, are described.

2.3 Sources

Books and articles from scientific publications, most notably *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *Russian Analytical Digest* and *Communist and Post-Communist studies* were used. Perhaps the most useful article was 'Fraud or Fairytales: Russia and Ukraine's Electoral Experience' by Mikhail Myagkov, Peter C. Ordeshook and Dimitry Shakin. This article examines the so-called fingerprints of fraud by using official data rather than relying on eyewitness accounts. Another useful source was Andrew Wilson's book *Virtual Politics – Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*. It provides useful insights into the world of 'political technology', i.e. ways to manipulate and manage the political system by both direct and more indirect, less obvious, means.

Newspapers and editorial internet sources were used for several reasons: They informed of events and political decisions of interest for this study, although some such events may also occur with little or no attention in the media. They also provide the reader with statements from high-ranking officials, politicians and experts. There are also many good analytical articles, but these should be treated with more care since they are usually more politicised. This is the case for both articles supporting and those opposing the current political leadership.

The study is based on newspapers and internet sources, both in more or less direct support of the current leadership (such as *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* and *Argumenty i Fakty*) and more in opposition (such as the internet sources *Newsru.com* and *Gazeta.ru*). Some of the newspapers (*Kommersant* and *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*) have previously been seen as independent (although financed by oligarchs) but are now indirectly more or less controlled by state economic interests. However, they have maintained a rather frank tone, although usually avoiding direct criticism of President Putin. *Novaya Gazeta* is the most oppositional of the newspapers providing qualified analysis of the Russian political environment. It is related to the liberal or socio-liberal political opposition. A few other newspapers and editorial internet sources were also used.

Other data available on the internet were used to obtain information about the political parties and actors, mostly their official websites. Official data were accessed through the official websites of public authorities, but sometimes second-hand sources were used, mainly because official data from the Central Election Commission were not always complete or available. This problem is

also discussed in the above-mentioned article ‘Fraud or Fairytales: Russia and Ukraine’s Electoral Experience’.²

Official data in Russia and the Soviet Union have a long history of unreliability, but in this study such data were mostly used to show what has been officially published rather than to determine what is necessarily true. The study was based on as many primary data as possible, in order to avoid basing the conclusions on the results of others rather than direct observations. However, it was also necessary to use second-hand sources to some extent. This primarily concerned the description of the media landscape, where in most cases second-hand sources and the findings of others were used when also confirmed by primary data.

2.4 Key concepts in Russian politics

There are a few key concepts in Russian political terminology that to a great extent set the framework for Russian politics. These need to be explained.³

The power vertical (*Vertikal vlasti*)

The power vertical is the political idea of strong Presidential control, or at least the right and possibility to control the political system, in a top-down process. This model is legitimised by the ambition to save Russia from chaos and decay, i.e. to create and ensure political stability. Stability is attained by the subordination, or removal, of alternative political power bases, thus severely limiting the scope of action by the political opposition.

Managed democracy (*Upravlyayemaya demokratiya*)

Managed democracy (also translated as directed democracy) is a contradiction in terms in the mainstream Western understanding of the term democracy. Managed democracy means that people’s political activities and civil society are, and

² Myagkov, Mikhail, Ordeshook Peter C. and Shakin, Dimitry (2005), ‘Fraud or Fairytales: Russia and Ukraine’s Electoral Experience’ (2005), Post-Soviet Affairs vol. 21 April-June, No. 2 2005, p. 92, footnote 2.

³ Some of these concepts are also discussed in a forthcoming FOI report by Vilhelm Konnander on the democratic situation in Russia.

should be, directed from above.⁴ This also includes the endeavour to manage the political parties, which is not necessarily the same thing as controlling them. Andrew Wilson puts it this way in the book *Virtual Politics – Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*:

*‘Directed democracy’ involves radical process management, rather than specific management tasks such as damage limitation, limit setting, or prompting and pointing. Victories, whether in elections, politics in general or in business, are ‘organised’, as the old Bolshevik phrase had it, rather than simply won. Presidents such as Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Ukraine’s Leonid Kuchma have an aversion to any independent political activity.*⁵

The goal for managed democracy in Russia has not been to simply establish a monopoly of power but also to monopolise the competition for power.⁶ It would be wrong to see this political concept solely as a result of the Putin era. The term managed democracy became widespread before Putin came to power, at the end of Yeltsin’s era, when Aleksandr Voloshin, then head of the Presidential Administration, was rather successful in gaining control over ‘the political processes’ in Russia.⁷

Sovereign democracy (*Suverennaya demokratiya*)

The term sovereign democracy was chosen by Vladislav Surkov, deputy head of the President’s Administration and coordinator of the domestic policy, in response to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine 2004/2005 to label Russia’s own brand of democracy. It is said to be neither populist nor conforming to the Western version. Instead, it is best described as a response to populist demands from the street and international pressure, which contributed to the Orange Revolution.⁸

⁴ Stykow, Petra (2007), ‘Russia at the crossroads? The realignment of the Party System’, *Russian Analytical Digest* No. 19 2007, p. 3.

⁵ Wilson, Andrew (2005), *Virtual Politics - Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World*, (New Haven and London Yale University Press), p. 38.

⁶ Krastev, Ivan (2006), ‘Sovereign Democracy, Russian Style’, *Insight Turkey* October-December 2006 Vol. 8 No. 4, p. 114.

⁷ Fishman, Mikhail (2001), www.democracy.ru/library/practice/media/media_in_reselect_2001/page7.html, last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet.

⁸ Krastev, Ivan (2006), pp. 114-115; Argumenty i Fakty (2007), ‘Medvezhata nacheku’, No. 16 2007, p. 8.

The concept of sovereign democracy combines the question of Russia's right to self-determine its political system with the question of how democratic the system is. This concept permits those defending the current political system to accuse those criticising it of either being against Russia's sovereignty (if they are foreigners) or being disloyal to their country (if they are Russians). It also makes it easier for the defenders of the system to avoid discussion of democratic principles.

Valery Kryukov, former MP and member of the Central Election Commission responsible for the electronic vote counting system GAS Vyborg⁹, claims that the Russian electoral system is more democratic than that in Western countries, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries.¹⁰ It is allegedly the Russian inferiority complex that makes Russians think their system is less democratic than that of Western countries.

Administrative resources

Administrative resources is a term that is not easily defined. The meaning of the term is that the resources of the administration, i.e. the bureaucratic system on a central, regional or local level, are used for purposes other than the normal. It can mean various things such as selective justice in favour of a specific political or economic interest, selective inspections by the health or fire authorities for instance, the closing of an office on almost any formal reason, difficulties in finding an assembly hall for a political meeting or difficulties in distributing political propaganda or newspapers due to pressure on those providing these services.

Controlling and managing

This report distinguishes between controlling and managing the political system and its actors. To control means to decide what someone should do or not do. To manage means to coerce or influence someone do something by various means, tougher or softer, or simply by depriving the individual of alternatives. In order to use this terminology one has to assume that there are some people managing the system from above. As is shown in this report, this is usually high-ranking persons around the president, in the Presidential Administration or elsewhere, out

⁹ Central Election Commission (2007), last accessed 14 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.cikrf.ru/aboutcik/biografy/kriukov.jsp>.

¹⁰ Rossiyskaya Gazeta (2007), 'Rodnyye komplekсы', published 5 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.rg.ru/2007/09/05/diskussiya.html>.

in the regions for example. This group of people, hard to define, is called the power elite.

This study examines the political actors in Russia, primarily those that have taken part in the Duma election. It is interesting to see which of them are possibly standing more or less free from the current power elite. This can be done by looking at their statements, their rhetoric and how they have acted during the last election and in the past. It is also interesting to see what personal and economic ties there might be between the political actors and the current power elite. All this, put together with the general political framework such as legislation and the media situation, provide the possibility to discuss how independent or dependent a specific actor is. However, such a judgement is complicated by the fact that the current power elite consists of several groups, often with different political and economic goals.

‘The Kremlin’

The term used to describe the ultimate power in Russia is often ‘the Kremlin’. What it implies is that those who have the power in Russia work in the Kremlin, which is where parts of the Presidential Administration are situated. Nevertheless it is an oversimplification to talk about ‘the Kremlin’, both because it can be argued that there are many people outside the Presidential Administration with great influence, and also because the Presidential Administration is much larger than just the Kremlin. It is also clear that the Kremlin and the Presidential Administration contain a number of different rival clans with different agendas. The term ‘Kremlin’ is thus generally used to describe some kind of collective leadership around the President and is employed when it is not clear what persons or bureaucratic functions should be included in it. It also reveals a distrustful attitude to the formal bureaucratic and political institutions. Naturally there is also a lot of careless use of the term. Despite this, the expression is used in this report to some extent for the sake of convenience, but the reader should bear in mind that it is a fairly imprecise term.

2.5 Notes to the reader

The *Main conclusions* section provides the reader with the most important findings in the report. It is recommended that it be read together with the *Conclusions* section at the end of the report.

The formal power structures (Chapter 3) deals with the executive and legislative powers in Russia. The role and significance of the President, Cabinet, Parliament (with emphasis on the second chamber, the State Duma) and regional powers is discussed to provide the necessary background for the evaluation of election results. This chapter also describes the interdependence between the central and the regional powers. While reading this, the descriptions of the political parties in Chapter 4 may be of use, as well as the map of the Russian regions at the end of the report.

The political party system (Chapter 4) describes the characteristic traits of the currently existing political parties and the political party system in Russia.

Other political movements (Chapter 5) treats political movements of greater significance. It describes movements directly used by the power elite for political purposes and also parts of the political opposition, which is mostly not formally registered and thus outside the official political system.

The Duma election in December 2007 (Chapter 6) analyses the election results but also discusses the various techniques used for manipulating and managing the outcome of the elections directly or indirectly.

In the *Conclusions* section, the consequences of the current political system and situation are discussed in terms of the impacts they have for the future of the political opposition and the possibility of the current power elite continuing to rule Russia.

3 The formal power structures

3.1 The President and the Presidential Administration

The President and the Presidential Administration constitute the dominant political power in Russia at present and have done so both under Yeltsin and Putin. The President is formally responsible for national security and the freedoms and rights of citizens. He also formulates the general concepts of domestic and foreign policy and leads the armed forces.¹¹

The Presidential Administration is a large institution. The central administration today employs at least a couple of thousand people and there are many more working in regional branches.¹² From its creation, the Presidential Administration was approximately as large as the Soviet Communist party bureaucracy it was intended to replace.¹³

The Presidential Administration is mentioned in the constitution of December 1993 but no details are given on how it should be organised.¹⁴ Hence there is good room for manoeuvre. The power of the administration was established as President Yeltsin gradually built up his own staff, which soon grew to become a huge part of the state bureaucracy. Yeltsin was able to use this administration, including its representatives in the Russian regions, to bypass the Cabinet.¹⁵

The Presidential Administration is both political and non-political. It is generally considered that all political decisions of importance originate from it or at least are approved by it. One major problem from a democratic point of view is that there is no political accountability for decisions taken in the Presidential Administration, other than the people's approving or disapproving of the President himself in election.

¹¹ Constitution of the Russian Federation, § 80, 87.

¹² Presidential Administration (2007), http://www.kremlin.ru/articles/administration_about.shtml, last accessed: 27 November 2007, Internet.

¹³ White, Stephen, Rose Richard, McAllister Ian (1997), *How Russia Votes*, (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham house publishers, Inc.), p. 161.

¹⁴ Constitution of the Russian Federation §83 I.

¹⁵ White et al. (1997), p. 96.

Liliya Shevtsova, a renowned observer of Russian politics, has pointed to the lack of public control over the real decision-makers, who are in the Presidential Administration and other President-controlled authorities, as a main obstacle.¹⁶

Mister Sechin, Mister Patrushev, Mister Viktor Ivanov, Mister Medvedev, Mister Surkov, Mister Sobyenin... well, I'm not sure the world knows about that, but of course Russians do know. They know that Putin's 'left hands', unfortunately, these people who rule Russia on behalf of the presidency, they don't have one very important thing. They don't have accountability for what is happening.

However, one should not regard the Presidential Administration as a politically unified actor. As everywhere else, there are different political and personal interests guiding policy-making. In Russia this struggle mostly takes place within the Presidential Administration and other bureaucratic institutions, not in the political life of the parliament or in public debates between the political parties. This concentration of power in the hands of the President, but also other parts of the executive power, combined with the weak formal institutions give birth to power struggles within the administration.

A key person in the Presidential Administration is Vladislav Surkov, who has been working there since 1999. He is one of the two deputy heads of the Administration, together with Igor Sechin, and manages ('coordinates') domestic political life in Russia. He regularly intervenes in political life, is considered 'the main Kremlin manager of the Duma',¹⁷ and reportedly holds regular meetings with '*politologs*',¹⁸ and journalists, giving them instructions on how to act.¹⁹ The political activity of the different parties is therefore best described as fictive, at least to a very high degree. However Surkov's control is naturally not total and he may even have been against the foundation of the pro-Putin party Just Russia,²⁰ which nevertheless occurred.

¹⁶ Liliya Shevtsova in the second part of the French TV documentary The Putin System, Les Films Grain de Sable, shown on Swedish Television (SVT1) 29 October and 4 November 2007. See also Vendil Pallin, Carolina (2006), *De ryska kraftministerierna: Maktverktyg och maktförstärkning*, (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), June 2006, Base data report FOI-R-2004-SE), pp. 196-199.

¹⁷ Kommersant (2007), 'Motherland gets new life', published 26 July 2006, last accessed 9 December 2007, http://www.kommersant.com/p692788/r_1/Motherland_Gets_New_Life/.

¹⁸ The Russian term for those working to manage the political system more actively than a spin doctor.

¹⁹ PBK Daily (2007) 'Favorit Naryshkin', published 22 February 2007, last accessed 10 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.rbcdaily.ru/2007/02/22/focus/266491>.

²⁰ Kommersant (2007), 'Things to come', published 12 February 2007, last accessed 9 December 2007, Internet, http://www.kommersant.com/p735542/presidential_elections/.

The current dominance of the Presidential power could decrease if Putin leaves the post after the Presidential elections in March 2008, especially if he becomes Prime Minister.

3.2 The Cabinet – a dependent part of the executive power

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President with the consent of the Duma.²¹ The rest of the Cabinet is also appointed by the President but on the Prime Minister's proposal²². The Cabinet is the executive power according to the Constitution²³ but it is dependent on the President, who can dismiss the whole Cabinet²⁴ and has the right to chair its meetings.²⁵

Due to the President's direct control over parts of the Cabinet, some observers claim that there are in fact two Cabinets in Russia: the Cabinet led by the Prime Minister and that led by the President. The Prime Minister's power is limited by the fact that several ministers are answerable directly to the President and not to the Prime Minister. The growing number of deputy Prime Ministers have also been assigned an increasing number of political responsibilities. The Prime Minister is mainly responsible for the socio-economic management of the country, with responsibility for the State budget and economic policy in general. However, the division between the President and the Cabinet is not as strict as this in reality.²⁶

This system has emerged from the Soviet system, where the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KGB were subordinate to the Politburo (and indirectly to the General Secretary). Several changes have taken place during the years following Yeltsin's subordination of the KGB, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence to the President in August 1991. In May 2003, Putin introduced an administrative reform that imposed direct presidential control over 20 out of 61 federal organs, including 5 of the 16 Ministries. The

²¹ Constitution of the Russian Federation §83 a and §111.

²² Constitution of the Russian Federation §112.2, 83 d.

²³ Constitution of the Russian Federation §110.1.

²⁴ Constitution of the Russian Federation §117.2.

²⁵ Constitution of the Russian Federation §83 b.

²⁶ Vendil Pallin, Carolina (2006), pp. 31-33.

President thus has formal control over security, law enforcement agencies and the military authorities.²⁷

The role and authority of the Prime Minister will probably become greater if Putin takes over the post after the Presidential elections in March 2008.

3.3 The Duma – conveyor belt for presidential decisions

The Russian parliament, or Federal Assembly, consists of two chambers, the State Duma with 450 seats and the Federation Council. The latter is meant to represent the interests of the ‘federation subjects’ (regions) on a federal level, with one representative from each region’s executive organs (led by the governors) and one from its legislative organs (the regional parliaments)²⁸. The governors can be dismissed by the President and almost all, if not all, regional parliaments are controlled by official pro-Putin parties. Most of the governors ran in the Duma election but abstained from taking their seats after they were elected, just like Putin, which prevented a doubling of the role of the Federation Council.²⁹

The parliament drafts and makes laws, which are signed by the President. If the President refuses to sign a law, there is a theoretical possibility for the parliament to overrule the President by a two-thirds majority in a second attempt.³⁰ However, the President can easily rule without the parliament by issuing decrees and regulations (*ukaz* and *rasporyazheniya*) as long as these do not contradict the Constitution or federal laws.³¹

²⁷ Kryshchanovskaya, Olga and White, Stephen (2003), ‘Putin’s Militocracy’ Post-Soviet Affairs Vol. 19 October-December No. 4 2003, pp. 293, 295 Leijonhielm, Jan, et al. (2005), Rysk militär förmåga I ett tioårsperspektiv – problem och trender 2005 [Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – Problems and Trends 2005], (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), June 2005, User Report, FOI-R—1662-SE), pp. 42-45; Vendil Pallin, Carolina (2006), pp. 31-33.

²⁸ Constitution of the Russian Federation §95.

²⁹ The official result published in Rossiyskaya Gazeta 11 December 2007, last accessed 11 December 2007, Internet: www.rg.ru/2007/12/11/cik-vybory-anons.html) was compared with a list of who actually ended up in the Duma from the State Duma of Russian Federation, last accessed 3 January 2007, Internet: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>.

³⁰ Constitution of the Russian Federation §107.

³¹ Constitution of the Russian Federation §90.

In theory, the MPs are held accountable by the voters at the elections but in order for this to mean anything, they have to have some influence. Otherwise an election is at best an expression of public opinion.

There is no established way for the Duma to hold the Cabinet or the President accountable for their work. This means that there is no counterweight to the executive power and the role of the Duma is very weak. However, the Constitution does contain possible ways for the Duma and the Federation Council to hold the President and the Cabinet accountable.³²

The previous (fourth) Duma has been judged the least independent of all four post-Soviet parliaments,³³ which is not very surprising since the overwhelming majority were members of a party that has unreserved support for the president as its credo. The fifth Duma will not differ from the fourth in this respect, at least as long as Putin remains in power. An intensified struggle for power in the future could be reflected in the life of the Duma, but must not be mistaken for a reflection of different political views among the population.

The Russian political system is not parliamentary, since the Cabinet is not formed out of a parliamentary majority. Petra Stykow, Professor of Political Science at the University of Munich, has compared the Russian political system with what she sees as the two main types of democratic systems in the West: 'Parliamentary systems' and 'Democratic presidential systems'.³⁴ Significant for parliamentary systems, according to Stykow, is that the Cabinet functions as the executive committee of the parliamentary majority, which stimulates competition between parties. The link between the parliamentary majority and the executive power is therefore temporary. Democratic presidential systems have a range of checks and balances between the executive and the legislative powers, which leads to institutional competition between these powers. The political parties are weaker and vaguer in democratic presidential systems.

Russia's system, according to Stykow, is a mix of elements from both these systems, but put together they function differently. The main features of the Russian political system are:

³² Constitution of the Russian Federation §93, §102e, §103b, §103zh and 117.3.

³³ Johnson's Russia List, No. 239 (2007), 'Outgoing State Duma least populist, most effective but highly reliant' and 'Laying the foundations of the law. The most obedient Duma in Russia's history disperses the fourth Duma assembles for the last time', Vremya Novostey 19 November 2007.

³⁴ Stykow, Petra (2007), 'A destructive combination: Why democratic institutions can destroy democracy' Russian Analytical Digest No. 19 2007, p. 11.

- The voting of the legislative assembly is controlled by the Presidential Administration (unlike the U.S. presidential system). There is thus no legislative counterweight to the executive.
- Unlike in parliamentary democracies, the executive power in Russia is not dependent on the parliamentary majority, so there can be no real competition between different political parties.

3.4 The power vertical reaching the regional political scene

Preventing the regions drifting away from the control of the federal power is an essential part of Russian security policy. One of its main goals is to keep the country together and avert the threat of separatism and collapse of the state.³⁵ The Kremlin has been striving to increase control over the regions but is still dependent on the regional power elites to get its political decisions implemented. Managing this issue is essential in the long term to stay in power and to win the elections, not least because the regional elites control the administrative resources needed to get the desired election result. These resources are described in more detail later in this report.

