PARTIES OF POWER IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA (1991-2008)

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

MEHMET ZEKİ GÜNAY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
EURASIAN STUDIES

DECEMBER 2008

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

_____

Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

_____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

_____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever	(METU, IR)	_____
Prof. Dr. Raşit Kaya	(METU, ADM)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Aydıngün	(METU, SOC)	_____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name : Mehmet Zeki Günay

Signature :

ABSTRACT

PARTIES OF POWER IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA (1991-2008)

Günay, Mehmet Zeki

M.S., Eurasian Studies

Supervisor : Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever

December 2008, 111 pages

This thesis seeks to examine the 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation between 1991 and 2008. The thesis also discusses the political party system and political party development in post-Soviet Russia. The thesis focuses mainly on the United Russia party and compares it with the former 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation. The main argument of the thesis is that as compared to the previous 'parties of power', which were affiliated mainly with the prime ministers without achieving party consolidation, the United Russia party has been successful in consolidating its party development and achieved a central status in the Russian political system.

The thesis has seven chapters. The introductory first chapter is followed by the second chapter that examines 'parties of power' in post-Soviet Russia, along with the political party system and the stages of political party development in the Russian Federation. The third chapter explores Russia's Choice party. The fourth chapter deals with Our Home Is Russia party. The fifth chapter focuses on the United Russia party. The sixth chapter discusses the new role of the United Russia in Russian political system after 2007 State Duma elections. The last chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

Keywords: Russian Federation, Parties of Power, Political Parties, United Russia Party

ÖZ

SOVYET SONRASI RUSYA'DA İKTİDAR PARTİLERİ (1991-2008)

Günay, Mehmet Zeki

Yüksek Lisans, Avrasya Çalışmaları

Tez Yöneticisi : Doç. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever

Aralık 2008, 111 sayfa

Bu tez, Rusya Federasyonu'ndaki iktidar partilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tez aynı zamanda Rusya Federasyonu'ndaki siyasal parti sistemini ve siyasal partilerin gelişimini de tartışmaktadır. Tez temel olarak Birleşik Rusya Partisi'ne odaklanmakta ve onu Rusya Federasyonu'ndaki daha önceki iktidar partileri ile karşılaştırmaktadır. Tezin temel argümanı genellikle başbakanlara bağlı olan ve parti gelişimini tam olarak sağlayamayan önceki iktidar partileri ile karşılaştırıldığında Birleşik Rusya Partisi'nin parti gelişimini sağlamlaştırmada başarılı olduğu ve Rus siyasal sisteminde merkezi bir statü kazandığı şeklindedir.

Tez yedi bölümden oluşmaktadır. Giriş olan birinci bölümü Sovyet sonrası Rusya'daki 'iktidar partilerini', Rusya Federasyonu'ndaki siyasal parti sistemini ve siyasal parti gelişiminin evrelerini de ele alarak inceleyen ikinci bölüm takip etmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm 'Rusya'nın Seçimi' Partisi'ni ele almaktadır. Dördüncü bölüm 'Bizim Evimiz Rusya' Partisi'ni analiz etmektedir. Beşinci bölüm ise Birleşik Rusya Partisi'ni ele almaktadır. Altıncı bölüm ise Birleşik Rusya Partisi'nin 2007 Duma seçimleri sonrasında Rus siyasal sistemindeki yeni konumunu tartışmaktadır. Son bölüm tezin sonucunu oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rusya Federasyonu, İktidar Partileri, Siyasal Partiler, Birleşik Rusya Partisi

To My Family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay F.Tanrısever for his guidance, advice, criticism, encouragement and insight throughout the research.

I would also like to thank to the members of my examining committee, Prof. Dr. Raşit Kaya and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Aydıngün for their valuable contributions and comments.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family for their continuous support and patience during my study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Primary aim of this thesis is to analyze the 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation and to clarify the differences between the United Russia and the previous 'parties of power'. In this regard, the thesis focuses on the formation, characteristics, electoral performance, and the factors behind the performance of these 'parties of power'. In addition, the thesis discusses general trends in the Russian political party system under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, as well as the stages of the political party development in post-Soviet Russia.

The main argument of the thesis is that as compared to the previous 'parties of power', which were affiliated mainly with the prime ministers without achieving party consolidation, the United Russia party has been successful in consolidating its party development and achieved a central status in the Russian political system.

In each Russian parliamentary election, the Kremlin has sponsored a different 'party of power' to advance its interests. In 1993, for example, the 'party of power' was Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), in 1995, it was Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), in 1999, it was the Unity (*Edinstvo*), and in 2003 and 2007, it was the United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*). Until the formation of the United Russia, none of the former 'parties of power' has managed to consolidate its ties with the Kremlin and survived until the next parliamentary election. This thesis aims to explain how the United Russia managed to consolidate its ties to the Kremlin and to discuss the

motivations of the ruling elite in supporting one particular 'party of power' in two subsequent parliamentary elections of 2003 and 2007.

While examining 'parties of power' in post-Soviet Russia, it is necessary to discuss the institutional choice, regime type and the legacy of the communist past in the Russian Federation. Scott Mainwaring points out that institutional choice significantly determines the party system type emerging in any country. Institutions encourage or discourage political actors, shape their identities and set up the policy-making context.[1] Richard Rose and Neil Munro adopt a 'supply side' focus on the state as a major factor determining which parties are offered to voters.[2] Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul emphasize the role of state elites in determining party supply in Russia.[3] M. Steven Fish, Herbert Kitschelt, Regina Smyth, Judith S. Kullberg and William Zimmerman mention that resource sets and legacies in the Russian case characteristically work against liberal parties and for the Communists and 'parties of power'.[4]

---

[1] Scott Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism and Democracy: The Difficult Combination," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1993, p. 198.