Due to the geographical size of Russia, it will always be very difficult for the central political power to exercise control over the regions and the Kremlin is partly reliant on long-lived regional leaders rather than seeing them as threats that have to be replaced.³⁶ The regional elites have all declared their loyalty to Putin and Moscow, but there are several examples of long-lived strong regional leaders (who came to power long before Putin, in some cases even in late Soviet times) remaining in their posts. A total of 19 of the 62 governors heading the lists of the main pro-Putin party United Russia in the 2007 Duma election have been in their posts since the beginning of the Yeltsin era or even since Soviet times. Yegor Stroyev of Orel holds the record, heading the region in 1985-1989 and since 1993.³⁷

³⁵ Presidential Administration (2000), National Security Concept of the Russian Federation (2000), last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/1.html>.

³⁶ Petrow, Nikolai (2006), 'Naznacheniya gubernatorov: itogi pervogo goda', Carnegie Moscow Center, Briefing 3 issue, Vol. 8, June 2006, p. 3.

³⁷ Kommersant (2007), 'Gubernatory-dolgozhiteli', published: 28 August 2007, last accessed 27 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=799226>. Other long-lived governors are those in: Kalmykiya, Mordova, Tatarstan, Udmurtiya, Chuvashiya, Khabarovsk, Kurgan, Omsk, Rostov, Sverdlovsk, Tambov, Tomsk, Chelyabinsk, Chita, Yaroslavl, the City of Moscow, Khanty-Mansi and Yamalo-Nenets. Heaney, Dominic (2006) contains information on the region's recent political history.

It can be assumed that these governors hold their regions in a tight grip, which is encouraged by the Kremlin, at least as long as they do not openly confront the federal power. When the current election cycle finishes in mid-2008, there might be a better opportunity for the President to replace some of these governors if this is considered necessary.

Another main political goal for the political leadership is to control the economic resources of the country. Remote and sparsely populated Russian regions may seem peripheral, but the far-off regions often have rich resources. The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous region (*okrug*), for example, is one of Russia's main oil producing regions³⁸ and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous region is Gazprom's most important prospecting region. Not very surprisingly, the state-owned company has played an active part in the region's political life.³⁹

The Kremlin's attempts to control the regions are sometimes straight-forward. In autumn 2007 the deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov, met with several governors to give them instructions for the forthcoming elections.⁴⁰

An important compromise between Moscow and the regions was reached when the party United Russia was created by the merger of Unity and Fatherland-All Russia in 2001. The latter had been the power base of several strong regional leaders such as Yury Luzhkov in the city of Moscow and Mintimer Shaymiyev in Tatarstan.

Since the abolition of the gubernatorial elections in 2004, Putin has gradually confirmed the incumbent governors or installed some of his men (no women have been appointed yet) in the regions. The main problem has not been the regional parliaments, which have not yet opposed the proposed candidates,⁴¹ but rather finding suitable candidates. New governors not only need to be loyal to Putin, but also able to control the regional elites.

³⁸ Bradshaw, Michael (2006), 'Observations on the Geographical Dimensions of Russia's Resource Abundance', *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 2006, 47 No. 6, pp. 728-730.

³⁹ Kusznir, Julia (2006), 'Gazprom's Role in Regional Politics: The case of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug', *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 1 2006, p. 10.

⁴⁰ *Gazeta.ru* (2007), '9-protsentnyy barier', published 7 September 2007, last accessed 27 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2136134.shtml>.

⁴¹ Petrow, Nikolai (2006), pp. 1-2, 3.

Only a few of Russia's governors are not members of United Russia. However in the recent election, not all governors who are members of United Russia were at the top of the party's list, or even on them, in their respective region.⁴² The rules on how the political parties may form their lists of candidates are complicated. In the case of United Russia, some regions had more than one list, others shared a list but most regions had one list. A total of 65 governors were on United Russia's 83 regional party lists and 62 lists were headed by governors.⁴³ Slightly less than half of these, 27 (those with a very high rating and those in regions where United Russia had a high rating in the last regional elections), had special status in the elections and were allowed to be on the same poster as Putin.⁴⁴

The Presidential power has so far accepted most of the incumbent governors and many governors have changed parties in order to adapt to the new circumstances, sitting on the President's mandate. Some of the governors have a background in other parties, for example Leonid Markelov (Marii-El) from LDPR, Aleksandr Mikhaylov (Kursk) from CPRF, Oleg Korolev (Lipetsk) who was supported by CPRF and Yabloko, Petr Sumin (Chelyabinsk) from CPRF and Aleksey Chernyshev (Orenburg) former MP 1993-1999 for the Agrarian Party.⁴⁵

The status of a governor in the eyes of the Presidential Administration largely corresponds to the rating of United Russia in the region and to that governor's personal results in prior elections.⁴⁶ Several of the governors heading the party lists have been elected with very high percentage of votes, from 80% to over 90% on one or several occasions.⁴⁷

⁴² Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Stoprotsentnyy Murat Ziazikov', published 5 October 2007, last accessed 27 November 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-10-05/5_ziazikov.html.

⁴³ United Russia, Candidates for the State Duma 2007, last accessed 22 November 2007, Internet: http://www.edinros.ru/file_dir/225.doc.

⁴⁴ Newsru.com (2007), 'Obraz Vladimira Putina v predvybornoy gonke pozvoleno ispolzovat tolko 27 gubernatoram', published 22 October 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/22oct2007/the_best.html.

⁴⁵ Heaney, Dominic (2006), pp. 180, 64, 66, 214; the State Duma of the Russian Federation, www.duma.gov.ru, last accessed 7 January 2008.

⁴⁶ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Chem blizhe vybory, tem opasneye menyat gubernatora', Last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2007/08/27_a_2097574.shtml.

⁴⁷ Heaney, Dominic (2006), Nikolay Merkushkin in Mordoviya: 87.3% and 96.6% (p. 183), Yegor Stroyev in Oryel 97% and 91.5% (p. 70), Aman-Geldi Tuleyev in Kemerovo 93.5% (p. 256), Aleksandr Filipenko in Khanty-Mansii 91% (p. 226), Yurii Neyelov in Yamalo-Nenets 90% (p. 229), Viktor Ishayev in Khabarovsk 88% and 85.3% (p. 280), Mintimer Shaymiyev in Tatarstan 80% (p. 186), see also election results for the governors of Krasnodar, Vologda, Murmansk and Rostov.

There are still some remaining governors whose popular mandate prior to abolition of gubernatorial elections has not yet expired. However being elected is not a guarantee of widespread popular support, as the turnout has often been low. One example of someone being elected despite weak public support is the governor of Saint Petersburg, Valentina Matvienko, one of Russia's very few women in the power elite.⁴⁸

In 2003 Putin appointed the incumbent governor of Saint Petersburg, Vladimir Yakovlev, to a post in the Cabinet, which forced him to resign as governor. Yakovlev had defeated Anatoly Sobchak, for whom Putin had worked in Saint Petersburg during the first half of the 1990s, in the gubernatorial elections of 1996. In the following election Matvienko received 'unprecedented support' from Putin. She was also backed by the formal political opposition parties SPS, Yabloko and CPRF. She was even backed by Yakovlev, although one of his former deputies, Anna Markova, also ran in the elections. Matvienko won in the second round, receiving 63.2% of the votes cast, but since the turnout was less than 30% she was in fact only actively supported by about 19% of the electorate.⁴⁹

In order to remain in office, the most important political declaration that the governors need to make is to express their support for President Putin. Rivalry based on conflicting economic and political interests between different groups or clans within the regional elite (for example one led by the governor and the other by the mayor of the regional capital) can result in support for different parties, even the two pro-Putin political parties Just Russia and United Russia, as in the cases of Arkhangelsk, Volgograd and Stavropol described below, or within the party of power, United Russia, as in the case of Ingushetiya, for instance,⁵⁰ or as the examples from Buryatiya and Volgograd given below.

The mayor of the city of Arkhangelsk, Aleksandr Donskoy, who has also declared his intention to run in the 2008 presidential election, was arrested on 1 August 2007 accused of a number of crimes. At the same time Donskoy accused

⁴⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), '100 vedushchikh politikov Rossii v oktyabre', published 31 October 2007, last accessed 27 November 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2007-10-31/14_politics.html. In the rating of the top 100 Russian politicians in October 2007 Matvienko shared the 23rd position. Only three other women were on the list.

⁴⁹ Heaney, Dominic (2006), pp. 90-91. The 19% support derives from $0.30 \times 63.2\% = 18.96\%$.

⁵⁰ Newsru.com (2007), 'Prezident Ingushetii so vtoroy popytki vozglavil regionalnoye otdeleniye partii Yedinaya Rossiya', Published 17 July 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/17jul2007/gensek.html>

the governor of the Arkhangelsk region, Nikolay Kiselev, of a number of crimes.⁵¹ Kiselev is now a member of United Russia but was not when he defeated an opponent from United Russia with 75.1% of the votes in 2004.⁵² Donskoy, on the other hand, became a member of Just Russia while in custody, in October 2007.⁵³

The struggle between United Russia and Just Russia in Volgograd is yet another example of the conflict between a mayor and a governor. In August 2007 armed men from special forces searched the office of the region's largest company Diamant, which belongs to the regional leader of Just Russia. This was generally assumed to be part of the political fight between Just Russia and United Russia.⁵⁴

The elections to various posts in the regional executive and legislative branches that took place in some Russian regions at the same time as the Duma elections on 2 December 2007 complicated the situation for United Russia in regions with rival clans within the regional power elite. In the aforementioned region of Volgograd, candidates from three different groups within the regional branch of United Russia competed against each other. In the republic of Buryatiya, two rival United Russia candidates competed for the post of mayor in the regional capital Ulan-Ude, with the party providing better opportunities for the Communist candidate. According to the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, it seems that the federal leadership of United Russia has not yet succeeded in finding a mechanism to handle conflict within the regional elites: 'The federal electoral project United Russia rather easily becomes hostage to the intrigues of the local elite, despite the Kremlin's mobilisation projects and the power vertical.'⁵⁵

Stavropol is another a region where the political struggle between United Russia and Just Russia has been especially fierce. The struggling political clans in

⁵¹ Newsru.com (2007), 'Mer Arkhangelska napisal pervoye pismo iz SIZO: Yego shantazhiruyet', Published 23 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007 Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/23aug2007/donskoy.html>.

⁵² Heaney, Dominic (2006), p. 99.

⁵³ Newsru.com (2007), 'Mer Arkhangelska Aleksandr Donskoy stal chlenom Spravedlovoy Rossii v SIZO', published 8 October 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/08oct2007/donskoy.html>.

⁵⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (2007), 'Volgogradskikh eserov posetil Spetsnaz', published 30 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/regions/2007-08-30/1_esery.html.

⁵⁵ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (2007), 'Grazhdanskaya voyna v partii vlasti', published 2 November 2007, last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet: www.ng.ru/politics/2007-11-02/3_kartblansh.html

Stavropol are supported by different commercial and administrative structures.⁵⁶ Stavropol is the only region where Just Russia defeated United Russia in the regional elections of March 2007. It seems that the chances of Just Russia achieving good election results in the regional elections were best in regions with strong rivalry within the regional power elite, as was the case in Stavropol and Samara for example.⁵⁷ As described below, the results of the Duma election in Stavropol differed radically from those of the regional election in March 2007.

Regional feuds can result in attempts to remove a governor by an opponent. Negative reports in the media (so-called black PR) or other forms of attack thus do not necessarily reflect discontent with the governor from Putin, or anyone else in a central position of power. They may instead be a symptom of a rival regional clan trying to use central power to get rid of the incumbent.⁵⁸

It is often evident that the regional struggle is not for political goals as much as a basic struggle for administrative and economic power. There is a long-lived feud between the governor-veteran Leonid Polezhayev and the mayor in the Omsk region, Viktor Shreyder, who were number one and three respectively on the regional list of United Russia in the elections. Both were elected but abstained from their seats in the Duma.⁵⁹ According to the party leader of Just Russia in the Omsk region, Aleksandr Kostyukov, "there is a struggle going on for resources and money. During the election there was a ceasefire and now it is finished."⁶⁰

It is obvious when looking deeper into regional politics that anyone in Moscow who wants to have the support of the regional elites cannot just order them to be

⁵⁶ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Militsiya razыgrala partiyu', Published 28 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2101260.shtml>.

⁵⁷ Argumenty i Fakty (2007), 'Yedinaya Rossiya proigrala oppozitsii so schetom 45:55', No. 11 2007, pp. 2, 4.

⁵⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Gubernatory na peredavom fronte izbiratel'noy kampanii', Published 14 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-08-14/3_kartblansh.html.

⁵⁹ The official result published in Rossiyskaya Gazeta (11 December 2007, last accessed 11 December 2007, Internet: www.rg.ru/2007/12/11/cik-vybory-anons.html) has been compared with a list of who actually ended up in the Duma from the State Duma of Russian Federation (last accessed 3 January 2007, Internet: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>).

⁶⁰ Kommersant (2007), 'Prinudraboty nad oshibkami', published 5 December 2007, last accessed 5 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832719&NodesID=2>.

loyal. There are many factors that have to be taken into account, so the only opportunity in the majority of cases is to reach an agreement for some kind of mutual benefit. The Kremlin's power is thus lower than often suggested, due to its often limited control on the regional level. This is an inevitable consequence of Russia's geographical size.

4 The political party system

The political parties are essentially created and governed from above. They are largely of a volatile nature, with the exception of the Communist party CPRF, which originates from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The parties, like the whole political system, are based on influential individuals and their networks rather than on formal structures and political programmes. The only large, nation-wide, public manifestations of political will in recent years were the demonstrations against the planned cuts in social benefits that were held all over Russia at the beginning of 2005, just after the Orange Revolution occurred in Ukraine.

4.1 A party system managed by the Kremlin

It is natural for anyone studying political parties to begin by investigating their political ideologies and programmes. The 15 registered parties for 2007 can be sorted into different categories according to their declared political ideas, but it has become increasingly clear that this kind of categorisation is not enough to understand the party system in Russia. It may even confuse more than clarify. In order to understand the parties one must look a bit further, beyond their names and image.

There is plenty of proof of the Kremlin's involvement in the lives of the political parties, sometimes openly, but also in more subtle ways. None of the parties in the election can be said to stand free from the Kremlin. However some of the factions and regional or local branches of mainly Yabloko and CPRF have shown some political independence.

Leading individuals such as Putin, Surkov and many others have long advocated a two party system in Russia, allegedly modelled on that in Great Britain and the USA. After Just Russia was formed in 2006, Surkov said it was going to be the 'second leg' in a two party system together with the 'first leg', United Russia.⁶¹ However the opinion rates were low for Just Russia and continued to be higher for CPRF, especially after Putin declared his intention to run for United Russia. The plan to make Just Russia the second biggest party was obviously abandoned.

⁶¹ Gelman, Vladimir (2007), p. 14.

This was not the first time that attempts by the Kremlin to create a two party system had failed. It was tried already in Russia's first parliamentary election in 1993, with the parties Russia's Choice (which later developed into the SPS) led by Yegor Gaidar (Prime Minister in 1992) and Party of Russian Unity and Accord, supporting Viktor Chernomyrdin⁶² (Prime Minister between 1992-98).

In the Duma election of 1995, the strategy was developed further by the Kremlin and became known as 'the many-layer pie' (*mnogosloynny pirog*). Originally, the idea was to control parties in three parts of the political spectrum. The support for one of these parties, the nationalist, was allegedly cancelled, and the efforts were concentrated on two parties: Our Home is Russia in the centre and the Ivan Rybkin Bloc on the left wing.⁶³ The strategy was not successful: Our Home is Russia obtained 10.13% of the votes and the Ivan Rybkin Bloc only 1.11%⁶⁴ The Kremlin was more successful in its two-party strategy in the 1999 election, when the Union of Right Forces (SPS) and Unity were launched. They received 8.52% and 23.32% respectively.⁶⁵ Yabloko also seems to have played a role in this strategy in 1999. 'Although not so closely linked to the Kremlin, Yabloko (6%) was much more tightly integrated into the pie system than its public positions suggested.'⁶⁶

The many-layer pie concept is not unique to Russia. A comparison has been made with the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (the party of power in Mexico 1929-88), where the same technique (spoiling real opposition and using 'virtual parties') was used for many decades.⁶⁷ Another example of the same phenomenon is East Germany, where Putin and some of his colleagues spent several years.⁶⁸

Not all registered parties competed in the recent elections in Russia. Three of the 15 officially registered parties were not allowed to participate (Party of Peace and Unity, the Ecological Party - the Greens and People's Union), and one chose

⁶² Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 91-92.

⁶³ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 92-93.

⁶⁴ University of Essex,

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=RUSSIA&election=ru95duma>, last accessed 21 November 2007 Internet.

⁶⁵ University of Essex,

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=RUSSIA&election=ru99duma>, last accessed 21 November 2007 Internet.

⁶⁶ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p.125.

⁶⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 126.

⁶⁸ Gelman, Vladimir (2007), p. 12.

not to do so (Party of Russia's Renaissance). The ban was motivated by irregularities in the collection of signatures needed for party registration.⁶⁹

The 15 parties can be categorised into 'pretenders' (pretending for seats in the Duma), 'spoilers' (with the main task of spoiling the chances of others by stealing their votes) and 'outsiders' (not needed by anyone and lacking financial backing), as was done for example in the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*⁷⁰. The three mentioned parties that did not pass the registration procedure were all labelled outsiders, as was the Social Justice Party, the only outsider that was actually running in the elections.

The 11 parties running in the 2007 Duma election

| 'Pretenders' | 'Spoilers' | 'Outsiders' | Comment ⁷¹ |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| United Russia, UR (Yedinaya Rossiya) | | | Founded in 2001. Pro-Putin party led by Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov but headed in the elections by Putin. |
| Communist Party of the Russian Federation, CPRF (Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii) | | | Founded in 1990, temporarily suspended in 1993 after the shelling of the White House in Moscow. ⁷² Headed from start by Gennady Zyuganov. |

⁶⁹ Kommersant (2007), 'Bez vesti popavshiye', published 29 October 2007 last accessed 3 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=819791>.

⁷⁰ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Partii berut samootvod', published 29 August 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007 Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-08-29/1_partii.html.

⁷¹ The year of foundation for some parties is not always easy determinable - symptomatic of the volatile party system. On the CEC website (www.cikrf.ru/politparty) dates of registration for the parties can be found, but due to the constant reshaping of the parties, Just Russia is said to have been registered in 2002 and Patriots of Russia in 2002, several years before today's parties were formed by merging processes. Other sources are: White et al. (1997), p. 111 and the websites of the parties as of 14 November 2007: www.agroparty.ru, www.democrats.ru, www.edinros.ru, www.gr-sila.ru, www.kprf.ru, www.ldpr.ru, www.patriot-rus.ru, www.pp-pss.ru, www.spravedlivo.ru, www.sps.ru, www.yabloko.ru and www.duma.gov.ru (where all MPs in the current and former Dumas can be found.)

⁷² Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 227.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, LDPR (Liberal-demokraticeskaya Partiya Rossii) | | | Founded in 1990, registration temporarily annulled in August 1992. ⁷³ Populist, nationalist and a one-man show of its constant leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. |
| Just Russia, JR (Spravedlivaya Rossiya) | | | Founded in 2006. Left-wing and Pro-Putin party led by Sergey Mironov, speaker of the Federation Council. |
| | Agrarian Party of Russia (Agrarnaya Partiya Rossii) | | Founded in 1993. Party aiming at rural voters. Spoiler party of the CPRF and JR. Led by Vladimir Plotnikov, MP 1993-2007. |
| Yabloko | | | Founded in 1993. Social-liberal party. From 2006 including three fractions: Greens, Soldiers' Mothers and Advocates of Human and Civil Rights. Led by Grigory Yavlinsky. |
| | Civic Force (Grazhdanskaya Sila) | | Founded in 2002. Right-wing party. Spoiler party of the SPS and Yabloko. |

⁷³ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 204.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | Led by Mikhail Barshchevsky. |
| Union of Right Forces, SPS (Soyuz pravykh sil) | | | Right-wing party founded in 2001, although entering the Duma in 1999 as an election bloc. Led by Nikita Belykh, former deputy governor of the Perm region. |
| | Patriots of Russia (Patrioty Rossii) | | Patriotic party founded in 2005. The Party for Russia's Renaissance and the not registered Great Russia joined in 2007. Spoiler party of the CPRF and JR. Led by Gennady Semigin, former MP for Motherland party and the CPRF. |
| | | Social Justice Party (Partiya Sotsialnoy Spravedlivosti) | Nationalistic and left-wing. Led by Aleksey Podberezkin, former MP for the CPRF. |
| | Democratic Party of Russia (Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii) | | Traces its origin back to 1990. Right-wing with a Europe-friendly/Eurasian image. Spoiler party of the SPS and Yabloko. Led by Andrey Bogdanov. |

United Russia (UR)

The main managers of United Russia's precursor Unity were the head of the Presidential Administration Aleksandr Voloshin and his deputies Vladislav Surkov and Igor Shabdurashov.⁷⁴ Vladislav Surkov, today coordinating domestic policy in the Presidential Administration, is currently the main political curator in Russia.

The close connection between United Russia and the Presidential Administration was demonstrated on 6 November 2007, when Vladislav Surkov and the party leader and chairman of the previous and current Duma, Boris Gryzlov, had a closed meeting to instruct candidates from United Russia.⁷⁵ Another example was the intervention of the Presidential Administration after United Russia's congress, where their list of candidates was formed and prepared to be sent to the Central Election Commission.⁷⁶

Political analyst Yevgeny Minchenko claims that there were two pre-election staffs in United Russia. One staff worked to raise the ratings for Putin, mainly by media coverage of the President's daily work. The other, the official staff, concentrated on transforming Putin's popularity into support for United Russia. The Kremlin reportedly also formed a group of parliamentarian deputies from United Russia that were allowed to propagandise for the party in the media.⁷⁷

Surkov appears on the party's internet website informing about the role of United Russia and the President's role in Russia's political system.⁷⁸ The personal connections between the Presidential Administration and United Russia are obvious. The deputy head of the President's Department for Domestic Policy, Leonid Ivlev, and Mikhail Sidorov, of the PR company IMA-Consulting and close to the Presidential Administration, were working in the pre-election staff.⁷⁹ IMA-Consulting has in the past worked with different projects approved by the

⁷⁴ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 98.

⁷⁵ Newsru.com (2007), 'Gryzlov i Surkov sobrali deputatov-yedinorossov ne sekretnyy instruktsiy', published 7 November 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/07nov2007/surkov.html>.

⁷⁶ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Kreml usilit shtab Yedinoy Rossii', published 5 October 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-10-05/1_shtab.html.

⁷⁷ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Kreml usilit shtab Yedinoy Rossii', published 5 October 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-10-05/1_shtab.html.

⁷⁸ United Russia, www.edinros.ru, last accessed 6 February 2008, Internet.

⁷⁹ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Kreml usilit shtab Yedinoy Rossii', published 5 October 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-10-05/1_shtab.html.

Presidential Administration, the Moscow government (led by its mayor Yury Luzhkov) and United Russia's predecessor party Unity. Konstantin Kostin, advisor to Vladislav Surkov, is deputy head of United Russia's executive committee.⁸⁰

Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF)

The way the CPRF has behaved has generally suited the Kremlin well. The party has successfully functioned as the main enemy of the Kremlin. Regime strategists are reported to have appreciated the CPRF's conservative message and their stress on stability, which has helped to cool down public opinion.⁸¹

There are many examples elsewhere in this report of the economic and personal ties between the CPRF and the political and economic leadership of the country, but the party has probably remained slightly more independent than other parties.

The CPRF routinely submitted lukewarm protests against the election results, but has a record of mobilising large public protests.⁸²

Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)

The LDPR was the first political party to be registered in Russia. It was registered in 1990 and has been much of a one-man-show under its scandalous leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky. It seems likely that the KGB was heavily involved in the creation of LDPR as a fake liberal party, which later turned into a fake nationalist party.⁸³ It seems plausible that at least some parts of a leadership accustomed to a one-party system will try to form one or several parties themselves once the one-party system is abolished.

Despite its often vocal conduct, it became clear in the late 1990s that the LDPR was acting according to the Kremlin's wishes at every important vote in the

⁸⁰ Kommersant (2007), 'Yedinaya Rossiya zanovo rastavilo aktsenty', published 21 September 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=806882>.

⁸¹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 226.

⁸² CPRF, <http://www.kprf.ru/actions/53565.html>, last accessed 7 December 2007.

⁸³ Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 22-23.

Duma,⁸⁴ although in the former Duma it was used ‘only as a last resort’ by the Kremlin.⁸⁵

Just Russia (JR)

Just Russia is also loyal to Putin and the Kremlin. Vladislav Surkov, said to have been against the party originally, interfered heavily in the pre-election work of the party.⁸⁶ Just Russia was created out of Party of Life, Party of Pensioners and Motherland (Rodina) in 2006. The small Party of Life was set up in June 2002, also on the Kremlin’s initiative.⁸⁷ The Party of Pensioners was a Kremlin project to take votes from the Communists⁸⁸ and had some potential in channelling protests from pensioners. Motherland was initially a relatively popular and Kremlin-backed party working against the communists of CPRF.⁸⁹ However, Motherland became less reliable, particularly after the major public demonstrations against cutbacks in the social benefit system in the beginning of 2005. In November 2007 it transpired that the former party leader, Dmitry Rogozin, would be appointed Russia’s representative to NATO in November 2007⁹⁰, and he was finally appointed by President Putin on 10 January 2008.⁹¹ This could be a way of disposing of a famous, unreliable politician, but sending a leading nationalist to the NATO, deliberately or not, sends a signal that Russia will continue its harsh tone in foreign relations.

The Just Russia party leader Sergey Mironov once stated that: ‘with the foundation of our party there is a real choice for the Russians, including choosing between parties that support the current president.’⁹² As the opinion poll ratings were continuously low, Surkov and the Kremlin were accused by Just Russia

⁸⁴ Lenta.ru, ‘Liberalno-demokraticheskaya partiya’, last accessed 21 November 2007, Internet: <http://duma.lenta.ru/parties/ldpr/>.

⁸⁵ Kommersant (2007), ‘Motherland gets new life’, published 26 July 2006, last accessed 9 December 2007, Internet: http://www.kommersant.com/p692788/r_1/Motherland_Gets_New_Life/.

⁸⁶ Kommersant (2007), ‘Spravedlivaya Rossiya s rabotala na dvoynku’, published 8 October 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=812550>.

⁸⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 127.

⁸⁸ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 126.

⁸⁹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 112, pp. 260.

⁹⁰ Kommersant (2007), ‘Rodina kadrami ne razbrasivayetsa’, published 2 November 2007, last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=821297>.

⁹¹ Rossiyskaya Gazeta (2008), ‘Razgovor s NATO po-russki’, published 11 January 2008, last accessed 1 February 2008, Internet: <http://www.rg.ru/2008/01/11/rogozin.html>.

⁹² Argumenty i Fakty (2007), No. 35 2007, Sergei Mironov quoted on p. 2.

members of not letting Just Russia have enough famous personalities among the candidates on their party list.⁹³ This clearly illustrates the degree to which the Kremlin is considered to manage party politics.

Putin commented on the difference between United Russia and Just Russia at a press conference on 1 February 2007 in quite an illustrative but at the same time not very clarifying way:

*The difference, as far as I can see, is that United Russia seems to be more of a right-leaning, liberal centre, at least in terms of economic policies, although it also features many Social Democratic aspects. But Just Russia, of course, is a party that is reminiscent, in all of its aspects of a Socialist, or Social Democratic trend. This may not be completely evident or visible at this point in time, just as the right-leaning liberal tendencies of United Russia are not yet fully visible yet [sic]. That takes time.*⁹⁴

On 11 December 2007, Just Russia, together with United Russia, Civic Force and the Agrarian Party, declared that they supported the presidential candidacy of Dmitry Medvedev.⁹⁵

Agrarian Party of Russia

The Agrarian party has cooperated with the CPRF but has gradually moved towards closer cooperation with United Russia. Some observers pointed at the risk of a party split in 2001 when Fatherland-All Russia seemed to have made serious attempts to merge with the party.⁹⁶ Despite the earlier cooperation with the CPRF, the Agrarians named CPRF together with Just Russia as their main opponents in the Duma election of 2007, but promised to also criticise United Russia.⁹⁷

⁹³ Newsru.com (2007), 'Kreml udalyayet iz spiska Spravedlivoy Rossii yarkikh kandidatov', published 8 September 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/08sep2007/sdf.html>

⁹⁴ Putin quoted in Petra Stykow (2007), p. 4.

⁹⁵ Kommersant (2007), 'Vladimira Putina lishili preyemnika', published 11 December 2007, last accessed 31 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=834836>.

⁹⁶ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2001), 'Konets Agrarnoy partii?', published 8 August 2001, last accessed 31 January 2008, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2001-08-08/3_the_end.html.

⁹⁷ Vremya Novostei (2007), 'Seychas ne vremya druzhby. Agrarnaya partiya Rossii namerena proyti v Gosdumu bez soyuznikov', No. 149, published 21 August 2007, last accessed 31 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.vremya.ru/2007/149/4/185206.html>.

Central in the party's relationship to the presidential administration is probably Aleksey Chesnakov, aide of Vladislav Surkov, who allegedly met with people from the Agrarian Party to give detailed instructions for the campaigning.⁹⁸

The best illustration of the party's current political position is, as mentioned above, its support of Dmitry Medvedev's presidential candidacy, announced on 11 December 2007, shortly after the Duma election.⁹⁹

Yabloko

There is reason to believe that even Yabloko, the party with the most democratic and liberal opposition position in the eyes of many in the West, has had a closer relationship with the Kremlin than is generally understood. Shortly before the Duma election of 2003, Yabloko's leader Grigory Yavlinsky admitted to the now murdered journalist Anna Politkovskaya that he told the Kremlin in 1999 he "was not against Putin" and that he had had discussions with the Kremlin about possible money donations to Yabloko. However, Yavlinsky denied that any deal was made with the Presidential Administration. Nevertheless, the way he acted while meeting with journalists in November 2003 made several of them suspect some kind of deal between Yavlinsky and the Kremlin, prior to the upcoming elections.¹⁰⁰ If that was the case he was probably deceived, since Yabloko did not make it into the Duma. Lately, Yavlinsky has said that he sees Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov as a serious man, who at least eight years ago shared some of his views.¹⁰¹

The pre-election programme of Yabloko, although critical of the current political system, does not mention Putin. 'The President' is only mentioned in connection with the party's political goal of abolishing the censorship in the state media and allowing criticism of the President and other high officials.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

⁹⁹ Kommersant (2007), 'Vladimira Putina lishili preyemnika', published 11 December 2007, last accessed 31 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=834836>.

¹⁰⁰ Politkovskaya, Anna (2007), *A Russian Diary*, (New York: Random House), p. 12-14.

¹⁰¹ Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 'Yabloko sozrela pervym', published 17 September 2007, last accessed 4 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.rg.ru/2007/09/17/yabloko.html>.

¹⁰² Yavlinsky, Grigory, 'Sem shagov k ravenstvu vozmozhnostey. Predlozhenie G. Yavlinskim dlya vyborov Yabloka v 2007-2008 godakh', published 19 June 2007, last accessed 22 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.yavlinsky.ru/said/documents/index.phtml?id=3342>.

Although to a lesser extent than the SPS, Yabloko has had party members and elected candidates within the power elite, most notably Sergey Stepashin, former head of the FSB and considered close to Putin. He is now the head of the Audit Chamber (the main control function of the budget funds). Stepashin was elected MP for Yabloko in 1999.¹⁰³ Another example is Igor Artemov, head of the Federal Antimonopoly Service.¹⁰⁴

Civic Force

The nominally right-wing party Civic Force is a Putin-loyal political project aimed at attracting votes from the right wing electorate. The party is led by Mikhail Barshchevsky, who since 2001 has been the Cabinet's representative in the Constitution Court, the Supreme Court and the Arbitration Court.¹⁰⁵

According to Barshchevsky, the party will fight SPS as well as Yabloko, but not United Russia. Barshchevsky also admitted that he has 'many friends in United Russia' and that his party would bring political ideas 'on a tray' to them. Furthermore, Barshchevsky's, and his party's, attitude towards President Putin is positive. He says he appreciates Putin 'as a person and as an officer'.¹⁰⁶ Further confirming the status of Civic Force as a party loyal to the Kremlin, Vladislav Surkov made an opening speech at the party conference on 31 July 2007.¹⁰⁷

Barshchevsky was asked the following question during an interview: 'Mikhail, you always show restraint in your judgement of United Russia and mercilessly judge potential like-minded and allies in the political right-wing field. Do you feel like a spoiler, mobilised by the power?' Barshchevsky denied this suggestion, explaining his critical attitude towards Yabloko by labelling it a social democratic party. He said he was even more critical of the SPS for

¹⁰³ Kommersant (2007), 'Pravila Igry', published 8 October 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=812534>, <http://www.eng.yabloko.ru/Press/1999/991220.html>, last accessed 23 November 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Yabloko, <http://www.yabloko.ru/Persons/artem.html>, last accessed 6 December 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Civic Force, <http://www.gr-sila.ru/document.html?id=2956>, last accessed 17 December 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Te yeshche grazhdane', published 24 September 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2186747.shtml>.

¹⁰⁷ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Surkov ozabochen polevniyem strany', published 1 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-08-01/1_surkov.html.

betraying democracy. However, Barshchevsky also accused United Russia of what he described as a lack of ideology.¹⁰⁸

Civic Force showed their support for the current political leadership by supporting the presidential candidacy of Dmitry Medvedev.¹⁰⁹

Union of Right Forces (SPS)

After its appearance in 1999, the SPS served as a liberal party of the power elite. Its creation was supported by the Presidential Administration.¹¹⁰ The SPS was a hardliner on the second war in Chechnya, thus benefiting from Putin's popularity, and at the same time distancing itself from Yabloko, which opposed the war.¹¹¹

The SPS has always been part of the establishment, since it was formed by people such as Anatoly Chubais (current head of the power and electricity monopoly UES and responsible for many privatisation programmes in the 1990s), Boris Nemtsov and other former ministers or top officials, including Yegor Gaidar, leader of the party Russia's Democratic Choice (predecessor of the SPS) and Sergey Kirienko - who were even Prime Minister for short periods in 1992 and 1998 respectively. It is interesting to note that Gaidar and Kirienko were appointed Prime Minister after Russia's Democratic Choice gave Yeltsin its support in his 1996 re-election campaign. The SPS also backed Putin in 2000 and were loyal to the Kremlin in the Duma up to the party's failure in the 2003 election.¹¹²

The pre-election programme of the SPS, in contrast to Yabloko's, discusses President Putin. The SPS refuses to be completely for or against Putin, as it is said to be a party based on ideas. According to the programme, the situation in Russia changed dramatically in 2003, because Putin abandoned the path towards

¹⁰⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Mikhail Barshchevsky: Vse ostalnyye – shakaly poleticheskogo polya', published 6 September 2007, last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-09-06/3_barshevski.html.

¹⁰⁹ Kommersant (2007), 'Vladimira Putina lishili preyemnika', published 11 December 2007, last accessed 31 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=834836>.

¹¹⁰ Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 98-99.

¹¹¹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 99-100.

¹¹² Gelman, Vladimir (2005), 'Political opposition in Russia: A dying species?', Post-Soviet Affairs, Vol. 21 July-September, No. 3 2005, p. 237-238.

liberalisation (manifested by the attack on Yukos) and ‘a parliament without opposition’ was elected.¹¹³

The SPS has also challenged Putin by accusing him of breaking the law during his campaigning in the autumn of 2007. The party leader Nikita Belykh, as well as Boris Nemtsov and Maria Gaidar, daughter of Yegor Gaidar, participated in the demonstrations in Moscow on 24 November 2007 under the banner of the opposition movement Other Russia. This could possibly be a sign of radicalisation of the SPS. However, their participation could also be argued to discredit the other participants in the demonstration since most Russians rightly consider the SPS very much a part of the political establishment, especially because of its leaders’ role in the privatisation programmes of the chaotic 1990s.

Patriots of Russia

The party Patriots of Russia is headed by Gennady Semigin, who was expelled from the CPRF. The party was not allowed to engage Dmitry Rogozin, the former leader of the successful party Motherland from the 2003 election. Semigin is reported to have had a detailed discussion on this issue with the influential and ever present Vladislav Surkov.¹¹⁴

In 2007, the members of the Party for Russia’s Renaissance, also a Kremlin-initiated project,¹¹⁵ which was headed by Gennady Seleznev (formerly chairman of the Duma and deputy leader of the CPRF), declared they were going to merge with Patriots of Russia. In September, the Central Election Commission decided that the party could not use the free time in certain media that all parties are guaranteed, due to debts from the 2003 campaign. In addition, the Federal Registration Service refused registration of the new name ‘Patriotic Forces, for the Motherland!’ (Patrioticheskiye sily, za Rodinu!).¹¹⁶ Despite the information on the merger between the two parties, the Party for Russia’s Renaissance was

¹¹³ SPS, Pre-election programme of SPS, approved 21 September 2007, last accessed 22 November 2007, Internet: http://www.sps.ru/?id=222854#_Toc178588429.

¹¹⁴ Gazeta.ru (2007), ‘Surkov-patriotizm’, published 24 September 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2187537.shtml>

¹¹⁵ Wilson, Kenneth (2006), p. 331.

¹¹⁶ Newsru.com (2007), ‘TsIK lishil Partiyu Vozrozhdeniya Rossii besplatnykh efirov i mesta v pechati’, published 25 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/25sep2007/smi.html> and Kommersant (2007), ‘Patrioty vozrodis i uvelichilis’, published 14 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=804279>.

still registered by the Central Election Commission after the December election.¹¹⁷

Social Justice Party

The links between the Social Justice Party and the Presidential Administration are obvious. The party's website has links to both Putin- and Medvedev-related websites,¹¹⁸ but no other presidential candidates. A statement on the party's website explicitly supports the decision by the Central Election Commission to ban former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov from running in the March 2008 presidential election. The statement also declares: 'We are convinced that the side that is most interested that this election to the Presidency of the Russian Federation will be the most fair and just in Russian history, is the Kremlin and all accusation against it in this matter is totally groundless.'¹¹⁹

The Social Justice Party has been keen on establishing good relations with Oleg Govorun, head of the Domestic Policy Department of the Presidential Administration, and has publicly expressed hope of an intense cooperation with him, and of receiving help from him.¹²⁰ Aleksey Chesnakov, aide to Vladislav Surkov, has allegedly met with people from the Party of Social Justice and given them detailed instructions on their election campaigns.¹²¹

Democratic Party of Russia

The Democratic Party of Russia derives from one of the oldest parties registered in Russia (in 1990), making it a good political brand. For a short period in 1990, the party's predecessor was the largest non-Communist party and the most promising democratic party. However, it was destroyed by the KGB and split into several fractions. A second attempt, in October 1990, by the democratic opposition to form a party called Democratic Russia was also sabotaged by the KGB, who saw it as one of their main tasks to prevent the organisation of a democratic opposition.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Central Election Commission (2007), officially registered political parties, last accessed 29 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.cikrf.ru/politparty/>.

¹¹⁸ Social Justice Party, <http://www.pp-pss.ru/main.php?ID=421886>, last accessed 31 January 2008.

¹¹⁹ Social Justice Party <http://www.pp-pss.ru/main.php?ID=421886> last accessed 31 January 2008.

¹²⁰ Social Justice Party, www.pp-pss.ru/main.php?ID=271436, last accessed 22 November 2007.

¹²¹ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

¹²² Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 21-22 and 152.

The party is led by Andrey Bogdanov, who has been involved in the formation of other parties, including United Russia and the Party of Pensioners. He even headed the department for contacts with the media in United Russia.¹²³

The nominated Duma candidates of the Democratic Party of Russia in 2007 were all party members.¹²⁴ However, the fact that according to the documents sent to the Central Election Commission, the vast majority of the 578 candidates worked at only three different places (namely the All-Russian Citizen Committee for Fair Elections, the Democratic Institute for International Relations and the Institute for Political Sociology) aroused suspicion. Furthermore, a third of the candidates did not have any registered income. The party leader, Andrey Bogdanov, had some obvious difficulties explaining these circumstances,¹²⁵ but the Central Election Commission did not find anything illegal in this and the party was allowed to run.

Registered parties that were not allowed to run

Although three registered parties were not allowed to run in the elections and one, the Party for Russia's Renaissance, chose to join forces with Patriots of Russia and was treated earlier in this report, it is worth noting a few facts about them in order to fully understand the political environment in Russia.