[2] Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections without Order*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[3] Timothy J. Colton, "Parties, Leaders, and Voters in the Parliamentary Election," in *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, ed. Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Michael McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

[4] See Herbert Kitschelt and Regina Smyth, "Programmatic Party Cohesion in Emerging Postcommunist Democracies: Russia in Comparative Context," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 10, December 2002, pp. 1228-1256; Judith S. Kullberg and William Zimmerman, "Liberal Elites, Socialist Masses, and Problems of Russian Democracy," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3, April 1999, pp. 323-358; M. Steven Fish, "The Predicament of Russian Liberalism: Evidence from the December 1995 Parliamentary Elections," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, March 1997, pp. 191-220; M. Steven Fish, "The Travails of Liberalism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1996, pp. 106-117; Regina Smyth, "Building State Capacity from the Inside Out," *Politics and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2002, pp. 555-578.

In the literature concerning democratic transition, it is generally suggested that the existence of a parliamentary system promotes democratic consolidation and the formation of political parties, whereas presidentialism hinders these processes especially in the absence of a historically structured party system.[5]

Russia's constitution of 1993 has created a 'superpresidential' system in Post-Soviet Russia.[6] This institutional design was chosen a result of Yeltsin's purpose of consolidating his power and controlling the legislation. The constitution gave superior powers to the presidency while giving the legislative an inferior role in Russia political system. The weakened parliament in Russia has affected post-Soviet Russia party development. The motivation in party building directly depends on the relative power of the legislature. In Russia, political parties are unable to control the formation of the government or configure the presidential vote.[7]

Robert Moser mentions that under presidential systems less organized parliamentary parties emerge, whereas, parliamentary systems encourage the establishment of much

[5] See Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994; Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics*, Vol. 46, 1993.

[6] See Timothy Colton, "Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1995, pp. 144-148; also M. Steven Fish, "The Pitfalls of Russian Superpresidentialism," *Current History*, Vol. 96, No. 612, 1997, pp. 326-330.

[7] David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy*, Birmingham: Ashgate, 2006, p. 29.

more disciplined parties in the legislature.[8] Scott Mainwaring states that the presence of presidentialism together with multipartism is harmful to the establishment of a small number of effective parties. In parliamentary systems, parties take role in the choice of cabinet and prime minister, and are responsible for supporting the government. Parties are more stable, as disciplined parties are needed to maintain the executive in power. However, in presidential systems presidents design their own cabinets and parties, and are less supportive of the government.[9]

Herbert Kitschelt states during the transition the old elites of the 'patrimonial communism' often support a presidential system in order to preserve their position in the new regime [10] Therefore, the government style and the role of political parties in post-Soviet Russia are largely determined by its history and the communist legacy. Henry Hale, drawing on Kitschelt and his colleagues,[11] mentions that each type of communist regime left a different legacy that has had implications for the important decisions that had to be made in countries coming from the communist rule. He adds that the previous regime type encouraged

> the selection of certain new postcommunist institutions over others by producing particular patterns of interests and particular distributions of resources among these interests. … [The] patterns of resource distribution left by communist regimes had

[8] Robert G. Moser, 'The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia,' in *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, ed. J. Löwenhardt, London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp. 57-58.

[9] Scott Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, Multipartism and Democracy: The Difficult Combination," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1993, p. 200.

[10] Herbert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies, " *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1995, pp. 453-454.

[11] See Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka. *Post-Communist Party Systems*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

> very important implications for the kind of parties that would develop in these countries.[12]

'Patrimonial communism' of the Soviet times had important legacies for the countries where it was present. The features of this kind of communism are vertical chains of dependence, extensive patronage and clientelistic networks, personality cults, low rational-bureaucratic institutionalization, and little tolerance for opposition. In such an environment, non-state actors, like civil society, are weak because of repression and the full control of state patronage networks on resources. Consequently, rulers coming from the patrimonial communist rule prefer political systems that gave significant power to the chief executive.[13] In many post-Soviet states this preference led to extremely powerful presidencies, like in the case of the Russian Federation.[14]

The legacy of 'patrimonial communism' in Russia had important implications for the democracy in Russian Federation and for the political capital with which Russian political parties are established. While coming to the 1993 parliamentary elections, party-builders were in a hard situation concerning the political capital available to them because of the legacies connected with 'patrimonial communism'. Nationwide political organizations free from the state were very limited. Before 1991, since the

[12] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 28.

[13] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 28; See also Gerald M. Easter, "Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2, January 1997, pp. 184-211.

[14] See Eugene Huskey, *Presidential Power in Russia*, Armonk,NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

time of Lenin, the only party allowed to compete in all Russian elections was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and real independent movements had problems. In such an environment, noncommunist parties and movements had little chance to organize. In addition, due to Russia's hierarchical social structure, controlled by clientelist rules, it was hard for independent party-builders to find sufficient resources and to mobilize support for ideas contradicting the incumbent authorities. As a result, although the 1990 election for the Congress of People's Deputies had been competitive, the competitors had little political organization outside of the CPSU structures,[15] and even it was hard to use the term 'political party' for those noncommunist associations existed between 1990 and 1993.[16] In the fall of 1993, the most common form of political capital for politicians in Russia was either personal reputation or connections to the powerful state structures that emerged from the patrimonial communist regime. Reputation and connections were closely interlinked as most of the Russia's popular politicians achieved their popularity working in important state organs.[17]

The experience of 'patrimonial communism' in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the course that the Russian leaders followed for its transition

[15] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 37.

[16] See Frederic Fleron J., Richard Ahl, and Finbarr Lane, "Where Now in the Study of Russian Political Parties?" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 1-2, March/June, pp. 224-252; Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, "Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 23, No. 4, October 1993, pp. 521-548; Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995; Michael McFaul, "Party Formation after Revolutionary Transitions," in *Political Parties in Russia*, ed. Alexander Dallin, Berkley: International and Area Studies, University of California Press, 1993, pp. 7-28.

[17] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 41.

to market and democracy resulted in a society in which political capital was highly concentrated in few people. Consequently, only a small number of individuals with strong connections to power structures in Russia had a real chance to launch Russia's first political parties. However, party leaders were not completely free in designing their own destinies, although having significant political capital. Presidential administrations in Russia regularly intervened in the party-building projects.[18]

In democracies, political elites, as the representatives of different segments of civil society, compete against each other electorally through political parties to acquire power and supremacy. In turn, by the presence of these representatives of civil society in the governance, civil society's function and position in the state become more legitimate and more effective. Political parties, ideally, represent the interests of civil society and create

> …a basis for organizing the ideological diversity within a state into identifiable platforms, objectives, and agendas. Parties are the media through which pluralism…provides the citizenry with an outlet within the political system.[19]

Therefore, political parties have a very important role as the mediator between the civil society and the state. Parties perform this role, basically, by winning

[18] Ibid., pp. 26-28.

[19] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January-February 2006, pp. 3-5.

parliamentary seats or, in a more advanced way, by forming governments or by appointing their members as the heads of state.[20]

> No other mechanism [other than parties] has yet been found for aggregating the preferences of citizens, expressing them in the form of a government program, and providing a team to carry them out. More generally, parties help to engage citizens in the political process on a continuing basis. They provide a form of political education, often including the daily press, and sometimes they provide a wider network of social activities, including youth movements, sporting societies, and holiday arrangements. In the largest sense of all, they provide for the accountability of government by allowing voters to pass judgement on the performance of an outgoing team and, when they think it appropriate, to "throw the rogue out."[21]

According to Richard Sakwa, Russian party system is characterized by three types of parties regarding their relations with the regime. The first type is 'programme' parties, which have a clear policy adopted within the party that is pursued by the leadership and constantly presented to the public. The second type is 'project' parties, which are created not long before the elections as a part of hidden plans of competing elites. The last type is 'regime' parties, which are sponsored and established by the ruling group to manipulate and shape political environment and in some cases to act as 'party of power'. A 'party of power' is a political organization established with the support of the executive to take part in elections and the legislature process.[22]

---

[20] Ibid.

[21] Stephen White, "Russians and Their Party System," *Demokratizatsiya*, 2006, p. 7.

[22] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 146.

In post-Soviet Russia, as Knox, Lentini and Williams mention, the emergence of a party system and the development of civil society have created 'paradoxical' trends. That is, although in Russia parties, which are able to win seats in the parliament with leaders having a certain degree of power, have emerged, they have not been "manifestations of the organic or class based interests normally associated with civil society."[23] These parties have been 'parties of power', founded by the state. Parties of this kind have not paid much attention to the development of Russian civil society, because the state has taken control of the positions that should be under the control of the agents of civil society. Since the end of the communist rule, the Russian state has been using 'parties of power' as substitutes to the political parties involving civil society agents,[24] and the 'parties of power', with their "decision-making nucleus… outside the party,"[25] represent the bureaucratic or other institutional interests of the authorities rather than the interests of the civil society.[26]

'Parties of power', representing the ruling group instead of the sections of civil society, have been a constant characteristic of Russia's post-communist political system. The quick dissolution of the Soviet state and the following privatization process favored those connected to the post-communist Russian state and its leading

[23] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 4.

[24] Ibid., p. 5.

[25] Tatiana Stanovaya, "What Is the Russian Party of Power?" RIA-Novosti, 14 June 2005, www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9177-21.cfm (Accessed on 12 August 2008)

[26] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January-February 2006, p. 5.

export industries. Then, they assumed the main role of planning political initiatives and organizations that sought to use political institutions and the electoral processes to advance sectoral aims. These political formations contributed to the personalization of politics that has held back the development of political parties in Russia. In such an environment, 'parties of power' helped realize individual political and electoral aims.[27]

Scholars used different concepts to describe the emerging regimes from the communist rule. Giullermo O'Donnell used the term 'delegative democracy' to describe the regimes that contain elements of both democratic and authoritarian systems. [28] Paul Kubiček uses the concept of 'delegative democracy' to examine party system in Russia. Yeltsin's preference to stay above party politics and rule by decree, and the adoption of a constitution creating a powerful presidency and weak legislature were as a result of the 'delegative democracy' in Russia.[29] Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul define the regime in Russia as 'electoral democracy', in which institutions and norms of 'liberal democracy' are absent. In Russia after the 1993 constitution, the parliament and the party system lacked power and independence[30]. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way used the term 'competitive authoritarianism' to describe the post-communist regimes. In such a regime,

[27] Ibid.