Ecological Party – the Greens

In 1993, Cedar (later renamed the Ecological Party – the Greens) was one of several parties with 'covert links' to the Kremlin. Just like the Green party of Ukraine (which briefly enjoyed more success than its Russian equivalent), it was sponsored by business interests,¹²⁶ rather than originating from environmental

¹²³ Lenta.ru (2007), <http://duma.lenta.ru/parties/democrat/>, last accessed 6 January 2008.

¹²⁴ Kommersant (2007), 'Dempartiya oboydetsa bez artistov I sportmenov', published 19 September 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=806050>

¹²⁵ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Kollegi po bezdenezhyu', published 26 September 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2194196.shtml>.

¹²⁶ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 120, 131.

groups. The Greens, at least initially, had links to Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov.¹²⁷

The standard formula for how the political parties have declared their loyalty to the political leadership can be illustrated by the example of the Ecological Party. It has declared its will to cooperate with the Cabinet and with United Russia and that it totally supports the President. However, the party is critical of 'the regional powers' for not fulfilling the President's policy. The party leader, Anatoly Panfilov, has stated that the party had received support from the Presidential Administration.¹²⁸

The situation around the party is confused by the fact that Anatoly Panfilov also sits in the Supreme Council of the Civic Force party described above.¹²⁹ The Green's candidate 'troika', furthermore, included two persons with a right-wing profile. One was the author and journalist Svetlana Konegen (who entered the party the day before she was nominated); the other was Vladimir Semenov, former MP for the SPS, although originally elected for the Unity party.¹³⁰ The Ecological Party declared it was seeking cooperation with 'European surroundings' through the 'Moscow European Club', an 'informal association' of Russian politicians and other people of influence with different political convictions, which is headed by Vladimir Semenov.¹³¹

In September 2007 it seemed that the party would not run in the elections, but plans were changed and a decision taken to collect the required amount of signatures.¹³² As it turned out, however, the Greens were not allowed to participate in the elections since the signatures collected were not approved by

¹²⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 126.

¹²⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Zelenyye osvaivayut yevropeyskiy opyt', published 17 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-09-17/3_zelenye.html; Newsru.com (2007), 'Spisok zelenikh na vyborakh v dumu vozglavyat Panfilov, Konegen i Semenov', published 16 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/16sep2007/2007z.html>.

¹²⁹ Civic Force, <http://gr-sila.ru/document.html?id=3024>, last accessed 22 November 2007; compare with Ecological Party – the Greens, http://www.greenparty.ru/party_leader_en.php, last accessed 22 November 2007.

¹³⁰ State Duma of the Russian Federation <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>, last accessed 22 November 2007.

¹³¹ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Zelenyye osvaivayut yevropeyskiy opyt', published 17 September 2007, last accessed 3 September 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-09-17/3_zelenye.html. See also Moscow European Club (2007), http://www.moscow-europe.ru/info_ru2.html, last accessed 8 December 2007.

¹³² Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Zelenyye osvaivayut yevropeyskiy opyt', published 17 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-09-17/3_zelenye.html.

the Central Election Commission on 27 October. The Greens then decided to support the Democratic Party instead,¹³³ despite the fact that the party leader sits in the supreme council of its rival Civic Force. This clearly illustrates the dubious nature of these three parties.

People's Union

Putin invited Sergey Baburin from the People's Union to meet him on 26 September 2007 in the fashionable holiday resort town of Sochi. Directly after the meeting, Baburin declared that the 'Russian March' was to be held in Moscow on 4 November. This march has previously gathered many of Russia's most extreme nationalist groups. Putin did not openly support the march but Baburin would hardly have announced the march directly after this meeting if he had not received approval for it or at least discussed it with Putin. According to Baburin, Putin 'listened to all our projects to strengthen the patriotic movement in Russia'. Baburin also said he did not want any revolution and Putin commented: 'That is without doubt a very important course for the political work, but not only for your party but for the country and the state.'¹³⁴ Despite this, the People's Union was not allowed to participate in the elections.

Party of Peace and Unity

The Party of Peace and Unity is a pro-Putin, patriotic party under the only female party leader, Sazhi Umalatova. She has had a long career in the Soviet party bureaucracy and stood in opposition to both Yeltsin and Gorbachev. The party declared its support for Putin already in September 2000 and supports the presidential candidacy of Medvedev.¹³⁵

4.2 A political system based on influential individuals

There are many examples of how Russian politicians have changed parties and often even done so several times in order to stay on the political scene (a few

¹³³ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Partiya Zelenyye podderzhat na predstoyashchikh vyborakh v dumu demokraticheskuyu partiyu', http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-11-14/100_green.html, last accessed 14 November 2007.

¹³⁴ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Iz Kremlya na Russkiy Marsh' published 27 September 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2196257.shtml>.

¹³⁵ Party of Peace and Unity, <http://www.patriotparty.ru/> and <http://www.patriotparty.ru/about.php>.

examples are given below). This is not unique to Russia, but it is one of the characteristics of the Russian political system and will probably continue to be so. Although United Russia has become the largest party, it is heavily dependent on the person of Vladimir Putin. Putin, on the other hand, has expressed his aversion for political parties, saying explicitly that a vote for United Russia in the elections would be a vote for him and not the party. However, he admitted that United Russia is the best party at the moment.¹³⁶

A more institutionalised party system would not automatically mean a more democratic system. If the current party system were to succeed in transforming itself into something more stable, it would probably make it easier for the current power elite to survive longer, as party-based non-democratic systems tend to outlive personality-based systems.¹³⁷

Viktor Pokhmelkin, independent (non-party affiliated) MP of the 2003-2007 Duma, can serve as one example of how many politicians change parties. In the 1990s he held several important posts in the right-wing and pro-Kremlin party Russia's Choice, which later transformed itself into the SPS. In 2002 he entered the Berezovsky-backed party Liberal Russia. After its failure he ended up as an independent MP. In 2007 he entered the left-wing Just Russia, after being promised to stand as number one on its party list in the Perm region. However, this promise was not kept and he consequently left the party in September 2007 and declared his intention to support Yabloko instead.¹³⁸

Even when people join a party of power, it is far from always being a success. The former governor of Samara, Konstantin Titov, has changed parties several times (Democratic Choice, Our Home is Russia, Golos Rossii, SPS, Social Democratic Party) and ended up in United Russia in 2005. However, this did not save him from losing his post to Vladimir Artyakov.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Vladimir Putin: Idealnoy politicheskoy struktury u nas net', published 14 November 2007, last accessed 21 November 2007 Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-11-14/1_putin.html?mthree=1.

¹³⁷ Gelman, Vladimir (2007), 'The transformation of Russia's Party System', Russian Analytical Digest, 19/07, p. 14.

¹³⁸ Kommersant (2007), 'Spravedlivaya Rossiya idet na ubyl', published 11 September 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=803089>.

¹³⁹ Kommersant (2007), 'Gubernatoroobrazuyushcheye predpriyatiye', published 28 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=799128> and 'Chem proslavilsya Konstantin Titov', published 28 August 2007, last accessed 17 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=799205>.

The LDPR has been a party that accepts dubious individuals who pay enough money. The LDPR list of candidates for the Duma election in 1999 contained several known criminals. However, this led to difficulties for the LDPR and the party was forced to run not as a party but as an election bloc called the Zhirinovsky Bloc. It nevertheless included several of the criminal figures from the original LDPR list. Two of these suspect individuals later joined Unity (which later developed into United Russia).¹⁴⁰

One of Russia's richest individuals, Mikhail Gutseriev, bought himself a place on the LDPR's list in 1995 in order to be able to lobby for his economic interests in the Duma. Zhirinovsky later repaid him by advocating the creation of an offshore zone in the region of Ingushetiya, adjacent to the republic of Chechnya. This zone soon became a notorious black hole for federal budget funds and tax evasion. Gutseriev, of Ingushetian origin, seems to have been deeply involved in this business.¹⁴¹ However, Gutseriev lost control over his company Russneft and fled to London in August 2007.¹⁴²

4.3 The volatile nature of the political parties

Most observers agree that Russia's party system had a volatile nature in the 1990s.¹⁴³ Changes in legislation in recent years have reduced the number of parties, which could be interpreted as a consolidation of the party system. The new legislation is not very objectionable in theory¹⁴⁴ and the parties abolished have mostly been small.¹⁴⁵ In the first parliamentary elections of 1993, a total number of 130 parties were registered but only 21 nominated candidates. Finally, only 13 parties and electoral blocs were allowed to take part in the elections. In

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 208.

¹⁴¹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 206-207, the use of internal off-shore zones (Mordoviya, Kalmykiya and Chukotka) by energy companies to dodge taxes has been described in Larsson, Robert L. (2006), *Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier*, (Stockholm: The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), Scientific Report FOI-R—1934--SE), p. 82.

¹⁴² Newsru.com (2007), 'Eks-glava Russnefti Gutseriev obyavlen v mezhdunarodnyy rozysk', published 31 Augusti 2007, last accessed, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/31aug2007/gutseriev.html>; Newsru.com (2007), 'Gutseriev ne schitayet smert syna sluchaynoy: v Baku bylo provedeno taynoye vskrytiye', published 30 August 2007, last accessed 29 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/30aug2007/russ.html>.

¹⁴³ Wilson, Kenneth (2006), 'Party-System Development under Putin', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 22 October-December No. 4 2006, p. 320.

¹⁴⁴ Wilson, Kenneth (2006), p. 341.

¹⁴⁵ Wilson, Kenneth (2006), p. 330.

1995 there were 43 parties and electoral blocs running,¹⁴⁶ in 1999 there were 26 and in 2003 there were 23.¹⁴⁷ Eleven parties ran in the 2007 election.

The legislation regulating the political parties has made it possible to fake the construction of a Western-style party system as part of its [the Putin administration's] phoney commitment to democracy, as one observer has put it.¹⁴⁸ The political reality, in a broader sense, is dominated by the Presidential Administration and leaves the political parties to play a minor part.

Many of Russia's political parties have been created by merging existing parties. This could be interpreted as a consolidation of the party system but there is a striking absence of parties formed out of the initiatives of common people and independent NGOs. There have been such attempts, but so far they have all failed.

Russia's vast territory, together with the great diversity of conditions under which different people live, has been an obstacle to party building in Russia. A study from 1999 states that the national-regional political alliances are still very dependent on influential individuals and that it is always going to be difficult to create a party-based system because of the large size and diversity of Russia.¹⁴⁹

United Russia was created through the merger of Unity and Fatherland-All Russia in 2001.¹⁵⁰ It was created to strengthen the support for President Putin and has never been an independent political actor. Moscow mayor Yury Luzhkov and others in the party Fatherland-All Russia were seen as a threat to Putin, but the result of the merger was that the pro-president party and an opponent joined forces, probably both because pressure was put on Fatherland-All Russia and for the sake of mutual benefit.

A similar process occurred when Just Russia was created on the initiative of the Kremlin, in the summer of 2006, out of Party of Life, Party of Pensioners and Motherland (Rodina). All three parties had previously been created on the initiative of the Kremlin¹⁵¹ for the purpose of controlling protest voters and attracting votes from the CPRF. These voters became very active in the

¹⁴⁶ White, Stephen, Rose, Richard and McAllister, Ian (1997), 'How Russia Votes', pp. 110 and 204.

¹⁴⁷ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Igra po novym pravilam', published 23 August 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007 Internet: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-08-23/3_kartblansh.html.

¹⁴⁸ Wilson, Kenneth (2006) p. 343.

¹⁴⁹ Nicholson, Martin (1999), 'Towards a Russia of the Regions', *The International Institute for Strategic Studies – Adelphi Paper 330*, (New York: Oxford University Press 1999), p. 70.

¹⁵⁰ United Russia, History of the party, www.edinros.ru/news.html?rid=3121, last accessed 30 November 2007.

¹⁵¹ Wilson, Kenneth (2006), p. 331.

beginning of 2005, when Motherland in particular participated in the major public demonstrations against cuts in the social benefit system. A merger of these parties was therefore probably aimed at the Kremlin regaining control over some of these voters, to 'unify all sound left-wing forces' in Russian politics. According to its leader, Sergey Mironov, this includes the Communists and parts of the LDPR, for example.¹⁵²

For some time there were rumours that Just Russia would even incorporate the CPRF and be renamed the Russian Socialist Party.¹⁵³ The youth organisation of the CPRF, Union of Communist Youth (SKM), declared during a congress in Moscow on 20 August 2007 that they were changing party affiliation to Just Russia. That congress was probably encouraged and possibly secretly organised by Just Russia.¹⁵⁴

Another example of the volatile and personality-based party structure is the People's Union, a nationalistic party with a religious orthodox profile which, as described above, was not allowed to run in the elections. Its leader Sergey Baburin was elected MP for the Motherland party in 2003. The majority of Motherland's MPs joined Just Russia when it was founded but some went to the fraction headed by Baburin, called Motherland - People's Will (Rodina-Narodnaya volya). Baburin was then forced out of the fraction by the businessman Gennady Semigin, 'known for his raider talents in party building' and now leader of the party Patriots of Russia, which participated in the elections. Baburin stayed in the post of deputy chairman in the Duma - in contradiction of the rules (which forbid MPs outside a parliamentary fraction sitting in such a post).¹⁵⁵

Forming parties by merging existing ones usually creates weak party structures which can fall apart, especially if success fails to come or if the new party

¹⁵² Newsru.com (2007), 'Spravedlivaya Rossiya pretenduyut na obyedineniye vseh levyykh sil Rossii', published 30 August 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/30aug2007/mechty.html>.

¹⁵³ Newsru.com (2007), 'Spravedlivaya Rossiya mozhet byt pereimenovana v Rossiyskuyu sotspartiyyu i obyedenitsya s KPRF', published 17 August 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/17aug2007/mironov.html>

¹⁵⁴ Kommersant (2007), 'Spravedlivaya Rossiya zamakhnulas na molodezhnoye krylo KPRF', published 21 August 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=796905>.

¹⁵⁵ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Cherepkov bez Glazyeva', published 27 September 2007 last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2197646.shtml>

becomes a threat to a powerful enemy. An example of this was seen in the Stavropol region, which was the only region where Just Russia, or any other party, defeated United Russia in the regional elections in March 2007. The regional party structure of Just Russia fell apart in its original three party compounds, probably after great pressure from United Russia¹⁵⁶ and the mayor of Stavropol, Dmitry Kuzmin from Just Russia, was prohibited from participating in the elections at the last moment, accused of 'illegal campaigning' and exceeding his authority. The Agrarian party in the region was also directly involved in accusing Kuzmin, possibly acting as a proxy for United Russia or other interests.¹⁵⁷

4.4 The faking and quashing of political parties

From the previous description of the parties it is obvious that almost all of them are empty of political substance and are instead best described as existing to legitimise the political system. However, a few more words are called for regarding the faking and the quashing of political parties.

The parties are required by law to present official membership numbers. The legal demand introduced in 2005 for 50 000 members in order for a political party¹⁵⁸ to be officially registered can be a way to eliminate unwanted parties. If they fail to meet the demand they are simply dissolved or are forced to merge with better controlled parties. In other words, the demand for 50 000 party members could be used as a tool to manage the party system, rather than as a means of consolidating it. An example of this was when the Soldiers' Mothers party and the Green Russia party joined Yabloko in 2006.

The party leader of Green Russia, Aleksey Yablokov, has declared that the party only joined Yabloko because it saw no other option¹⁵⁹ as it had only managed to acquire 17 000 members in the six months following its foundation, significantly

¹⁵⁶ Kommersant (2007), 'Partiynnye nize ne khotyat zhit po-staromu', published 30 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=799874>.

¹⁵⁷ Kommersant (2007), 'Spravedlivaya Rossiya lishilas Stavropolskogo paravoza', published 27 November 2007, last accessed 3 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=829789>.

¹⁵⁸ Central Election Commission (2007), <http://www.cikrf.ru/politparty/>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Yabloko, http://www.yabloko.ru/Publ/2006/2006_04/060418_rg_zelen.html, last accessed 10 December 2007.

short of the required 50 000 members and other regulations concerning the regional branches, etc. Before 2005, the demand was for 10 000 members.¹⁶⁰

At the same time the gathering of members can be fabricated. The employees of companies close to the party leaders are often used. Andrew Wilson is probably right in claiming that ‘the phantom mass membership of mainstream parties’ is often just a bunch of employees in party leaders’ enterprises who signed up under duress’.¹⁶¹ The peculiar circumstances around the Democratic Party’s membership numbers, described above, are part of a general picture – as is Unity, which became the second biggest party in the election of 1999 (close behind CPRF), coming from nowhere without ideology, regional structure or real membership.¹⁶²

Smaller parties are often ‘actual or potential ‘clones’ or ‘spoilers’’.¹⁶³ A subtle way to impair the political work of unwanted parties is to create ‘clones’, i.e. parties with the same image as the unwanted parties, but with the prime purpose of splitting the vote and confusing the voters.

As demonstrated above, it is clear that Russia has several such parties and that the Presidential Administration manages them firmly.

4.5 Economic sponsors of the parties

Business interests have backed several parties, sometimes with fundamentally different ideologies and images. The sponsors also change parties, often for clearly opportunistic reasons. State-controlled economic interests, often difficult to distinguish from private economic interests and state-owned companies, have likewise been involved, even in backing parties that have declared themselves to be in opposition.

According to Saint Petersburg’s mayor and the former deputy Prime Minister Valentina Matvienko, ‘many political parties for the time being are commercial structures, which are into political business.’¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Green Russia, [http://www.rus-green.ru/about/argp.html?cmd\[164\]=i-163-7315](http://www.rus-green.ru/about/argp.html?cmd[164]=i-163-7315), last accessed 8 December 2007.

¹⁶¹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 245.

¹⁶² Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 96.

¹⁶³ Wilson, Andrew (2007), ‘Does Russia still have an opposition?’, Russian Analytical Digest, No. 28 2007, p 10.

¹⁶⁴ Argumenty i Fakty (2007), No. 35 2007, Matvienko quoted on p. 2.

Sometimes the sponsors of the political parties, or their associates, have received a place on the party's list of candidates to the Duma - and often they have put money into several parties at the same time. Oligarchs and large business structures, even state-owned companies such as Gazprom, have sponsored political parties, including official 'opposition' parties such as the CPRF.¹⁶⁵

Due to the often unclear limits between private property and state property in Russia, it is not always easy to determine whether state funding occurs. Putin has expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that money from the state-owned energy giant UES funds the SPS, which has been headed for many years by one of the founders of the party, Anatoly Chubais.¹⁶⁶

There are many examples of the oligarchs' involvement in party politics. To mention but a few: Mikhail Khodorkovsky's Yukos, for instance, had people on positions 11-13 on Yabloko's list of candidates in 2003 but at the same time funded United Russia.¹⁶⁷ A leading oligarch, Oleg Deripaska, used to be a main sponsor of the CPRF together with Yukos. Deripaska worked with Gennady Semigin of the CPRF, now leader of the Patriots of Russia, for this purpose.¹⁶⁸

The sponsors have frequently changed parties, at least until now. Aleksey Mitrofanov, the LDPR's main sponsor for many years and MP in the Duma 2003-2007, suddenly announced his departure from the LDPR to join Just Russia in late August 2007.¹⁶⁹ Other examples are Suleyman Kerimov and Konstantin Vetrov, who have also financed the LDPR but later turned to United Russia.¹⁷⁰ If United Russia continues to be the dominant party, it will naturally attract most sponsors.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 231.

¹⁶⁶ Newsru.com (2007) '*Anatolii Chubais ostavlyayet SPS radi Putina*', published 19 November 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet:
<http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/19nov2007/sps.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 109. Yabloko's leader Grigory Yavlinskiy now says he regrets the 1.5 year Yukos sponsored the party: '*Pismo v regionalnyye organizatsii PODP Yabloko*', published 26 December 2007, last accessed 2 January 2008, Internet:
http://www.yabloko.ru/Publ/2007/2007_12/071230_yavl.html.

¹⁶⁸ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 234.

¹⁶⁹ Newsru.com (2007), '*Soratinik Zhirinovskogo Aleksey Mitrofanov ukhodit iz LDPR v Spravedlovuyu Rossiyu*', published 29 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet:
<http://www.newsru.com/russia/29aug2007/vstupil.html>.

¹⁷⁰ Wilson, Andrew (2007), p. 9.