[28] Giullermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No.1, January 1994, pp. 55-69.

[29] Paul Kubiček, "Delegative Democracy in Russia and Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 27, No.4, 1994, pp. 423-441.

[30] Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000,* Washington DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003, p. 206.

democratic institutions are regarded as the main means of gaining and exercising authority. Leaders in such regimes, however, abuse institutional arrangements contrary to democratic standards.[31] Harvey Balzer preferred using the term 'managed pluralism' to describe the post-communist regimes, in which the groups that are backed by the regime are promoted, while political parties, business, media and civil society are constrained.[32] David White states that the term 'managed democracy', despite its shortcomings, is a comprehensive term to describe authoritarianism under Putin.[33] He defines 'managed democracy' as a system

> which contains all the formal trappings of a democracy - a parliament, judiciary, party system, regular elections, and an independent media, the rule of law, civil society – but where such institutions may be constrained, regulated and adjusted by a central authority.[34]

Although the term 'managed democracy' has been invented and widely used for the Putin's presidency, in fact Yeltsin and Putin have the same "objective of a 'manageable' and streamlined party system and a compliant legislature."[35] The main difference between the two presidents was that Putin has been more successful in utilizing the Russian party system in achieving his political objectives. While Yeltsin avoided creating a stable 'party of power' forming the basis of a pro-

[31] Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 2002, p. 52.

[32] Harvey Balzer, "Managed Pluralism: Vladimir Putin's Emerging Regime," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 19, No.3, 2003, p. 191.

[33] David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy*. Birmingham: Ashgate, 2006, p. 187.

[34] Ibid., p. 186.

[35] Ibid., p. 187.

governmental majority in the Duma, Putin has significantly benefited from the successful pro-presidential 'party of power', the United Russia. Although both Yeltsin and Putin refused to join political parties, Putin has been more closely associated with the Unity and then with the United Russia than Yeltsin was with Russia's Choice or Our Home Is Russia.[36]

The main motivation of the presidency under Putin's rule in supporting and building closer relations with the 'party of power', the United Russia, was related to Putin's agenda of consolidating and preserving the authoritarian regime he created in Russia, and continuing his dominance in the Russian political life as the Prime Minister after the end of his presidency. The best to achieve this was through the creation of 'one party dominant regime'. The key to this end was creating and enhancing a true presidential party, the United Russia. The former 'parties of power' lacked the real support of the presidency as Yeltsin intentionally distanced himself from party politics. However, in accordance with the plans of Putin of creating a 'dominant party regime', the United Russia acquired its significant power. This power acquired with the backing of the presidency is the main difference of the United Russia as compared to the former 'parties of powers'. Thanks to the support of Putin, especially after the 2007 Duma elections, the United Russia has started to play the same role that the Communist Party did in Soviet times. However, in contrast to the Soviet experience of Communist Party rule, which was characterized as a 'party-state' regime, the United Russia's dominance could be labeled as 'state-party'. The United Russia is the dominant party and the party politics in Russia serve as a branch

[36] Ibid., p. 188.

of the presidential administration,[37] however under the supervision of Putin as Prime Minister.

The factors behind the failure of the former 'parties of power' before the United Russia were mainly related to the different leadership features of Yeltsin and Putin. These differences included their popularity among the Russian public, and their attitudes towards the Russian political parties. The former 'parties of power' until the United Russia failed mainly because Yeltsin did not have the public support that Putin had. The popularity of the president is a significant factor affecting the success of the 'parties of power', due to the feature of Russian 'parties of power' mentioned by Edwin Bacon that they gain position from support of the president, rather than the president gaining his position from the support of a party.[38] Yeltsin and Putin both tried to control and constrain the Russian parliament and political parties. Putin has managed to achieve this end largely due to his relatively high popularity that Yeltsin lacked. Yeltsin did not have mass support that could be shared by a 'party of power'. Therefore, Yeltsin was unable to direct an obedient parliament like Putin did during his presidency.[39]

In understanding why presidents sometimes prefer and sometimes avoid creating presidential parties it is helpful examining the 'principal-agent problem' Henry Hale,

[37] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 922.

[38] Edwin Bacon, "Russia's Law on Political Parties: Democracy by Decree?" in *Russian Politics under Putin*, ed. Cameron Ross, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 42.

[39] David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy*, Birmingham: Ashgate, 2006, p. 188.

mainly referring to Joel S. Migdal,[40] explains why presidents might undermine the institutions that might make them more effective, a phenomenon in new states with clientelistic social structures like in Russia. The main problem is a principal-agent problem. The creation of a presidential party can be examined using this logic in the following way. Although a party might help a president rule more authoritatively, the authority that the party itself would accumulate through this process could become a threat to the president's power, as the party might develop its own interests contradicting those of the president. The party benefits from its reputation of being fully loyal to the president, and it becomes costly to oppose. Another risk is that the party might create leaders of its own, who could become an opponent to the president. As a result of such concerns, state leaders might intentionally weaken their own state institutions to preserve their own power. Therefore, presidents resist the creation of a presidential party that might acquire authority and become independent of the president.[41]

Therefore, the main factor affecting the formation of presidential party is the relative power of president and opposition. Incumbent presidents are more likely see risks than benefits in establishing a presidential party, when they feel they do not need parties to guarantee success in elections for themselves or a successor. Therefore, presidential parties emerge in two ways. Firstly, a president feels obligated to form a presidential party in order to counterbalance an opposition party that mobilizes