Moreover, during the late Yeltsin and early Putin era it seems that there occurred a shift from the time when oligarchs were buying themselves seats in the Duma towards a situation of business interests bribing those already elected. Business networks invest significant sums in favourites.¹⁷¹

The sponsorship of political parties may not always be voluntary. One example of how the system works for a man with a medium-sized business in a town near Moscow shows that not only do the mafia and ‘the usual’ authorities demand money from him, but also the local leaders of United Russia and Just Russia. He gave the local police chief an expensive foreign car for ‘special friendship’ and pays his ‘curator’ from the FSB with daily dinners in a restaurant. Moreover, he has ‘good relations’ with the mayor of the city, the tax inspectorate, the migration services and the public health authorities. Once a month, the fire and trade inspectorates visit his stores. Even the district police officer comes by for a present on his birthday. In 2007, another pair of spongers appeared – the head of the local branch of United Russia and a representative from Just Russia. They also asked for money, for their party activities.¹⁷²

This kind of bribe is usually paid in Russia to avoid problems with the authorities that could be created by those demanding money. If they are not credible in this, no money is paid. In this episode, the businessman obviously believed the local party leaders had such capability.

4.6 Merger of PR companies and political parties

Due to changes in the electoral system in Russia, the PR companies have already lost much of the influence they had in previous years. Therefore they have increasingly become integrated into the party structures. These PR consultants not only run the campaign, but sometimes also become candidates for the parties. Close personal links between PR companies and political parties is of course far from unique to Russia, but a look at the relations between PR companies and political parties suggests links to United Russia for at least two parties: The Democratic Party and the SPS. This could be a way for United Russia and the

¹⁷¹ Cheloukhine, Serguei and King, Joseph (2007) “Corruption networks as a sphere of investment activities in modern Russia”, *Communist and Post-Communist studies*, Vol. 40 No. 1 March 2007, pp. 115-116.

¹⁷² Novaya Gazeta (2007), ‘Kak ustroyeny kryshi v Rossii’, *Tsvetnoy vypusk* from 22 October 2007, No. 41 (51), last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/color41/03.html>.

Presidential Administration to pacify and influence these parties. Other parties, such as the LDPR and the CPRF, claim they are not using PR companies. However, there is a 'Centre for Research on Political Culture in Russia', which is associated to the CPRF.¹⁷³

An illustrative example is the company Novokom, which 'was completely reborn as the Democratic Party'. The party leader, Andrey Bogdanov, also heads the PR company Novokom, which has existed since 1991 and which declared its intention to work with United Russia in the December 2007 election. However, United Russia mainly used the PR company IMA-Consulting in the December election. IMA-Consulting is considered to be close to the Moscow mayor and party member Yuri Luzhkov. At the same time, the company was contracted to help the Central Election Commission and its head, Vladimir Churov, said he did not see any problem with this.¹⁷⁴

Other companies contracted for United Russia are reported to be Imidzh-kontakt, Novokom (which as mentioned above is closely linked to the Democratic Party) and News Outdoor (whose director, Sergey Zeleznyak, at the same time intended to run for the party in Moscow). Regional PR companies also do a great deal of the work 'since the governors are responsible for the result of the party of power'.¹⁷⁵

The PR campaign of the SPS was led by a group of *politologists* headed by MP Anton Bakov. Some members of the SPS were probably dissatisfied with this, since Bakov represents United Russia in the Duma.¹⁷⁶ Leonid Gozman is on the Saint Petersburg list of the SPS. Gozman has been characterised as one of the SPS's 'in-house technologists' who secretly backed the short-lived 'Yabloko without Yavlinsky Movement' in the 2003 elections, which was aimed at spoiling the chances of Yabloko.¹⁷⁷ *Technologist* or *political technologist* is the Russian term for those who know how to best manoeuvre within or manage the political system. Gozman is also a member of the board of Russia's state-owned

¹⁷³ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007
Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

¹⁷⁴ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007
Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

¹⁷⁵ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007
Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

¹⁷⁶ State Duma of the Russian Federation, www.duma.gov.ru, last accessed 6 February 2008,
Internet; Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Dopiarilis', published 1 October 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007
Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2200133.shtml>.

¹⁷⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 164.

energy giant UES and is responsible for the company's contacts with authorities and NGOs.¹⁷⁸

4.7 No open opposition within the party system

The aim of this rather detailed survey of the political parties has been to see how they are managed and if any of them are acting in opposition to the current power elite.

It is not very controversial to claim that there is no open opposition or political alternative within the official political system of today's Russia.¹⁷⁹ The CPRF, together with the SPS and Yabloko, are the three parties that most often have been labelled opposition parties,¹⁸⁰ while consultative members of the Central Election Commission from the three parties also protested against the results of the Duma election in 2007.¹⁸¹ However, the conduct of the CPRF has been very passive during most of the post-Soviet period and the party lost its leading role within the opposition after the Duma elections of 2003.¹⁸²

Yabloko and the SPS have so far been considered to be opposition parties, at least in the eyes of the West, due to their liberal economic view and sometimes opposition rhetoric. One observer has described the SPS as an example of the liberal trend and Yabloko as an example of the democratic trend in Russian politics and although they tend to share political standpoints, they differ in their 'ends and means during the process of regime change'.¹⁸³

However, both parties became increasingly loyal to the Kremlin while still in the Duma during Putin's first term.¹⁸⁴ In the 2003 election Yabloko won four seats in the Duma and the SPS three by winning in single mandate constituencies. One

¹⁷⁸ UES, http://www.rao-ees.ru/ru/info/about/corp_upr/org_upr/pravl/show.cgi?exec_personal.htm, last accessed 22 November 2007.

¹⁷⁹ See for instance Stykow, Petra (2007), p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ Gelman, Vladimir (2005), 'Political opposition in Russia: A dying species?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 21 July-September, No. 3 2005, p. 228, p. 234.

¹⁸¹ *Gazeta.ru* (2007), 'Itogi vyborov podveli', published 8 December 2007, last accessed 9 December 2007 on the Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2402848.shtml>.

¹⁸² Gelman, Vladimir (2005), 'Political opposition in Russia: A dying species?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 21 July-September, No. 3 2005, p. 234-236.

¹⁸³ Gelman, Vladimir (2005), 'Political opposition in Russia: A dying species?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 21 July-September (Number 3) 2005, p. 233-234.

¹⁸⁴ Gelman, Vladimir (2005), 'Political opposition in Russia: A dying species?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 21 July-September (Number 3) 2005, p. 237-238, p. 240.

of Yabloko's MPs and all three SPS MPs joined United Russia after they were elected. The remaining three Yabloko MPs acted as independent MPs.¹⁸⁵

Together, this makes it hard to regard even these parties as clear opposition.

¹⁸⁵ Centre for the Study of Public Policy (CSPP), University of Aberdeen,
http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_today.php?S776173303132=9efb4d92ad6b1b10158aab04115f8dce, last accessed 2 January 2007.

5 Other political movements

There are a number of other political movements, some controlled by the Kremlin and some freer or controlled by other interests, which play a role during elections.

5.1 Other political organisations managed by the Kremlin

The Kremlin also tries to control political movements outside the party system. The demonstrations in support of a third term in office for Putin (Za Putina), held in many Russian regions in late autumn 2007, were organised by the Kremlin. Instructions are reported to have been sent from the Presidential Administration to the governors to organise such rallies.¹⁸⁶

There are several different youth organisations that support the current power elite. Some are linked to political parties but all are controlled by the Presidential Administration. They will continue to be part of the political scene, although some of them will disappear or be less talked about, as in the case of the former high-profile *Idushchiye vmeste* (Marching Together).

The pro-Kremlin youth movement Nashi (Ours) was active against the Orange revolution in Ukraine and also during the conflict over the Bronze Soldier in Estonia. Vasily Yakemenko, former leader of Nashi and in September 2007 appointed head of the Russian Government's newly founded State Youth Committee, has explained his political view in the Russian newspaper *Argumenty i Fakty*. He used Surkov's term 'sovereign democracy' to describe Nashi's ideology. He also claimed: 'Either Russia is strong, or she'll be eaten.' In his opinion Nashi opposes the 'dreadful union' of pseudo-liberals and fascists, exemplified by the National-Bolshevik Eduard Limonov and Putin's former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov, who recently joined the opposition.

Yakemenko responded to the question of whether Nashi 'as usually assumed' is the 'fighting avant-garde' of the Kremlin, in the event of a revolution. He said there will be no fight since 'we will be 200 000 persons and 'they' only 400. The

¹⁸⁶ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Vertikal Putingov', published 13 November 2007, last accessed 23 November 2007 Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2308622.shtml>.

15 000 SIM-cards being distributed to facilitate the gathering of people in the event of a revolution will receive the following text-message: 'Ahead, you Putin's generation.'¹⁸⁷ Nashi is reported to have two units of street fighters, one of hooligans supporting the football team Spartak Moskva and the other supporting Moscow CSKA (Central Sports Club of the Army).¹⁸⁸

One youth organisation linked to United Russia is called Molodaya Gvardiya (Young Guard). Its leader, Ivan Demidov, also gives some clues to the mental landscape of the aspiring political elite in Russia, in an interview with *Argumenty i Fakty*.¹⁸⁹

The party governs us. It's another thing that both United Russia and Molodaya Gvardiya have very close contacts with the political part of the Presidential Administration. Our activists meet with Vladislav Yuryevich Surkov on a regular basis. Not every week of course, but quite often.

Speaking of the future political elite, he said:

In about 15 years time the young people who now begin their political career in Molodaya Gvardiya or in the ranks of Nashi will rise to stand behind the rudder of the country. They will not need to bargain since they all have agreed on everything when they were young.

Demidov described his organisation as a response to young people's wishes for a fast career:

Today's youth put education, career and family first, so our 'elevator' [social climbing] is to a large extent a 'social demand'.

The opponents of Molodaya Gvardiya are both the ultra nationalists and Drugaya Rossiya (Other Russia), characterised by Demidov as 'a conglomerate of petty liberals with their supply kit of 'human values' and 'human rights'.' In answer to the question of whether he dislikes these values, Demidov said:

Remember how it was in the 90s. Russia opened up the door to these Western values. We sincerely believed that these values would give us what we dreamed of. And what came out of this? The right to private

¹⁸⁷ Argumenty i Fakty (2007), 'Pokoleniyu Putina skomanduyut Vpered', No. 14 2007 p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ RFE/RL, 'Russia: Are soccer hooligans being used by Kremlin?' <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/9/E107C9F7-58E0-48E9-9112-31A1B90C0DAB.html>, last accessed 23 November 2007 and Politkovskaya, Anna (2007), p. 309-310.

¹⁸⁹ Argumenty i Fakty (2007), 'Medvezhata nacheku', No. 16 2007, p. 8.

property led to whole cities growing poorer and created a clique of enriched people, 'new Russians'. The freedom of speech led to a TV war between a couple of oligarchs... That kind of democracy turned out to be as bad as the Soviet style. Because of this we're all on the search for a third democracy, which Surkov has named 'sovereign'.

Demidov denied that there were fighting groups within his organisation, but said that 'one has to be able to defend oneself in today's 'street' politics'.

These youth organisations could have been created with the purpose of providing the power elite with a cadre reserve and these organisations, especially if they attract young people with a possible career path, have a much easier task reaching out to the youth than other kinds of political structures. However their main task seems to be to fight radical opposition organisations, which usually consist of young people to a high degree. The main point to be made here is that since political opposition does not compete with the power elite during elections, the opposition is fought either by various bureaucratic means or with the help of the above-mentioned Kremlin-controlled political movements.

5.2 Opposition outside the official political system

The term 'official political system' in this report refers to the officially registered political parties and movements. The network that unifies most non-registered oppositional political forces today is Drugaya Rossiya (Other Russia). It even nominated candidates for the Duma¹⁹⁰ but was refused participation on legal grounds, since no registered political party stood behind the nominations. The three top candidates illustrate the peculiar nature of the political opposition:

- Viktor Gerashchenko (former head of the National Bank, former MP for the nationalist and Kremlin-backed Motherland party and former chairman of the Yukos board)
- Garri Kasparov (a main opposition liberal, chess champion and founder of United Civil Front)
- Eduard Limonov (founder of the now banned National Bolshevik Party).

¹⁹⁰ Other Russia (2007), <http://www.theotherussia.ru/candidates/>, last accessed 23 November 2007.

The candidates and the organisers of the Dissenters' March¹⁹¹ together form a mix of nationalist, populist, capitalist, liberal, communist and revolutionary elements. These marches gained relatively large coverage in the Western media, but generally failed to attract large masses.

The National Bolsheviks are one of the most active political groups. Their ideology is a mix of nationalism and Bolshevik revolution. In the current opposition they play a key role, especially their younger followers, who have carried out some spectacular actions. They also articulate demands supported by liberal oppositional groups. On 15 September 2007, young National-Bolsheviks protested against the FSB head Nikolay Patrushev while he was watching a volleyball match. Banners were lowered from the gallery, accusing him of being responsible for: blowing up houses in Moscow 1999 with the aim of facilitating Putin's coming to power, several political murders (including Politkovskaya and Litvinenko), the mass killing of people (including children) during the hostage-taking at the Dubrovka theatre and in Beslan, terror against political parties and NGOs and starting a new war in the Caucasian region of Ingushetiya,¹⁹² which has been led by Murat Zyazikov, a former FSB employee, since 2002. The National-Bolshevik Party claims to have sections abroad, in former Soviet republics as well as in Israel, which is intriguing considering the Nazi image signalled by the party's flag.¹⁹³

The participation of Putin's former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov and the SPS in the Dissenters' March and apparent radicalisation of the SPS towards the end of the election campaign might discredit the movement, since people rightly associate Kasianov and the SPS with the political establishment, corruption and the unpopular economic reforms of the 1990s. It could of course also have been the consequence of a decision taken by the party leadership of the SPS, when they realised that they would still have no political influence after the election.

¹⁹¹ Dissenters' March (2007), <http://www.namarsh.ru/>, last accessed 22 November 2007.

¹⁹² Newsru.com (2007), 'Natsboly proveli aktsiyu protiv glavy FSB, pokazav yemu plakat Patrushev-Ubiytza' published 15 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/15sep2007/patr.html>.

¹⁹³ National-Bolshevik Party, <http://nbp-info.ru/cat74/index.html>, last accessed 22 November 2007.

6 The Duma election in December 2007

The Duma election in December 2007 and the presidential election in March 2008 are important for the overall image of Russia on the international scene and will have significance for its relations with the West and the former Soviet republics. The marginalisation of the democratic and other opposition forces in Russia is obvious. Due to the lack of real political competition and the lack of political power of the Duma, the outcome will probably not have any immediate significant impact on Russian policy.

6.1 Changes in the legislation prior to the 2007 Duma election

There have been important changes in the electoral legislation since 2003,¹⁹⁴ notably:

- The Duma is now formed solely from party lists and not as in the earlier elections (1993, 1995, 1999 and 2003) when half the 450 MPs were elected in single mandate constituencies. This change has strengthened the formal role of the political parties.
- The threshold to the Duma has been raised from 5% to 7%. The parties entering the Duma benefit from this and there is a risk that a larger number of votes cast for parties outside the Duma will in effect be wasted. However, in the Duma election of 2007 this was merely a theoretical objection, since over 90% of the votes were cast for the four parties entering the Duma and the largest party outside the Duma (the Agrarian party) received merely 2.30% of the votes cast. In the Duma elections of 2003, only 70% of the votes cast were for parties that ended up in the Duma.¹⁹⁵
- The possibility to vote 'against all' has been removed from the ballot. In the 2003 Duma election 4.7% used this alternative, which was more than in the

¹⁹⁴ All information, unless otherwise indicated, is taken from: Kommersant (2007), 'Novyye vybory – novyye pravila', published: 3 September 2007, last accessed 27 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=800773>.

¹⁹⁵ Central Election Commission, The Duma Election 2003, <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100095619®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=0>, last accessed 2 January 2007; Central Election Commission, The Duma Election 2007: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

1995 and 1999 elections.¹⁹⁶ This alternative has played a significant role in some earlier elections, such as the gubernatorial elections in the Primorsk (Maritime) region in 2001. One candidate was barred due to alleged irregularities in his campaigning. He then urged his supporters to vote 'against all' and 33.7% of them did so (the turnout was mere 36.0%).¹⁹⁷ Statistics from elections in Nizhnii Novgorod clearly show that while the turnout halved during the ten elections held from 1995 to 2002, the vote 'against all' increased from a few percent up to around 30%.¹⁹⁸

- People with a second citizenship or residence permit are not allowed to run in the elections. This is also the case for those sentenced for 'extremism' and serious crimes.¹⁹⁹ Such individuals are not eligible as candidates for up to 8 years depending on the crime.²⁰⁰
- The political parties are no longer allowed to criticise political opponents or to urge people to vote against a party in TV advertising. Election campaigning on TV, radio and printed media was only allowed from 3-30 November in 2007.²⁰¹

6.2 The election results

The results of the Duma election confirmed the overall picture of Russian party politics as dominated by the bureaucracy, both the Presidential Administration and the regional leaders' administrations. Four parties entered the Duma, of which two, United Russia and Just Russia, are openly in support of Putin. Together they received 72% of the votes cast, but United Russia with 64.30% gained a two-thirds majority in the Duma. The LDPR, which also passed the threshold to the Duma is, as mentioned above, a party essentially loyal to the

¹⁹⁶ University of Essex, the Duma Election 1995, last accessed 21 November 2007, Internet: <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=RUSSIA&election=ru95duma>; University of Essex, the Duma Election 1999, last accessed 21 November 2007, Internet: <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=RUSSIA&election=ru99duma>.

¹⁹⁷ Heaney, Dominic (2006), p. 283.

¹⁹⁸ Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz (2007), 'Why was democracy lost in Russia's regions? Lessons from Nizhny Novgorod', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 40. No. 3, September 2007, p. 372.

¹⁹⁹ For more discussion on the law on extremism and other legal changes see forthcoming FOI report by Vilhelm Konnander.

²⁰⁰ For a definition of 'Sudimost', see State Duma of the Russian Federation: Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, approved by the State Duma 24 May 1996: <http://ntc.duma.gov.ru/bpa/>, last accessed 16 December 2007, § 86.

²⁰¹ Newsru.com (2007), 'Predvybornaya agitatsiya v SMI razreshena partiyam s 3 po 30 noyabrya', published 6 September 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/06sep2007/campaign.html>.

Kremlin, while the CPRF will probably not cause any serious problems for Russia's political leadership.

However, the Duma could play a role if there are doubts about the leadership of the country in the future, for example if Putin is not succeeded by someone who has acceptance from a majority among the political elite, or the struggle for power becomes intense. The role could also increase if Putin as Prime Minister starts to use it as a power base.

| Election to the State Duma in December 2007 | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Parties represented in the Duma | Result | Seats in the Duma |
| United Russia, UR | 64.30% | 315 |
| Communist Party of the Russian Federation, CPRF | 11.57% | 57 |
| Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, LDPR | 8.14% | 40 |
| Just Russia, JR | 7.74% | 38 |
| Parties outside the Duma | | |
| Agrarian Party of Russia | 2.30% | - |
| Yabloko | 1.59% | - |
| Civic Force | 1.05% | - |
| Union of Right Forces, SPS | 0.96% | - |
| Patriots of Russia | 0.89% | - |
| Social Justice Party | 0.22% | - |
| Democratic Party of Russia | 0.13% | - |

The turnout was 63.71%,²⁰² which was higher than the 55.67%²⁰³ in the last Duma elections, but not an all-time high in Russian electoral history. Previous presidential elections have had a higher turnout.

The number of women in the Duma increased from 34 to 63. It is interesting to note that the number increased from 41 after the votes were counted up to 63 women after 25% of the elected MPs abstained from their seats.²⁰⁴

Even if one believes the official figures, it is misleading to describe the results as massive public support for President Putin and United Russia all over the country. According to the official results, the support for United Russia is massive in some areas (where the administrative resources are considered to be high, more on this below). In other areas, mostly larger cities, the active support for United Russia, i.e. people voting for the party, is more modest, given not only the lower rates but also the lower turnout. The ten regions where the support for United Russia was lowest²⁰⁵ include the two major cities Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Only three or four out of ten voters actively supported either United Russia or Just Russia in these regions.

Looking at each region separately, the second place was mostly occupied by the CPRF, but also the LDPR and Just Russia in some regions. The second largest

²⁰² Central Election Commission (2007), http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100021960186&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100021960186&type=242, last accessed 29 December 2007. The turnout figure derives from adding the numbers of valid and invalid ballot papers.

²⁰³ Central Election Commission (2003), http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100095621&vrn=100100095619®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=0&vibid=100100095621&type=233, last accessed 29 December 2007. The turnout figure derives from adding the numbers of valid and invalid ballot papers.

²⁰⁴ The official result published in Rossiyskaya Gazeta (11 December 2007, last accessed 11 December, Internet: www.rg.ru/2007/12/11/cik-vybory-anons.html) has been compared to a list of who actually ended up in the Duma and the list of MPs in the fourth Duma available from the State Duma of Russian Federation (last accessed 3 January 2007, Internet: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>).

²⁰⁵ Kommersant (2007), 'Top-10 regionov, v kotorikh Yedinaya Rossiya poluchila naimenshiy protsent golosov', published 4 December 2007, last accessed 7 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832394>.

party generally got between 10 and 20% of the vote²⁰⁶ and, considering the turnout, this means the active support of 6-12% of the electorate.

The Duma election can be compared to the elections to the regional assemblies in many regions in March 2007. Just like the Duma election, they were mainly a struggle between United Russia, Just Russia, the CPRF and the LDPR. The CPRF did quite well (mostly second and third place), considering the fact that they did almost no campaigning or were almost not exposed in the media. In the regional elections, however, three other parties, mainly the right-wing SPS, but also the Agrarians and the Greens, enjoyed success in some regions. Yabloko was not allowed to participate in its strongest region, the city of Saint Petersburg,²⁰⁷ due to irregularities found by the regional election commission in the signatures required from Yabloko for them to be allowed to participate.²⁰⁸ The practice of banning parties from participating is continuing in the regional elections planned for the same day as the presidential election, on 2 March 2008.²⁰⁹

Some important turnarounds in the official results occurred between March and December 2007. The election results in Stavropol show some peculiar changes, although comparison is somewhat complicated by the fact that the Central Election Commission has not presented figures for the region as a whole but for two approximately equal areas of the region, Pyatigorskaya and Stavropolskaya.

²⁰⁶ A map based on preliminary result was published in Kommersant (2007), 'Pobeditel ne prishel k pobeditelyam', published 4 December 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832130>.

²⁰⁷ Argumenty i Fakty (2007), 'Yedinaya Rossiya proigrala oppozitsii so schetom 45:55' No. 11 2007.

²⁰⁸ Yabloko, <http://www.spb.yabloko.ru/pbl/2860.php>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

²⁰⁹ Kommersant (2007), 'Dumskiye partii povoyut za mandaty', published 15 January 2008, last accessed 6 February 2008, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=841958&NodesID=2>.

| Comparison of election results from Stavropol, March and December 2007 | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Party | March 2007 (election to the regional assembly) ²¹⁰ | December 2007 (election to the State Duma) ²¹¹ |
| United Russia | 23.86% | 62.20% |
| Just Russia | 37.63% | 13.45% |
| CPRF | 14.13% | 11.10% |
| LDPR | 11.79% | 6.89% |
| SPS | 7.73% | 0.76% |

Similar dramatic changes have also taken place in other regions and, just as in Stavropol, the support for SPS has practically been erased (from the previous 7-8%) in Komi, Vologda, Leningrad region, Samara and Tomsk.²¹²

The Duma election will also result in an economic backlash for all seven parties that did not enter the Duma, as they will have to pay compensation for their 'free' access to state TV, radio and printed media during the election campaign. This will probably cost each party at least 60-90 million roubles. The participation in the election will also cost Yabloko, the SPS and Patriots of

²¹⁰ Elections Commission of Stavropol Kray (2007), last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet, http://www.stavropol.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/stavropol?action=show&root=1&tvd=2262000136694&vrn=2262000136689®ion=26&global=&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=0&vibid=2262000136694&type=379.

²¹¹ Gazeta.ru (2007): <http://www.gazeta.ru/maps/elections2007/russia.shtml>, last accessed 29 December 2007. The Central Election Commission does not always present accumulated figures for whole regions but sometimes only for parts of the region. The results for the Stavropol region are split into two areas. The figures however do not differ very much between the two areas. Central Election Commission (2007), The Duma Election 2007: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

²¹² 'Yedinaya Rossiya proigrala oppozitsii so schetom 45:55' Argumenty i Fakty No. 11 2007; Central Election Commission (2007), The Duma Election 2007: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

Russia another 60 million roubles, because they chose not to collect signatures in order to be registered for participation.²¹³

6.3 Setting the scene: Administrative resources, opinion polls and the media landscape

A few words are called for about the factors that set the scene for elections in Russia. The purpose is not to give a detailed analysis but merely to point out some vital aspects that have to be taken into account. Managing elections is also about setting the scene for the elections.

The significance of the administrative resources on a national level should not be overestimated. According to an analysis in the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, the extent of votes that can be added to the so-called party of power by administrative resources is about 10-15%, which is a lot but not enough in itself to completely swing the outcome.²¹⁴ Even if the intention to use such resources is great, this does not automatically mean that they are successful, especially since different interests within the political system have different aims and objectives for their use. They may also not be as efficient in reality as in theory. Gleb Pavlovsky has stated that they work well when there is status quo, but they become totally ineffective if there is turbulence in the system.²¹⁵

The Central Election Commission is naturally crucial for control over the election process. Its new head, Vladimir Churov, who was appointed on 27 March 2007, has a personal connection to Putin and many others in the current power elite. Churov is one of many individuals in key positions who worked with Putin on licensing the export of natural resources, involving huge sums of money in Saint Petersburg during the 1990s.²¹⁶ He has also been an MP for

²¹³ Newsru.com (2007), 'TsIK napomnil partiyam-autsayderam o rasplate: vozvrat zaloga, lisheniye gospodderzhki i dengi za agitatsiyu v SMI', published 4 December 2007, last accessed 5 December at the Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/04dec2007/partii.html>.

²¹⁴ Novaya Gazeta (2007), 'My nashli, gde pryachetsa administrativnyy resurs', No. 91 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/91/00.html>.

²¹⁵ Pavlovsky, Gleb (2002), 'Politika upravlyayemoy demokratii ne poderzhivayet vyborov prezidenta, a prezident Putin perezhyvet i eti vybory, i etu politiku', last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet: www.kreml.org/options/4426034.

²¹⁶ This will be described more in a forthcoming FOI report.

Zhirinovsky's LDPR in 2003-2007.²¹⁷ The appointment was most likely an attempt by Putin to tighten his grip over the Central Election Commission.

It has also been claimed that Vladimir Churov is close to one of the Kremlin's 'grey eminences', Igor Sechin, who is deputy head of the Presidential Administration.²¹⁸ The regional electoral committees are formed partly by the executive power (led by the governor who is almost always a member of United Russia) and by the parties. This normally guarantees United Russia a majority,²¹⁹ but has led to open conflict in the Stavropol region where Just Russia won the regional elections in March 2007.

Opinion polls play a role in elections all over the world today. The results of opinion polls and sociological surveys can be used in numerous ways. They can be used to boost the popularity of a candidate by creating the picture of him/her already being popular, which could help attracting real votes. They can also be used in open or covert propaganda by politicians to avoid taking highly unpopular decisions and can help to legitimise decisions taken by politicians – or results from manipulated elections.

The most important Russian opinion poll institute, VTsIOM, was brought under Kremlin control in August 2003 (just before the Duma elections in December the same year).²²⁰ The personnel of VTsIOM, under the guidance of the pioneer Yury Levada, formed the opinion poll institute Levada-tsentr instead (originally called VTsIOM-A).²²¹ Given the many manipulations of the elections and the media landscape, it seems unlikely that the Kremlin has abstained from interfering in the work of the opinion poll institutes. Levada-tsentr is generally considered to be more independent than other public opinion poll institutes. However this is probably a misconception, since the polls by Levada-tsentr generally do not differ from those of the other large institutes and they all seem to present 'ordered' results and use leading questions, but not necessarily to

²¹⁷ Central Election Commission, <http://www.cikrf.ru/aboutcik/biografy/churov.jsp>, last accessed 23 November 2007.

²¹⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Vybor Sdelan. Kazhetsa', published 20 April 2007, last accessed 10 December 2007, Internet: http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2007-04-20/2_red.html.

²¹⁹ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'My vybirayem, nas vybirayut', published 7 August 2007, last accessed Internet: http://www.ng.ru/ng_politics/2007-08-07/12_vybory.html.

²²⁰ Levada-tsentr (2007), <http://www.levada.ru/istoria.html>, last accessed 6 December 2007.

²²¹ Levada died at his office on the 16 November 2007. Nevskoye Vremya (2007), 'Levada-Tsentr osirotel', published 17 November 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.nevskoevremya.spb.ru/cgi-bin/pl/nv.pl?art=257449666>, last accessed 6 December 2007.

please the Presidential Administration. Levada-tsentr has allegedly had close cooperation with the SPS in the past.²²²

According to Gleb Pavlovsky, 'imitated Sociology' during earlier elections in Krasnoyarsk and Nizhnii Novgorod destroyed the authority of sociological information in general.²²³ Although it would require more research to say anything definitive about the opinion polls, it is clear that they should be treated with great care.

Control over the media is an essential feature of managing elections. There are both direct and indirect means of doing this.²²⁴ The fact that at least 20 journalists have been murdered during Putin's presidency has had a major influence on the media climate by creating an unsafe atmosphere for the journalists to work in. Almost none of the investigations into their deaths has resulted in convictions.²²⁵ All federal TV channels since 2003 or at least 2004, which coincided in time with the last election cycle, are under state control and have been reduced to an instrument for state propaganda. However, uncomfortable features can appear from time to time as a result of conflict within the power elite. Some see the TV media as a means of keeping the people passive and producing the picture that nothing depends on them - therefore its most important task is to entertain the audience.²²⁶ The various regional TV channels were brought back under central control already in 1998.²²⁷

The printed media has remained freer, mainly because few people read newspapers. Lately, however, the state's attention and involvement has increased. This may be because the Internet has made it possible for them to reach out to a broader audience. The Internet itself, which has been considered free in Russia, has also begun to attract more attention from the authorities.²²⁸

²²² Izvestiya (2007), 'Delo sotsiologov Politika partii i previtelstvo', published 30 October 2007, last accessed 30 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.izvestia.ru/sokolov/article3109847/>.

²²³ Pavlovsky, Gleb (2002), 'Politika upravlyayemoy demokratii ne poderzhivayet vyborov prezidenta, a prezident Putin perezhivet i eti vybory, i etu politiku', last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet: www.kreml.org/options/4426034.

²²⁴ Walker, Christopher (2007), 'Muzzling the Media: The Return of Censorship in the Commonwealth of Independent States', last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=138&report=54>, p. 1

²²⁵ Walker, Christopher (2007), p. 4.

²²⁶ Lipman, Mariya (2006), 'Svoboda pressy v usloviyakh upravlyaemoy demokratii', Carnegie Moscow Center, Briefing, 2 issue, Vol. 8, March 2006, pp. 2-3.

²²⁷ Nicholson, Martin (1999), p. 40.

²²⁸ Walker, Christopher (2007), pp. 2, 4.

One fundamental problem for the media is that it exists without the other democratic institutes, such as an active political opposition. There have been several scoops in recent years but they have not resulted in any significant debate.²²⁹

Political debates are not a common feature of Russian politics, and both Putin and United Russia abstained completely from pre-election debates.²³⁰ However, there was a debate between United Russia and the Communist party CPRF on 17 September 2007. A member of the Central Election Commission was also present and the participants were urged not to involve in pre-election agitation.²³¹

To conclude this chapter: the mechanisms used for setting the scene involve silencing and ignoring the opposition and instead producing the desired picture of the political situation. Various obstacles, mostly formal barriers, are also used against opposition forces.

6.4 Western involvement - a perceived threat and a political resource for Russia's leadership

The electoral campaign included several harsh statements from Putin and other leading politicians against the West in which foreign and domestic enemies were linked together. The harshest statement was perhaps delivered by President Putin at a rally in Moscow in November 2007:²³²

There are still people in our country who scavenge near foreign embassies like jackals, who beg at the doors of diplomats' offices, who count on the support of foreign funds and governments but not the support of their own people.

The nomination of Andrey Lugovoy, accused of the murder of Aleksandr Litvinenko in London, among the LDPR's three top candidates (together with

²²⁹ Lipman, Mariya (2006), pp. 3-4.

²³⁰ Kommersant (2007), 'Yedinaya i vezdesushchaya', published 23 November 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=828497>.

²³¹ Newsru.com (2007), 'Pervyye debaty proveli Yedinaya Rossiya i KPRF. Oni bespokoyitsa o sydbakh rossiyan pod raznym uglom.', published 17 September 2007, last accessed 30 November 2007 Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/17sep2007/debaty.html>.

²³² Moscow News (2007), 'Putin Addresses Huge Rally in Moscow', published 22 November 2007, last accessed 3 January 2008, Internet: <http://mnweekly.rian.ru/national/20071122/55291910.html>.

Vladimir Zhirinovskii and his son Igor Lebedev) was of course provocative.²³³ It is hard to imagine that this candidature was not agreed or even proposed by some of the most powerful persons in Russia. Although there are probably differing opinions among the power elite about how this should be handled, being accused of murdering a former security agent was nevertheless deemed to be a resource that can be used in elections, at least by the LDPR. It is unlikely that the primary goal of the nomination was to provoke the British police or the West; instead it is an example of how foreign policy and foreign enemies can be used for domestic consumption in order to boost support, in this case for the LDPR. Another fact, perhaps closer at hand, is that Lugovoy as a MP automatically receives immunity from criminal prosecution and this makes it easy to refuse his deportation to the UK.

Western countries, such as the USA, which have supported political parties and NGOs in Russia, will probably continue to do so.²³⁴ However, given the fact that the Russian leadership sees the West and particularly the USA and its allies as a main security threat, their support for Russian parties and NGOs is sensitive and may create more problems than benefits for the recipients. The support for opposition parties provokes the current Russian leadership but at the same time it has also been used in the election propaganda to depict the opposition as backed by subversive foreign forces.²³⁵

In October 2007 Nikolay Patrushev, head of the FSB, gave his view on the threats against Russia in the context of the upcoming Duma elections. He blamed the secret services of the USA and the UK (the CIA and the SIS) for being particularly active in financing subversive activities, partly by using the secret services of Poland, Georgia, the Baltic countries 'and some others'. According to Patrushev, the UK was the country most active in Russia, not only in gathering intelligence but also by interfering in domestic political life and the Turkish special organs were aimed at the political and business elite in regions with a

²³³ Komsomolskaya Pravda (2007), 'Zhirinovskiy sdelał Lugovogo svoim No. 2', published 18 September 2007, last accessed 6 January 2008, Internet: <http://www.kp.ru/daily/23969/73327/>.

²³⁴ An official description of the US engagement in the Russian political life and civil society is found on: http://www.usembassy.ru/bilateral/bilateral.php?record_id=report_supporting_rights_2006, last accessed 22 November 2007.

²³⁵ Kommersant (2007), 'Yedinstvo Forum i Soderzhaniya', published 22 November 2007, last accessed 10 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=828086>.

‘Muslim’ majority²³⁶ (it would perhaps have been more correct to point to the many different Turkic peoples in Russia rather than ‘Muslims’ in general).

Patrushev claimed the following areas were of interest for foreign intelligence organs, many of them directly linked to elections and the domestic political situation:

- The political situation in Russia
- The socio-economic situation in Russia
- Efforts by the current leadership to strengthen the state, territorial integrity, the economy and Russia’s international position (including the reactions to these attempts in the CIS)
- The state of the armed forces
- The reform of the armed forces (especially the nuclear missile complex)
- The Military Industrial Complex
- Cutting edge technology in weapons and military equipment
- The potential of the scientific sphere
- The situation in Northern Caucasus, Siberia and in the Far East
- Natural resources and the infrastructure for its transport

If the FSB director is right, the foreign intelligence organs have succeeded fairly well in reflecting the current Russian leadership’s own perception of key areas in the security political development of the country as outlined in its National Security Concept.²³⁷

President Putin was less harsh in his judgement of NGOs during the French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s visit to Moscow in October 2007. Putin said he was prepared to listen to criticism from NGOs, for instance Memorial, but stated that it is a bad thing if such organisations are used by a foreign country for its political goals.²³⁸

²³⁶ Newsru.com (2007), ‘FSB zayavila, chto nakanune vyborov TsRU SSHA i britanskaya SIS aktivizirovali deystviya protiv Rossii’, published 10 October 2007, last accessed 21 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/10oct2007/razvedka.html>.

²³⁷ Presidential Administration (2000), National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, last accessed 16 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/1.html>.

²³⁸ Newsru.com (2007), ‘Vladimir Putin ne vidit nichego osobennogo v tom chto Nikolaya Sarkozy vybral dlya vstrechi organizatsiyu Memorial’, published 10 October 2007, last accessed 21 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/10oct2007/memorial.html>.

6.5 Electoral fraud and manipulation

There is no doubt that fraud and manipulation occurred in the Duma election in 2007, as well as in earlier elections. Many observers in the West saw and described these primarily as transitional problems as long as Yeltsin was seen as a guarantee against a return of the Communists to power and as long as liberal, right-wing parties had some success in the elections. This is obvious for those who as early as 1993 witnessed fraud in favour of Boris Yeltsin.²³⁹ When discussing fraud and manipulation, at least two main questions are raised:

- 1) What ways are there to detect and determine such practices?
- 2) To what extent have such practices been employed?

Unfortunately there are no simple answers, but this chapter points out certain central phenomena and mechanisms involved in providing answers to these questions.

The Russian leadership knows very well how to manage elections.²⁴⁰ According to the General Prosecutor in late November 2007, there were multiple violations of the law during the election campaign of 2007, including the state organs exerting pressure on people and providing insufficient protection of their rights.²⁴¹ This is not a new phenomenon. Different ways of manipulation have been employed on a large scale, at least since Yeltsin's re-election in 1996, although in the 2003 election the use became even more massive.²⁴² According to Gleb Pavlovskiy's predictions in 2002, the elections of 2003/2004 would be the first elections 'with a full-scale use of all the modern techniques'.²⁴³

There are a couple of ways of detecting fraud, or at least of detecting suspicious patterns. One is to scrutinise the official election figures. A study published in 2005 detected so-called 'fingerprints of fraud' in elections in Russia and Ukraine

²³⁹ Ekdal, Niklas (2007), 'Sanning och konsekvens', Dagens Nyheter, 5 December 2007.

²⁴⁰ See for instance Shevtsova, Liliya (2006), 'Putin's Legacy: How the Russian Elite is Coping with Russia's Challengers', Carnegie Moscow Center, Briefing 4 issue, Vol. 8, June 2006, p. 8.

²⁴¹ Newsru.com (2007), 'Genprokuratura vyavila mnogochislennyye narusheniya zakona v khode predvybornoy kampanii', published 20 November 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/20nov2007/mnogo.html>.

²⁴² Wilson, Kenneth (2006), p. 335.

²⁴³ Pavlovsky, Gleb (2002), 'Politika upravlyayemoy demokratii ne poderzhivayet vyborov prezidenta, a prezident Putin perezhyvet i eti vybory, i etu politiku', last accessed 17 December 2007, Internet: www.kreml.org/options/4426034.

from 1996-2004. The method used in the study was to trace irregularities using official data instead of eyewitness accounts or similar sources.²⁴⁴ The study identified several peculiarities:

- Strange vote switches between the first and second round of Yel'tin's 1996 re-election campaign.
- Irregularities between Putin's share of the vote in 2000 and 2004. Comparing the two elections not only shows a general increase in Putin's popularity, but also a lack of correlation between districts reporting over 80-85% for Putin in 2004 and Putin's result in the same region in 2000, which could be anything between 40-95%. A similar phenomenon can be observed in districts reporting less than 20% for Putin in 2000, which in 2004 reported anything between 25-85%. 'It is almost as if, among a significant number of districts, the 2000 and 2004 elections took place in different countries.'²⁴⁵
- An increasing number of districts reporting a turnout of more than 90%.²⁴⁶
- Suspicious patterns in the distribution of turnout, first detected in republics such as Dagestan, Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, spreading to other parts of Russia, especially in the 2003 and 2004 elections.
- A high turnout benefiting Putin in many regions in 2004, most evidently in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. The opposite was the case in regions such as Tver and Samara, which were then led by governors in opposition to Putin.
- The flow of votes shows that Putin gained votes in 2004 from a suspiciously high share of those who failed to vote in 2003.
- According to the study, fraud has been more evident in the Russian republics²⁴⁷ and in rural areas than in urban areas. This pattern became stronger during the period 1996-2004. The turnout was most inflated in 2004, when it was obvious that Putin would be re-elected.²⁴⁸
- Many people who worked for Putin in 2004 also worked for the Russian-backed presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich in the elections in Ukraine later that year. Patterns similar to those described above can also be observed in Ukraine (although Yanukovich's opponents did not have clean hands either).