[40] See Joel S. Migdal, "Strong States, Weak States," in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, Boston: Little, Brown, 1987, pp. 391-434; Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

[41] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 207.

important elite and mass power. In such a situation, the risks mentioned by principal-agent problems are ignored by the urgent need to preserve the presidency. Secondly, an opposition party might bring partisanship to the presidency from outside the office winning a contest.[42]

Examining 'parties of power' in post-Soviet Russia requires covering the fields of political, economic, historical and cultural issues in Russia. Accordingly, in line with the objectives of this thesis discusses the formation, characteristics, electoral performance and factors behind these performance of the 'parties of power' in Russian Federation. As part of the research and data collection, library and internet resources composed of books, academic journals, online journals, websites of Russian political parties, state departments and research centers were utilized.

This thesis has seven chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which explains the scope and objective, the argument and the research method of the thesis. The second chapter provides a historical background of the political parties in post-Soviet Russia. It briefly covers the 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation. Then, the chapter examines the political party system and its development in post-Soviet Russia.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters discuss the formation, characteristics, electoral performance and the factors behind the performance of each 'party of power' in post-Soviet Russia in a chronological order, following the same method for each party. Accordingly, the third chapter deals with Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), the fourth

[42] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

with Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), and the fifth with the United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*).

The sixth chapter discusses the new role of the United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) in Russian political system after the 2007 parliamentary elections. In this respect, the chapter focuses on the rise of the party in Russian political system and its relationship to Vladimir Putin.

The seventh chapter is the conclusion. In this chapter the assertions of all chapters of with regard to the main argument of the thesis— as compared to the previous 'parties of power', which were affiliated mainly with the prime ministers without achieving party consolidation, the United Russia party has been successful in consolidating its party development and achieved a central status in the Russian political system— are summarized.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL PARTIES IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

This chapter, firstly, discusses the emergence of 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation under the presidencies of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Later, the chapter focuses on the political party system in post-Soviet Russia. Finally, the chapter examines the phases of the political party development in the Russian Federation.

2.1 'Parties of Power' in the Russian Federation

As discussed in the introduction of the thesis, 'parties of power' have always been an important part of the post-Soviet Russian political development. However, the effectiveness of 'parties of power' in the Russian political system has been different during the presidencies of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Under President Yeltsin, 'parties of power' were mostly ineffective. [43] However, under Putin, both as the President and then as the Prime Minister, the United Russia party has played and continues to play important roles in strengthening Putin's power and helping him to carry out his political agenda.

During Boris Yeltsin's presidency, between 1991 and 1999, there were several attempts to create 'parties of power', in order to direct Russia's political, economic,

[43] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 4.

and social development, and to enhance the president's position in the political system.[44] 'Parties of power' enabled President Yeltsin to distance himself from any specific political party and to remain above party politics. Yeltsin, as the 'president of all Russians', preferred working with his own cadres free of political or social control.[45] However, President Yeltsin managed to benefit from the "mobilizational skills and personnel provided by the organizations agitating on his behalf."[46] A good example was the case of Democratic Russia. Democratic Russia greatly assisted Yeltsin in the first Russian presidential elections of 1991. However, Yeltsin's victory did not help Democratic Russia to establish itself as the 'party of power' or even as a political party.[47]

After the victory of Yeltsin in 1991 presidential elections, some former members of Democratic Russia together with some government ministers, including the planner of economic reforms, acting Prime Minister Egor Gaidar, formed Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) for the 1993 Duma elections. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was established to advance Yeltsin's political agenda, mainly by demanding the votes of the reform-oriented voters. However, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), due to its poor election campaign, inefficient usage of its institutional and media advantages, and

[44] Ibid., p. 5.

[45] Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 192-193.

[46] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, pp. 5-6.

[47] Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 2002, p. 192.

President Yeltsin's non-participation in the party, failed to become the first party in the parliament after the 1993 Duma election.[48]

Coming to the 1995 parliamentary elections, as Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) failed to get the majority in the first Duma after the 1993 elections, President Yeltsin and the Kremlin decided to create a new 'party of power' for the 1995 elections.[49] Once again, the party was based on 'personality'.[50] Accordingly, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, was established. Party's main function was supporting the Chernomyrdin government in the 1995 Duma elections and then setting the basis for President Yeltsin's reelection campaign in the coming presidential elections of 1996.[51] However, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), having a similar destiny to Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), could not manage to get the first place in the 1995 parliamentary elections and lost its meaning for President Yeltsin.

After dismissing Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) as the 'party of power', the Kremlin decided to create a new 'party of power' for the 1999 parliamentary elections. Therefore, the Unity (*Edinstvo*), led by Minister of Emergency Situations

---

[48] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 6.

[49] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 56.

[50] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 6.

[51] Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics The Management of a Postcommunist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 44.

Sergei Shoigu, was established. Main aim of establishing this party was challenging the Fatherland-All Russia Party (*Otechestvo - Vsya Rossiya*) and creating a base in the new parliament.[52] In the election, the Unity managed to take the second highest vote with 23.3 percent, which was slightly below the vote of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

After Vladimir Putin's coming to power, Russia witnessed the creation of an effective and powerful 'party of power', the United Russia. It was the merger of the Unity and the Fatherland-All Russia Party. The party achieving significant electoral victories both in 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections continues to dominate the electoral and parliamentary politics in Russia.

2.2 Political Party System in Post-Soviet Russia

Russia's political party system in the 1990s, under President Yeltsin's rule, had several distinctive features in comparison with the Putin's rule. Firstly, in the 1990s Russian political party system was significantly fragmented. Secondly, there was a high level of electoral volatility and, therefore, great elasticity in voter demands. Thirdly, non-partisan politicians, who have resources other than party support, had a major role in national and sub-national electoral politics.[53] However, in the 2000s, these trends in political party politics began to change. Political parties became the

[52] Ibid., p. 158.

[53] Vladimir Gelman, "From 'Feckless Pluralism' to 'Dominant Power Politics': The Transformation of Russia's Party System," *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2006, pp. 545–561; Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004; Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

only legitimate actors in the electoral and parliamentary politic. Non-party politicians considerably lost significance. Only four parties, instead of many small parties and coalitions, had parliamentary representation over two consecutive legislative terms of 2003–2007 and 2007–2011. These political parties received almost 92% of the vote in the December 2007 elections. Finally, both national and sub-national executives, who in the 1990s stayed beyond party politics, became loyal partisans by the late 2000s.[54]

Especially in the mid-1990s after the collapse of the Soviet-style one-party rule, Russia's party system became highly fragmented. This was evident in the 1995 parliamentary elections, when 43 parties competed. However, during the 2000s along with the monopoly of the United Russia, Russian political party system became lowly fragmented. Now no political party or group of parties can form a meaningful alternative to the United Russia. Russian party politics in the 2000s witnessed two inter-related tendencies:

> …the emerging dominance of the party of power at the electoral and parliamentary levels; and the continuing decline (if not a total extinction) of opposition of different kinds.[55]

[54] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, pp. 913-914.

[55] Ibid., pp. 914-915.

After the 2007 State Duma elections, the United Russia party became a dominant party:

> …a party that is established by and closely tied to the rulers of an authoritarian regime; freely employs state power and resources to maintain its dominance; and uses extra-constitutional means to control the outcomes of politics during elections and beyond. [56]

The regime in Russia, which was mainly 'non-party-based' during the 1900s, became a 'party-based' 'non-democratic' regime in the 2000s. Therefore, as Vladimir Gelman states the 'indispensability' of political parties for democracies can also be relevant for some 'non-democracies', like in the case of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian politics.[57]

2.3 Stages of Political Party Development in Post-Soviet Russia

Richard Sakwa classifies post-Soviet Russian political party development in three phases: 'Phoney democracy' phase that lasted from August 1991 to October 1993; 'Dual adaptation' phase from December 1993 to December 1999; and 'formalization' phase from 2000 to 2008.[58]

The features of political parties and the structure of party politics in a country are determined by the timing of elections, the type of the electoral system and the

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 172-184; Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 128-141.

electoral processes. In the Russian Federation, the lack of a general election up to December 1993 delayed the development of political parties and the political party system. Between August 1991 and October 1993, without elections, political parties could not perform most of their main functions. As a result, 'phoney democracy' emerged in Russia.[59] Indeed, the role of elections in Russia is the legitimization of existing power rather than providing the transfer of power. The authorities, not the political parties, are the major players in the electoral process.[60]

Russian political parties in this period did not form the basis of the Russian political system. Russia, once a 'one-party' state became a 'non-party' state, although there existed many 'pseudo-parties'. By April 1992, 25 political parties were registered with the Russian Ministry of Justice. In Russia, the beginning of pluralism and the establishment of a multi-party system did not happen simultaneously. Politics in Russia meant the struggle between the parliament and the president, instead of the struggle between political parties in the parliament. In this period, Russia witnessed a 'dual power', in which the president was placed over the developing parliament, and political parties had no real functions.[61]

During the years 1991-1993, all the political parties united around two main centers of power: either around the President Boris Yeltsin or around the first post-Soviet

[59] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 131.

[60] Nikolai Petrov, "The elections since 1989: The end of the chapter?" in *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, ed. Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel and Stefani Hoffman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 248.

[61] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 132.

parliament, the Supreme Soviet.[62] Closure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union opened new political spaces. However, this did not led to political mobilization. Political parties had differing views on political, economic and nationality policies. A bipolar system emerged, in which 'democrats' were against 'red-browns', which was the alliance of communist rejectionists and nationalist reactionaries. Programmatic differences of parties, concerning the issues like the power of the presidency, near abroad and economy, began to emerge after the ideological homogeneity of the 'insurgency' phase that lasted from 1985 to 1991. Political party programs started to focus on the realities of the Russian politics, rather than on the transition to the market economy. Therefore, differing party programs and style of politics replaced 'anti-communist' homogeneity of the 'insurgency.[63]

During the 'phoney democracy' period, Russian political parties did not form the government or guided the president. The parliament and the political parties had a secondary role. The stability of the new democratic institutions was weakened, as political parties were not integrated into the political system. The president and the administration were not accountable to the political parties or parliament. The lack of a multi-party system held back the development of 'serious' political parties, and the lack of 'serious' political parties held back the development of a multi-party system.[64]

---

[62] Andrey Ryabov, "The evolution of the multiparty system," in *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, ed. Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel and Stefani Hoffman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 208.

[63] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 132.

[64] Ibid., p. 136.