²⁴⁴ Myagkov, Mikhail, Ordershook, Peter C, Shakin, Dimitry (2005), p. 91-131.

²⁴⁵ Myagkov, Mikhail et al. (2005), p. 96.

²⁴⁶ Myagkov, Mikhail et al. (2005), p. 94.

²⁴⁷ On 1 January 2008 Russia had 84 regions, 21 of which were republics within the Russian Federation.

²⁴⁸ Myagkov, Mikhail et al. (2005), p. 100.

The higher rate of fraud in rural areas is interesting, since the support for Putin has been stronger in rural areas than in regional centres and larger cities in general. Yeltsin, on the other hand, had stronger support in urban districts.²⁴⁹

Election results from rural areas in the Tyumen region in 2007, for example, but also in other regions, show a turnout of around 90-95% coinciding with an almost equally high rating for United Russia, whereas both rates were about 20-30% lower in the cities of that region.²⁵⁰

The great difference in support for United Russia in rural and urban areas in the Astrakhan region even made the governor, Aleksandr Zhilkin, declare that he was going to change the regional development programme in favour of the rural citizens who voted better, i.e. in support of United Russia.²⁵¹ This is in fact a reversed form of electoral accountability, where the voters are held responsible by those elected for not voting correctly.

A map in the Russian newspaper *Kommersant*²⁵² shows where United Russia had most success in the Duma election. The pattern is, with a few exceptions, very similar to that in a map published before the Duma election in another Russian newspaper, *Novaya Gazeta*,²⁵³ indicating where the administrative resources had been most widely used in previous elections (1995-2004). The administrative resources have been more frequently used during presidential elections than during parliamentary elections. In other words taking the administrative resources into account when analysing election results will be even more relevant after the presidential elections in March 2008. The pattern has become easier to distinguish over the years, but it is worth stressing that it also emerged under Yeltsin.

According to *Novaya Gazeta*, five suspicious phenomena, especially when found together, indicate the degree to which the administrative resources are used:

²⁴⁹ Novaya Gazeta (2007), 'My nashli, gde pryachetsa administrativnyy resurs', No. 91 2007, last accessed 4 December Internet: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/91/00.html>.

²⁵⁰ Central Election Commission, The Duma Election 2007: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

²⁵¹ Kommersant (2007), 'Prinudraboty nad oshibkami', published 5 December 2007, last accessed 5 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832719&NodesID=2>.

²⁵² Kommersant (2007), 'Pobeditel ne prishel k pobeditelyam', published 4 December 2007, last accessed 4 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832130>.

²⁵³ Novaya Gazeta (2007), 'My nashli, gde pryachetsa administrativnyy resurs', No. 91 2007, last accessed 4 December, Internet: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2007/91/00.html>.

Turnout. A very high turnout could indicate that the ballot boxes were stuffed with votes for the party or candidate preferred by those in control of the administrative resources.

Invalid votes. A large number of invalid votes could indicate that votes for the undesired party or candidate were wrongly counted as invalid.

Votes ‘against all’. A very large or small number of votes ‘against all’ was a useful parameter prior to the last presidential election in 2004.

Monolithic support. Monolithic support for one party or candidate, not necessarily a pro-Kremlin one.

Regional specifics. Much higher or lower support for a certain party than on the national level does not have to indicate fraud but points to regional specifics, which can reveal strongholds for certain politicians in areas where they have large economic interests.

However, very strong support for Putin in a region or nearly total electoral support for Putin in some regions such as Chechnya should not be interpreted as total federal control over the region. It is rather the other way round. An extremely monolithic electoral result indicates a regional power with almost total control over the official political process in the region, and thus makes the federal power dependent on it, although the relationship is also based on mutual support.

In Chechnya the ‘Chechenisation’ of the war has meant that some of the former separatists have been absorbed into the political leadership of the republic in exchange for declaring loyalty to Moscow. The result is thus a situation where Chechnya has gained something like *de facto* independence.²⁵⁴ Electoral support for pro-Kremlin candidates is thus best described as a form of tribute paid to be left alone to govern the republic. The situation is similar in other regions, especially in Russia’s Caucasian republics and some of the Volga republics.

Two conclusions can be drawn: 1) If the Kremlin wishes to achieve a certain result, it must at least to a very high degree rely on the regional administrative resources; and 2) these resources have not been used to an equal extent in all regions and there are also significant differences on a local level within the

²⁵⁴ Tsyganok, Anatoliy, *Agentstvo Politicheskikh Novostey*, ‘Profederaly pokidayut Chechnu’, published 16 November 2007, last accessed 3 January 2008, Internet: www.apn.ru/opinions/article18384.htm.

regions. This difference could be the result of a decision to use administrative resources on a large scale only in some areas, most notably far-off districts without much media coverage, but it is more likely because the regional elites have different possibilities and intentions of living up to the commands and wishes of the Kremlin. A third explanation could be that the Kremlin or different clans within it have an interest in different results in different regions to balance different groups within the national and regional elites.

6.5.1 Turnout

It is of great interest to the power elite to have a high turnout in elections. Political apathy of the voters, manifested in a low turnout, would have dramatically diminished the propaganda effect of United Russia's victory. The Central Election Commission predicted an all-time high turnout as early as September 2007.²⁵⁵ However, according to opinion polls, including polls carried out by the large Kremlin-controlled All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre (VTsIOM),²⁵⁶ this did not seem very likely in today's Russia, where political apathy is widespread even among the supporters of United Russia and Putin.²⁵⁷ The expectations of, or demands for, a high turnout have therefore been described as a way of stimulating the regional powers to use administrative resources, i.e. to use state authorities and personal influence for manipulation and outright fraud.

The changes made in the electoral law will also stimulate the use of administrative resources in the regions.²⁵⁸ An important change from previous elections is the way the seats are distributed within the parties, in proportion to the number of votes cast for each regional list of party candidates. For regions with a small population this means that in order to have any representative at all

²⁵⁵ Newsru.com (2007), 'TsIK prognoziruyet rekordnuyu yavku na dumskikh vyborakh', published 30 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/30sep2007/sik.html>.

²⁵⁶ Newsru.com (2007), 'The New Times: VTsIOM po porucheniyyu Kremlya zadayet navodyashchiye voprosy i zanimayetsa finansovym makhinatsiyami', published 6 November 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/06nov2007/vciom.html>.

²⁵⁷ Johnson's Russia List (2007), No. 240, Rudakov, Vladimir: 'Russian voters simply aren't interested in politics' and Sonin, Konstantin: 'Truly Strange Duma Elections', Moscow Times, 20 November 2007.

²⁵⁸ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Golosovaniye yavochnym poryadkom', published 6 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2132778.shtml>.

in the parliament, they need a high number of votes for the winning party, which in terms of numbers of votes, not percentage, can compete with other regional party lists. This is bound to trigger the regional power to use whatever means they have to ensure a high turnout and as many votes as possible for United Russia (whose regional party lists most governors headed).²⁵⁹ The election resulted in two regions (Magadan and Chukotka) not having any MPs from United Russia in the Duma, Saint Petersburg only having seven and the city of Moscow 15, compared with 15 from Bashkortostan, 14 from Tatarstan and 12 from Rostov. Even Dagestan, with eight MPs, exceeded Saint Petersburg.²⁶⁰ This balance may subsequently have changed, since about a third of the elected MPs from United Russia abstained from their seats.²⁶¹

This was probably one aim behind the reformation of the electoral law, but this system also has the consequence that elected candidates from United Russia sit in the Duma on a regional mandate, rather than on a mandate for a specific policy. However the system is even more complex, as the parties themselves choose how many regional party lists they want. The parties were allowed to have between 153 and 80 regional party lists in the 85 regions²⁶². Every region can function as a separate electoral constituency, or be unified with others if the total population does not exceed 3 million.²⁶³ However, the consequences of the election result turned out differently: 99 of United Russia's 315 elected candidates, mostly governors and others heading the regional party lists such as mayors, a few ministers, and foremost the candidate number one, President Vladimir Putin, abstained from their seats.²⁶⁴

About a third of United Russia's elected MPs, 25% of Just Russia's, 5% of the CPRF's and 5% of the LDPR's, abstained from their seats. In total this meant

²⁵⁹ Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Golosovaniye yavochnym poryadkom', published 6 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet:

<http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2132778.shtml>.

²⁶⁰ Kommersant (2007), 'Otkuda zhdut pobediteley', published 4 December 2007, last accessed 10 December, Internet, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832390>.

²⁶¹ The official result published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (11 December 2007, last accessed 11 December December, Internet: www.rg.ru/2007/12/11/cik-vybory-anons.html) was compared to a list of who actually ended up in the Duma from the State Duma of Russian Federation (last accessed 3 January 2007, Internet: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>).

²⁶² From 1 January 2008 Russia has only 84 regions and from 1 March 2008 the number will be reduced to 83 due to merging processes.

²⁶³ *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (2007), 'Vash vykhod, partii', published 21 Augusti 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet, <http://www.rg.ru/2007/08/21/morozov.html>.

²⁶⁴ The official result published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (11 December 2007, last accessed 11 December December, Internet: www.rg.ru/2007/12/11/cik-vybory-anons.html) has been compared to a list of who actually ended up in the Duma from the State Duma of Russian Federation (last accessed 3 January 2007, Internet: <http://www.duma.gov.ru/>).

that 25% of the elected MPs never entered the new Duma. This diminished the democratic legitimacy of the Duma, since it allowed someone other than the electorate to decide who ended up in parliament.

Historically, the official turnout has been very high in some areas and in the last presidential election in 2004, as well as in the 2007 election, this correlated with a high vote for Putin and United Russia respectively. To get the full picture it is necessary to examine the figures on the local level (electoral districts), but already at the regional level there are many striking examples.²⁶⁵ The correlation is most obvious in many of Russia's North Caucasian and Volga basin republics. In 2007, 99.36% in Chechnya reportedly voted for United Russia from a turnout of 99.46% (compared with 92.30% for Putin in 2004 from a turnout of 89.75%). Some other striking examples are: Ingushetiya 98.72% from 98.35% turnout (2004: 98.18% from 96.22%); Kabardino-Balkariya 96.12% from 96.68% turnout (2004: 96.49% from 95.94%); Mordoviya 93.41% from 94.49% turnout (2004: 91.35% from 91.29%).

The correlation was also strong for voters outside Russia: in 2007 78.24% voted for United Russia from a turnout of 71.93%, compared with 85.13% for Putin from a turnout of 86.45% in 2004.

Most of these regions are listed as regions with strong administrative resources, but for some reason North Osetiya-Alaniya apparently did not live up to the 2004 result (91.25% for Putin from a turnout of 89.21%) in the 2007 election. The reported turnout from North Osetiya-Alaniya increased from 45.45% to 60.98% in the last hour of voting, between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. However, the support for United Russia was 71.60%.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Official result from Central Election Commission: Result from 2004 <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=1001000882950®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007 and result from 2007: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>. Since the Central Election Commission does not always present accumulated figures for whole regions but sometimes only for parts of the region Gazeta.ru (2007) has also been used: <http://www.gazeta.ru/maps/elections2007/russia.shtml>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

²⁶⁶ Central Election Commission (2007), http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100021960186&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100021960186&type=453, last accessed 3 January 2008 and Gazeta.ru (2007): <http://www.gazeta.ru/maps/elections2007/russia.shtml>, last accessed 29 December 2007.

6.5.2 The size of the electorate

The size of the electorate is also of interest. According to the Central Election Commission on 19 November 2007 the electorate was 108 million,²⁶⁷ but it turned out to be 109.1 million,²⁶⁸ suggesting that Churov was either poorly informed or that the electorate was expanded with voters, previously unknown and possibly fabricated. The size of the electorate has seemingly varied in a way that, according to some experts, is not easily explained by natural causes. A more detailed study is required to determine what might be natural variation, what is due to unreliable statistics and what might be due to manipulation of the size of the electorate or the statistics. New legislation or new interpretations of current legislation could also have contributed some new voters by legalising or enabling more people to be registered as voters. However, it is clear that the relatively large numbers of children born during the 1980s can explain a growing number of new voters.²⁶⁹

All in all, the size of the electorate has increased slightly since 1991, while the population has decreased.²⁷⁰ From 2004 until the election in December 2007, the electorate increased from 108.1 million voters to 109.1 million voters, while the

²⁶⁷ Johnson's Russia List No. 239, 'Russian Voters Take Keen Interest in State Duma Elections – Churov'.

²⁶⁸ Central Election Commission (2007), <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 21 December 2007.

²⁶⁹ Federal Service for State Statistics, Gosstat (2005), *Rossiyskiy statisticheskiy yezhegodnik* 2005, p. 87.

²⁷⁰ Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 79, 113. The drop of the size of the electorate in March 2004 in Wilson's statistics contradicts the numbers published by the CEC. (From the Internet last accessed 20 November 2007:

http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=1001000882951&vrn=1001000882950®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vbid=1001000882951&type=226, the other figures for the electorate in the elections 1991-2000 correspond to those at

<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexCountry.asp?country=RUSSIA&opt=elc>. These results are not found on the Central Election Commissions' website

<http://www.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>, where only election results not older than September 2003 are currently found http://www.electionguide.org/search-results.php?type=&country=179&search_year=any&submitted=1&submit.x=39&submit.y=10,

<http://www.russiavotes.org/>. For more about the difficulties to find data from the Russian elections see Myagkov et al. (2005), p. 92, footnote 2.

population went from 144.2 to less than 142.2 million.²⁷¹

Information in the media, although hard to verify, points further in this direction. On 1 July 2007 there were said to be 318 000 more voters than on 1 January 2007, while the population loss was 175 000 people during the same period.²⁷² The size of the electorate registered in the electronic counting system GAS Vybory increased by 5 million between 2003 and 2005, according to information in the media. There are claims that there were 104 million registered voters in GAS Vybory in 2003²⁷³ but 109 million in 2005²⁷⁴. No official statistics are available to verify these figures.

Doubts about the size of the electorate, and not only a superficial increase in it, were expressed already in connection with the Duma elections in 1993. It seemed that 2 million voters disappeared from April to December, but the figure then increased again by one million when the final results were published in mid-February.²⁷⁵

It is thus very hard to state anything categorically on this issue but it is an aspect that should be continuously monitored by those wishing to analyse elections in Russia.

6.5.3 Dead souls and other useful voters

Just as there are doubts about how large the electorate is, there are also doubts about who is voting. If the size of the electorate and the turnout are increased in order to add votes, this needs to be done without drawing too much attention to irregularities in the official statistics. Needless to say this kind of information is very difficult to verify.

²⁷¹ Federal Service for State Statistics, Gosstat (2007), http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/2007/b07_11/05-01.htm, last accessed 2 January 2008. 142.2 million is an estimation of the population on 1 January 2007 it was probably even less in December 2007 and Official result from Central Election Commission: Result from 2004

<http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=1001000882950®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>, last accessed 29 December 2007 and result from 2007:

<http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom?action=show&global=1&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null>.

²⁷² Newsru.com (2007) 'Vedomosti: Vlasti manipulirujut spiskami izbirateley dlya podgonki itogov golosovaniya pod nuzhnyy rezultat', published 1 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/01aug2007/electorat.html>.

²⁷³ Novaya Gazeta (2007), 'U vas v kvartire GAS', No. 19, 17 March 2003, last accessed on 20 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2003/19/00.html>.

²⁷⁴ Novyye Izvestiya (2005), 'Dabi na GAS', published 20 December 2005, last accessed 6 December 2007: <http://www.newizv.ru/news/2005-12-20/37490/>.

²⁷⁵ White et al. (1997), pp. 100, 195-196.

The Central Election Commission has tried to increase the number of voters by making it easier for different groups of people to vote. This has been aimed at people living outside Russia (where, as seen in the table above, the turnout and support for Putin and United Russia were higher than the national average, just as in other regions with a high turnout), homeless people and people who cannot come to the polling stations. There is also evidence of illegal methods to increase the electorate by adding groups of non-existent people, people who are not allowed to participate (due to criminal convictions for example) and simply counting individual voters twice.

Dead souls. In *Dead Souls*, the classic novel by Nikolay Gogol, dead serfs ('souls'), only existing in the records of their owners, are bought by the devious main character in order to create the impression that he is a rich man. Deceased or invented people in electoral registers can likewise be used to add votes in favour of a specific party or candidate. In the 1993 elections deceased (former) voters were even reported to have been registered in a house in Moscow that once belonged to the famous author.²⁷⁶ However, the use of dead souls in 1993 seemed to have occurred on a larger scale than this, with around 7 million allegedly being used to increase the turnout to more than 50%, the number needed to endorse the new Constitution in the referendum held simultaneously with the parliamentary election that year. However, since the Duma election was held at the same time, the Central Election Commission faced a conundrum. The 7 million votes needed for the referendum also had to be split among the political parties. It was reportedly decided to give most of these votes not to the main opponents (the right-wing pro-Kremlin party Russia's Choice and the CPRF), since they both monitored each other, but to other parties, primarily Zhirinovsky's LDPR, which received 23% instead of 13%. This strong support for ultra-nationalists shocked most Western observers, who had expected a victory for pro-Western, liberal forces.²⁷⁷

Voters abroad. The previously abolished Soviet passports for domestic purposes are now again eligible for use by Russians in those former Soviet republics where they do not have to bring their Russian international passport with them to enter the country. According to one expert, the size of electorate that can vote,

²⁷⁶ White et al. (1997), p. 126.

²⁷⁷ Wilson, Andrew (2005), pp. 75-76, 204.

but that probably will not, is increased this way.²⁷⁸ It can therefore be used to add votes if desired. As mentioned above, the official statistics show that the turnout to date has been higher among voters outside Russia than within the country. This was also the case in the manipulated election in Ukraine in 2002, when a high percentage of people working abroad were most likely used to falsify the results.²⁷⁹ A Territorial Election Committee has been set up in Moscow to handle 1 670 000 Russian voters in 142 countries. Another committee has been set up for 17 000 voters at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.²⁸⁰ According to the figures of the Central Election Commission's electoral registers, the respective numbers of these voters in the 2004 Presidential elections were 315 925 and 21 082. In the 2007 Duma election the figures were 405 400 and 15 995 respectively.²⁸¹

At least 80% of the people in the unrecognised Georgian separatist republic Abkhazia and South Ossetia are reported to have Russian passports and thus the right to vote in the Duma election, but there are some uncertainties about the number of voters in these areas. Even Vasily Volkov, member of the Central Election Commission, did not have an exact figure, which may seem strange since the computerised counting system should make it easy to produce such data. However, less than a month before the election it seemed that the work to set up electoral registers in these areas had not been completed. There are also signs that the number of voters was augmented in earlier elections in the republics, probably to manipulate the results.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ Nezavisimaya Gazeta (2007), 'Churov reanimiruet sovetskiye pasporta', published 22 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007: Internet http://www.ng.ru/politics/2007-08-22/1_pasport.html.

²⁷⁹ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 81.

²⁸⁰ Rossiyskaya Gazeta (2007), 'Syemka zapreshchena', published 11 October 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.rg.ru/2007/10/11/tik.html>.

²⁸¹ Results from the 2004 presidential election: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=1001000882951&vrn=1001000882950®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=1001000882951&type=225, last accessed 23 November 2007 and for the 2007 Duma election: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/region/izbirkom?action=show&root=1&tvd=100100021960186&vrn=100100021960181®ion=0&global=1&sub_region=0&prver=0&pronetvd=null&vibid=100100021960186&type=233, last accessed 2 January 2008.

²⁸² 'Vremya Vyborov', Vremya Novostey No. 208 071114 <http://www.vremya.ru/2007/208/4/191864.html>. See also Jakob Hedenskog and Robert L. Larsson, (2007) 'Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States', p. 35.

Homeless people, or people without a permanent residence, have been able to vote in special constituencies set up in every region.²⁸³ The desire to vote within this group is probably not very high and this group of voters is hardly among the people most content with the current political situation.