'Dual adaptation' phase of the Russian political party development, which lasted from December 1993 to December 1999, witnessed the acceptance of a new constitution and the first national multi-party elections of 12 December 1993. The new electoral system aimed encouraging the development of a multi-party system. However, this was partly achieved and the 'pseudo-parties' of the earlier periods failed to compete with the difficulties of elections. A few of these political parties managed to survive. Thirteen political parties and electoral blocs competed in the elections, and only eight passed the 5 percent barrier. However, the election contributed to the development of political parties by compelling the formation of organizations and alliances. In addition, the new constitution set the institutional structure in which political parties could operate.[65]

In the 'dual adaptation' phase, a new generation of political parties emerged, which had their origins from the earlier phases but adapted to the new Russian political environment. The consolidation of the party system was difficult but the main feature of this phase was the adaptation of political parties to the rules of democratic and parliamentary politics. The extreme left and right were marginalized. However, a less positive side of this adaptation was to the demands of "regime politics and the structures of power themselves."[66]

The establishment of a parliamentary system encouraged the development of party politics, but the elections partially managed to create political party system. The

[65] Ibid., pp. 136-137.

[66] Ibid.

presence of small factions and groups in the First Duma prevented the establishment of a stable majority, slowed down the development of parliamentary government and continued the 'supra-party' system of regime politics. Political party factions were not concrete and deputies lacked discipline. Many deputies elected on the party lists were not even members of the political parties they represented. The lack of connection between the composition of parliament and the formation of the government heightened the fragmentation of the Russian political party system. Power in Russian politics was based on personalities that were outside the parliamentary and the political party system. Within the political parties, connection between the leadership and membership were weak. Political parties were somewhere between "strong executive authority and an 'amorphous' civil society."[67]

While coming to the parliamentary elections of December 1995, Russia's already fragmented political party system became further fragmented. 79 political parties and 43 groups were registered by the Ministry of Justice for running in the elections. The well-known features of post-communist political party building were again witnessed:

> …the emphasis on personalities, amorphous and poorly drafted programmes, the deinstitutionalizing influence of regional politics, the constant splitting and sub-diving of parties and factions, and the absence of party discipline.[68]

[67] Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 180-181.

[68] Ibid.

During the 'adaptation' phase, Russia lacked a real multi-party system. The only 'real' political party in the Russian Federation was the Communist Party. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation claimed a membership around 550,000. It had a strong programme and a powerful national organization. Party's remarkable success in the December 1995 elections was mainly a result of these features of the party. The party got the top position in the proportional part of the elections with 22.3 percent of the vote. It gained 99 seats in Duma in addition to the 58 single-member seats. The total of the votes of Communist Party of the Russian Federation and Liberal Democratic Party of Russia was noteworthy. The 'centre' was represented by the relatively disappointing vote for Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), which got only 10.1 percent of the party list vote.[69]

In this period, political design in Russia has changed:

> The transition was based on the alliance between reformist sections of the Soviet bureaucracy and a programme drawn from liberal Westernizes, marginalising the democratic movements of the insurgency against communism. A new model began to emerge in which political space became rather more structured, but the gulf between this and the conduct of government remained.[70]

[69] Ibid., p. 182.

[70] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 139.

The creation of a presidential party was a possible way of closing this gap. However, President Yeltsin repeatedly refused this option and mentioned that he was 'the president of all Russians'.[71]

Coming to the December 1999 election, the 'adaptation' phase had to a certain degree consolidated the policies of "market reforms, international integration and representative democracy," although the centre of Russian politics rooted in these policies lacked influential representation. The hurried but not very well organized regrouping of political parties could not change the weakness of the Russian political party system.[72]

During the 'formalization' phase, despite the facts of the contemporary Russian political party politics, there were apparent trends transforming the "fragmented and amorphous party" sphere into a political party system with effective political parties, different programmes, and stable electorates. The main feature of the 'formalization' phase in the Russian political party politics was 'differentiation', which took place in three ways:

1. Frenetic party formation and reformation continued, but the 1995 and 1999 elections distinguished a small group with representation in the Duma from the mass of pseudo-parties.
2. The programmes and policies of this small group were now far more clearly differentiated along the classical political spectrum- the CPRF on the left, Unity and Luzhkov's Fatherland in the centre, Yabloko and the SPS on the centre

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., p. 140.

right, and the LDPR on the nationalist right, although cross-cutting issues allowed alliances across the spectrum.

3. Russian society itself began to develop a contoured political structure as class, societal and institutional interests, which in the Soviet era related to each other in non-political ways, now asserted their positions by employing the classical gamut of democratic instruments, above all parties.[73]

Differentiation in the Russian electorate during the 'formalization' phase occurred by more stable political party alignment between demographic and economic groups. For instance: younger people supported Yabloko, Union of Right Forces (SPS), Women of Russia, Russia's Democratic Choice and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), while the older and the poor electorate supported the Communists and the Agrarians. Electorate with little education preferred the Agrarians, LDPR, and Communists, while more highly educated supported Union of Right Forces (SPS) and Yabloko. Yabloko attracted the old intelligentsia, while SPS attracted the 'market-oriented' new middle class. Reformist parties were more strongly represented in Moscow and St Petersburg. The Agrarian Party of Russia was powerful in villages, while liberals were not often supported. Many of the new generation political parties, getting reliable support with their recognized name and programme, had better funding and gave more importance to local organizations.[74]

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

2.4 Conclusion

'Parties of power' have been a constant characteristic of Russia's post-communist political system. They held back the development of political parties in Russia. Accordingly, 'parties of power' helped to realize individual political and electoral aims. However, the effectiveness of these 'parties of power' has been different under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. During Yeltsin's rule, 'parties of power' were mostly ineffective. However, under Putin, both as the President and then as the Prime Minister, the United Russia party, which is the current 'party of power', has played and continues to play important roles in strengthening Putin's power and helping him to carry out his political agenda.