According to the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, those without a permanent residence in the centre of Saint Petersburg voted to a lesser extent (40%) for United Russia in comparison with the national average, as could be expected, but somewhat surprisingly to a much larger extent for Yabloko (over 13%) and the SPS (almost 10%). The voters were allegedly not presented with any gifts while voting.²⁸⁴

The possibility to **vote at home** is desirable for those unable to come to the polling stations but could also provide useful votes if manipulated. This seems to have been the case in the regional elections in Pskov at least, where the number voting at home increased from 1-3% to 30% in some constituencies during the March 2007 election, thus implying that many voters were sought out in their homes and voted.²⁸⁵

Prisoners form yet another group that seems to have been used in earlier elections,²⁸⁶ although they are formally not allowed to participate.²⁸⁷ Some have also pointed at the use of **conscripts** to raise the turnout figure and vote several times in previous elections.²⁸⁸ The role played by the military in the election may be somewhat more complicated than merely adding votes for a certain party. The result and turnout in three electoral districts with naval bases, for instance, complicates the picture:

²⁸³ Newsru.com (2007), 'Dlya Rossiyskikh bomzhey, zhelayushchikh golosovat na vyborakh budut otkryty spetsialnyye izbiratelnyye uchastki', published 25 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/25sep2007/bomji.html>.

²⁸⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (2007), 'Samyye liberalnyye bomzhi v mire', published 17 December 2007, last accessed 21 December 2007, Internet: www.ng.ru/regions/2007-12-17/6_piter.html.

²⁸⁵ Newsru.com (2007), 'Pravozashchitniki: manipulirovat rezultatam vyborov v Gosdumu mozno na vseh etapakh kampanii', published 31 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007: Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/31aug2007/elections.html>.

²⁸⁶ Wilson, Andrew (2005), p. 91.

²⁸⁷ Federal law on "Basic guarantees for voters' rights and right to participate in referendums for citizens of the Russian Federation", last accessed 21 December 2007, Internet: http://www.cikrf.ru/law/2/zakon_02_67/g11.jsp, Chapter 1, §4.3.

²⁸⁸ Golts, Aleksandr (2007), 'Russian Power Structures and their Impact on Russian Politics Regarding the Upcoming Elections', p. 15.

| Voting with a high turnout | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Electoral district | Region | Turnout at 19.00 | Result for United Russia |
| Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskaya Gorodskaya (sudovaya) | Kamchatka | 100% (already at 10.00) | 65.93% |
| Novozemelskaya | Arkhangelsk | 99.03% | 79.34% |
| Sudov Zagranplavaniya | Krasnodar | 97.71% | 36.84% |

A 100% turnout, or close to it, evokes the picture of all personnel being more or less forced to vote or totally falsified figures. However, the result for United Russia is not particularly high, but rather remarkably low in the Sudov Zagranplavaniya electoral district. One would then expect a higher rate for the other larger parties, but instead the results for all other parties, with the exception of the most well-known parties Just Russia, LDPR, Yabloko and CPRF, are several times (3-10 times) higher than the national average. Either the voters showed a good democratic spirit by all going to the polling stations and then showed a greater variety in their voting than the country in general, for some reason benefiting only the clearly fake parties, or the results were manipulated in order to add votes to other Kremlin-backed parties than United Russia.

6.5.4 Counting the votes

Russia uses an electronic system for counting votes. The Central Election Commission is formally responsible for the system, called GAS Vybory, but does not control the operation of the system as such. There is a Federal Centre for Information Management (Informatizatsiya) at the Central Election Commission that also has regional Information Centres. These actually operate the system, according to the law on GAS Vybory signed by President Putin on 10 January 2003.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁹ Gazeta (2003), 'Tsentrizbirkom ne kontroliruyet GAS Vybory', published 24 July 2003, last accessed 28 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.gzt.ru/politics/2003/07/24/014211.html>; Federalnyy Zakon o Gosudartstvennoy avtomatizirovannoy sisteme Rossiyskoy Federatsii "Vybory", especially Article 9 and 17.6, Central Election Commission: <http://www.cikrf.ru/law/2/20fz.jsp>, last accessed 2 January 2008.

At first, the system was handled by FAPSI (Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information), one of Russia's security services primarily responsible for signal intelligence and security of communications. FAPSI was abolished in March 2003 and its functions were divided among three other security services, all controlled by the President: the Federal Security Service (FSB), Federal Protection Service (FSO) and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). It was first assumed that the FSB controlled the GAS Vybory system.²⁹⁰ However, it is more probable that it is now controlled by one of the departments of the FSO.²⁹¹ In that case, its control is likely under the first deputy head of FSO, also head of the Service for Special Communication and Information (SSSI). The SSSI includes a Department for Information Resources, which is assumed to control GAS Vybory but also conducts opinion polls on various issues.²⁹²

It is worth underlining that the security agencies most likely in charge of counting the votes, FAPSI and FSO, have been conducting opinion polls and other sociological surveys for years. The computerised system fits this profile very well, since it can also be used for purposes other than elections and referendums. It is not specified further by the relevant legislation what these other purposes are.²⁹³

The FSO, which is a reticent security agency in Russia and not especially well-known in the West, is thus probably responsible for the technical operation of the counting of the votes and for conducting surveys.²⁹⁴ This gives the FSO, the President and whoever might have influence over the FSO the opportunity, at least in theory, to produce the election results they want. The Central Election

²⁹⁰ Novaya Gazeta (2007), 'U vas v kvartire GAS', No. 19, 17 March 2003, last accessed on 20 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2003/19/00.html>.

²⁹¹ Aleksey Mukhin, general director of the Centre for Political Information in Radio Svoboda 'Premyer Chechni popal v avtomobilnuyu avariyu v Moskve' transcribed on <http://www.svobodanews.ru/Article/2005/11/18/20051118145756000.html>, last accessed 4 December 2007. See also Jonathan Littell, 'The Security Organs of the Russian Federation (Part IV)', Post-Soviet Armies Newsletter, last accessed 28 November 2007, Internet: <http://www.psan.org/document521.html> and Moskovskiy Komsomolets (2003), 'FAPSI razdelili na troikh', published 31 March 2003 accessed through <http://fsb.ru/smi/smifsb/periodik/hinsht5.html>, last accessed 28 November 2007.

²⁹² Voenno-promyshlennyy kuryer (2003), 'Kremlevskaya proslushka', No. 1, 2003, last accessed: 21 December 2007, Internet: www.vpk-news.ru/oldversion/article.asp?pr_sign=archive.2003.01.0301_03_03.

²⁹³ Federalnyy Zakon o Gosudartstvennoy avtomatizirovannoy sisteme Rossiyskoy Federatsii "Vybory" http://www.info-system.ru/zakon/zakon_gas_vibory.html, last accessed 20 November 2007.

²⁹⁴ Agentura.ru, <http://www.agentura.ru/dossier/russia/fso/>, last accessed 23 November 2007.

Commission does not acknowledge any connection with GAS Vybory and the FSO, but only with the Federal Centre for Information Management.²⁹⁵

6.5.5 Fighting election fraud

The Central Election Commission has promised in public statements to fight election fraud. One example is the list of so-called black technologies (various means of manipulation) that was published by the Central Election Commission and which it promised to fight, thus admitting the existence of such problems.²⁹⁶ Another example was when its head Vladimir Churov listened to complaints concerning the abuse of administrative resources in Khabarovsk in favour of United Russia. Churov labelled these practices illegal and promised that legal action would be taken.²⁹⁷ Despite these public commitments to fight fraud, the overall picture indicates that there is no real intention to do so. The lack of attention that the Central Election Commission has devoted to the massive media coverage in favour of United Russia and different ways of using administrative resources shows that there has not been a genuine will to produce fair and equal conditions for the election.

A main point in evaluating the Duma election is to ask whether any measures will be taken against apparent anomalies in the results, such as those in most North Caucasian republics for instance. This is not likely, given the lack of measures taken by the Central Election Commission against suspicious circumstances in the pre-election campaign and in previous elections, such as the evident fake nature of the Democratic Party.

²⁹⁵ Central Election Commission, http://www.cikrf.ru/elect_duma/aboutGAS/index.jsp, last accessed 10 December 2007.

²⁹⁶ Gazeta (2007), '26 chernykh', published 21 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007 Internet: <http://www.gzt.ru/politics/2007/08/21/220222.html>; Gazeta.ru (2007), 'Kniga chernogo piara', published 23 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/elections2007/articles/2080079.shtml>; Newsru.com (2007), 'Tsentrizbirkom sostavil spisk iz 26 nezakonnykh izbiratelnykh tekhnologiy', 22 August 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/22aug2007/vote.html>.

²⁹⁷ Kommersant (2007), 'Vladimir Churov poborol administrativnyy resurs', published 21 September 2007, last accessed 6 December 2007, Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=806860>.

The newspaper *Kommersant* published an article²⁹⁸ enumerating ‘typical violations’ that allegedly occurred on Election Day. These included: many votes cast at the same time, paying voters, proxy voting for large group of people moving from polling station to polling station, observers not being allowed to come to the polling stations, refusal to investigate violations, voting by others than those on the electoral registers (in closed areas or institutes and at polling stations for the homeless, for example), propaganda close to, or at, the polling stations, violations of voter confidentiality, collective voting and voting under surveillance for groups of voters, massive use of ‘dead souls’ in the registers and refusal to give out protocols.

Several of these violations were confirmed by the head of the Central Election Commission, but he also claimed that they had only received 43 complaints from the 96 000 polling stations. The 27 000 calls to the hotline set up for complaints seemingly did not add many complaints to the list.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ *Kommersant* (2007), ‘Tipichnyye narusheniya, zafiksirovannyye v den golosovaniya’, published 4 December 2007, last accessed Internet: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=832229>.

²⁹⁹ Johnson’s Russia List, No. 250 (2007) ‘Central Election Commission Receives 43 Complaints – Churov’.

7 Conclusions

Elections in Russia are not free and political parties do not and cannot act in real opposition to the power elite. The power elite is above the official political system. Most of the parties openly support the current political leadership personified by Putin and the Duma election 2007 was managed to ensure the victory of United Russia. President Putin turned the election into a vote of personal confidence in himself and he openly showed his aversion to the political parties, even United Russia, whose list of candidates he headed. Putin's indifferent attitude towards political parties is hardly surprising since there are no real political parties that are acting independently to promote different policies and no real political opposition was allowed to make itself heard in the election campaign.

The overwhelming political dominance of United Russia can be explained by the fact that political parties have never served as the real power bases in Russian post-Soviet politics. They are used to mobilise support and legitimise the current system instead and in the last few years most efforts have been spent on getting United Russia to perform this function. The party is best characterised as a huge corporation of various national and regional political and economic interests. Conflict between these groups mostly takes place behind the political scene and within the political parties and the bureaucratic system. A power struggle could therefore very well provoke a major crisis within or between political parties, but this would not be a reflection of different political opinions among the population.

There are 15 registered political parties in Russia today, but they are pro-Putin, totally fabricated, manipulated or pacified to the extent that they cannot perform the function of a political alternative to the current regime. Yabloko, the CPRF and, perhaps to some extent, the SPS are pacified oppositional parties. Their weak position is however also a consequence of their history of having been part of the political establishment (to a certain degree some of them still are). Their leaders have held positions of power, both in the economy and the political system; this is especially true of the SPS and the CPRF. The parties outside the Duma have also been stopped from participating in various regional elections. This means that on the regional political level the choice between different political parties is often significantly smaller than might be suggested from the fact that there are 15 registered parties, even though only 11 of them ran in the last Duma election.

There are different ways to determine the extent of public support for the political parties that back the current political system under Putin. The votes for United Russia and Just Russia are regarded as votes in support of Putin and according to official data the two parties together received 72% from an official turnout of 64%. This means that slightly less than half the electorate actively showed their support for Putin, which is not low compared with most countries.

However, the result can be questioned because fraud and manipulation occurred during the election, although the exact extent of such practices is difficult to determine. In addition, it is important to look at more than just direct manipulation and outright fraud and also take into account the whole political climate in Russia and the various soft or indirect techniques for managing elections. All in all, the real support for Putin and United Russia is probably lower than the official result, perhaps by some 10-15% as discussed earlier in this report. This would signify that despite massive propaganda, largely passive and pacified opposition and even fake opponents, only about one-third of the electorate showed their support for the current political leadership, personified by Putin, at the polling station.

The election manipulation has been most obvious in some areas, especially in rural areas and outside the larger cities, and has been carried out to a large extent under the direction of the regional elites. The victory for United Russia is therefore best described as a result of a unified effort by the federal and regional elites. These results have possibly been produced deliberately in order to carry out as much manipulation as possible in remote areas and then abstain from more overt fraud in areas with more journalists, foreigners and organised opposition, but may also be a consequence of some regional and local leaders simply being eager to deliver the 'right' result. Since Putin's support is generally lower in the richer and more developed parts of the country (such as the larger cities), his popularity cannot easily be explained by support from those gaining most from the last years' positive economic development.

Looking at the regions, it is clear that the election was rigged in several of them (just as in earlier elections). Since this has not prompted any measures from the federal authorities, this has either been accepted (perhaps even encouraged) or there is an inability to act in the central authorities, or, which seems more likely, they just have to accept the results delivered from the regions, because they cannot be controlled or managed from Moscow and these votes are needed for a satisfactory election result.

Fraud and manipulation have occurred on a large scale, at least since Yeltsin's re-election in 1996, but have increased in the last few years. The essential point is that election tampering is not just significant for the Putin era but for the whole post-Soviet period in Russia. However, the West did not criticise the Russian elections as much previously as they have done since the December 2007 election. The reason is probably partly because as long as the fraud and manipulation favoured Boris Yeltsin, seen as a bulwark against the return of Communism, and as long as right-wing and liberal parties made it to the Duma, the West was inclined to view all this as transitional problems. The Russians and especially the Russian leadership are probably well aware of this and tend to see Western criticism as a product of fear of a strong Russia and not so much as genuine concern for democratic principles.

Another explanation is that the increasingly anti-Western stance of the Russian leadership and its renewed emphasis on great power status has made some Western observers look at the Russian political system with more critical eyes.

The current political leadership in Russia is naturally struggling to consolidate its position of power, which is publicly talked of as strengthening the power vertical. The Russian political system is dependent on individuals rather than on parties and institutions. Therefore, until now Putin has been the only common denominator for the current power elite, which harbours a number of different groups and clans with different interests and goals. His claimed personal qualities of being orderly, hardworking and a strong leader are the only guarantee the power elite is able to offer the population, since public trust in the political and bureaucratic institutions is low. However, the positive economic development during recent years has probably also contributed to some extent. It therefore makes perfect sense to strengthen the power vertical and bring the whole political system under the personal control of President Putin. Personal authority, rather than institutional authority, has served Putin well in terms of securing his position at the top. But at the same time, control beyond the personal reach of Putin becomes uncertain since other individuals take his place further down in the hierarchy in the absence of established authority of political and bureaucratic institutions.

There are obvious problems with this way of organising the political system, let alone the objections from a democratic point of view. The most acute is the problem of installing a successor to Putin in March 2008, since according to the

constitution he is not allowed to continue as president for a third term. Consequently, the forthcoming presidential election is seen as a very critical event, which may have a number of negative consequences such as general uncertainty and an intensifying struggle for power within the elite.

The current political stability in Russia is to a large extent only a perceived stability. The monolithic façade ensures that struggles for power between different groups take place under the surface, masking instability present in the system. This could cause unexpected shifts in policy and unpredictable measures, which may surprise both outside observers and actors within the system. It is, of course, more difficult to understand why things are happening if there is a lack of consistency between words and deeds and if transparency is lacking.

However, the fact that there are hidden struggles going on between political parties, institutions and persons in Russia is not unique but rather the absence of a public struggle between these actors.

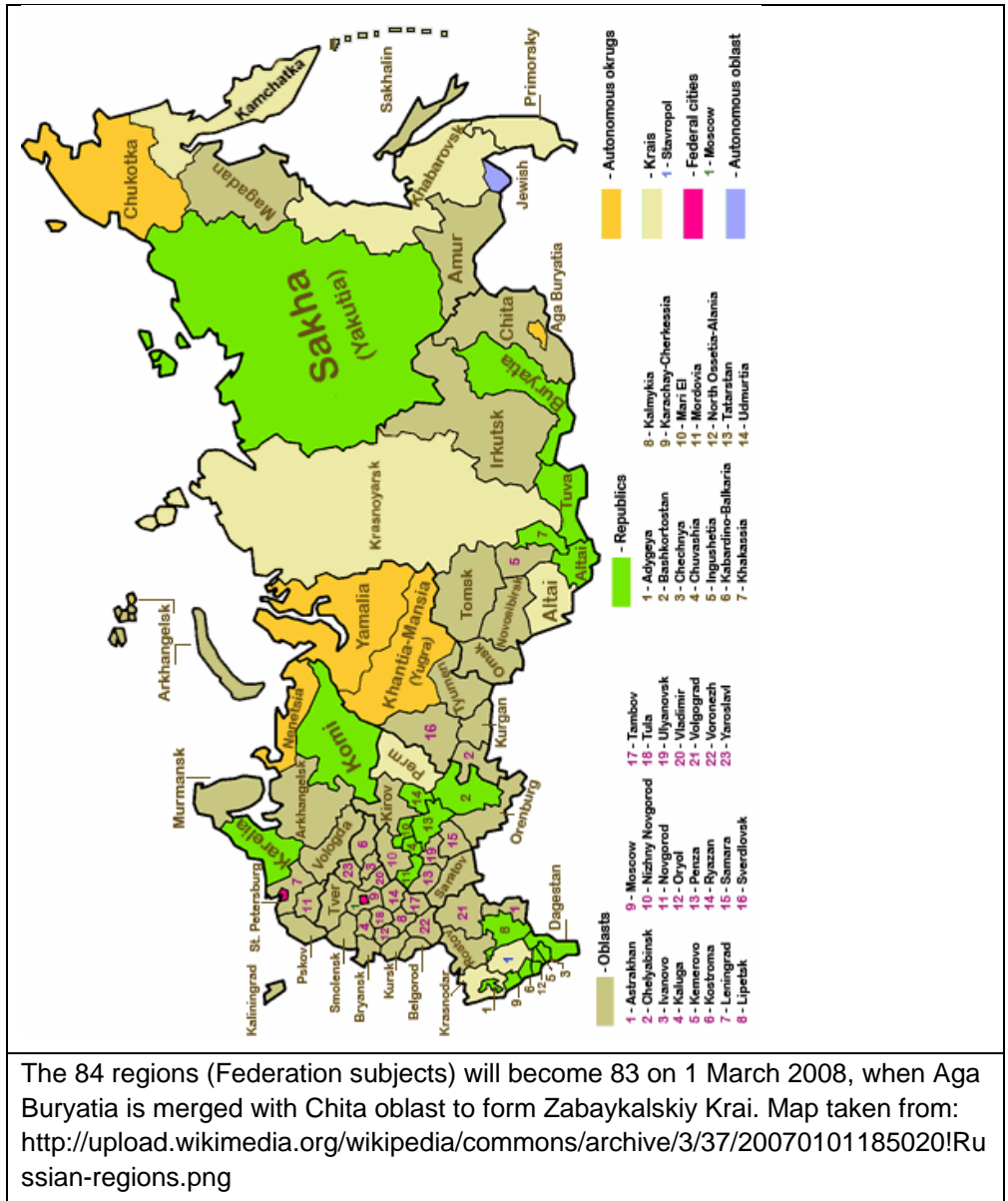
Another problem with the power vertical, and the heavily centralised system, is that the top is very dependent on the lower levels both to get things done and to acquire correct and relevant information. The interests of those further down in the hierarchy are often contrary to those at the top, especially if the system does not work well, is corrupt and the confidence in it is low. In that case, the interest of the lower echelons is to provide information to the top that supports claims for more money and other resources, either because the money is said to be well spent or because more money is said to be crucially needed to solve existing problems. In answer to this, those at the top can create parallel structures, which has been the case in Russia. This also threatens to increase tensions within the system, especially if there is a struggle for power at the top. This is exactly the scenario that Russia faces today.

By managing elections and trying to control the whole political process, the Russian leadership deprives itself of a good source of information about the situation in the country and the public opinion. This could otherwise have been articulated by real opposition parties or other organisations acting more or less independently of the power elite. The leadership's strategy, called managed or sovereign democracy, is aimed at pacifying the political opposition but it is far from sure that this will work. Opposition outside the official political system, striving to undermine it, might grow stronger, since the legal political means are becoming increasingly impracticable, but others attempting to change the system may nevertheless prefer to act within the system and try to attain the rights they are granted by the Constitution and other legislation.

Figur 1 The voters' dilemma



8 The regions of the Russian Federation



The 84 regions (Federation subjects) will become 83 on 1 March 2008, when Aga Buryatia is merged with Chita oblast to form Zabaykalskiy Krai. Map taken from: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/archive/3/37/20070101185020!Russian-regions.png>

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