After Putin's coming to power, Russia witnessed the creation of an effective and powerful 'party of power', the United Russia. The party achieving significant victories both in the 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections continues to dominate the electoral and parliamentary politics in Russia. After 2007 State Duma elections, the United Russia finally became the dominant party, which is established by the rulers of an authoritarian regime. The rise of the United Russia as a dominant party led to the significant destruction of Russia's major institutions. Now no single party or group of parties can form a meaningful alternative to the United Russia.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIA'S CHOICE

This chapter discusses Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), which was the first 'party of power' in post-Soviet Russia. In this regard, the chapter examines the formation, characteristics, electoral performance, and the factors behind the performance of the party. Exploring these points is helpful in clarifying the United Russia's difference from the previous 'parties of power' in post-Soviet Russia.

3.1 Formation of the Russia's Choice Party

When Yeltsin dissolved the Congress of People's Deputies on September 21, 1993, the legislature responded by impeaching Yeltsin and electing Rutskoi as acting president. Following this, the army seized the parliament on October 4, 1993. Rutskoi and some other opposition leaders to Yeltsin were arrested. Between these events, on October 1, Yeltsin issued a decree that defined the rules for electing a new parliament. The new parliament, Federal Assembly, was to consist of two chambers. The 450 members of the lower chamber, the State Duma, were to be elected by a mixed electoral system. In this system, while half of the members were to be elected by proportional representation (PR) in a single, nationwide district, the other half was to be elected by plurality in single-member districts (SMD). The proportional representation threshold was set at 5 percent.[75]

[75] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 28.

Proportional representation elections were one of the most inventive decrees of Yeltsin. However, for the executive, in particular for President Yeltsin, the lack of a political party, a 'party of power', that could represent the executive was a serious problem. In the period between 1992 and 1993, there were many attempts to create such a political party. One of these attempts was a meeting called the Forum of Democratic Forces. There were two kinds of participants in the meeting. The first group of participants was some of the national leaders of Democratic Russia, who were totally supporting the government. The second group was the government itself, represented by some senior officials, such as Egor Gaidar who was the acting prime minister and the main planner of the reform program. The creation of a political party that could represent the executive was decided in June 1993. Finally, in October 1993 the founding congress of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) took place.[76]

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the successor of Democratic Russia. Democratic Russia had important role in mobilizing the anti-communist ideas during the last years of the Soviet Union. However, with the collapse of communism, the Democratic Russia lost its main motivation and reason of existence. Subsequently, political parties and some important leaders united under the Democratic Russia left the movement. Several deputies from Democratic Russia formed new factions in the Congress of People's Deputies.[77]

---

[76] Ibid., pp. 26-29.

[77] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 116.

Coming to the summer of 1993, democratic leaders in and out of the government became aware of the fact that they had to secure their status after the elections. However, government officials and politicians around the President Yeltsin were afraid that the candidates from Democratic Russia could not be elected to the new parliament. Therefore, many leading figures (for instance Gennadii Burbulis, Aleksei Golovkov and Arkadii Murashev) established a new organization, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), to replace Democratic Russia. They aimed getting support from the old supporters of Democratic Russia and from the group that had benefited from the post-Soviet political environment. This second group included members of Yeltsin's government and presidential team, heads of regional administrations and directors of privatized enterprises. This electoral bloc of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), therefore, was not 'revolutionary' anymore, but was in favor of the new status quo.[78]

Egor Gaidar, who was the leader of the bloc, tried to turn Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) into a 'professional' and 'well-organized' political party. However, although supporting the government, leaders of Democratic Russia did not accept this idea, and they supported a looser organizational framework.[79] This was the case, as it was planned that the Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) would take the place of Democratic Russia by dissolving it. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) hoped to persuade major members of Democratic Russia to join the movement. However, leaders of

[78] Ibid., p. 117.

[79] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 29.

Democratic Russia rejected this idea. They did not want to subordinate their movement to Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). In addition, some members of Democratic Russia criticized superior status of Egor Gaidar, Anatoly Chubais and Andrei Kozyrev in the movement. Finally, while coming to the founding congress of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in October 1993, old leaders of Democratic Russia and the leaders of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) found a solution. Democratic Russia's leaders accepted to join Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) bloc, instead of joining as individuals. As a result, both movements preserved their identity and integrity. However, during the founding congress it became clear that the electoral bloc was under the control of people from Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). Democratic Russia's leaders were not included in the bloc's federal list. This list consisting of federal candidates from Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was enough to perceive it as the 'party of power', as sixteen of the nineteen candidates were either recent or former government officials.[80]

3.2 Characteristics of the Russia's Choice Party

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had important 'political capital', with the participation of democratic activists, government leaders, local heads of administration, and other officials. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the creation of President Yeltsin's advisors. The party included famous politicians: Egor Gaidar, formal leader of the party and former acting Prime Minister, Anatoly Chubais, the

[80] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 117-118.

'privatization tsar', and Andrei Kozyrev, the Foreign Minister. These leaders in the eyes of the Russian public represented the ideas of "opposition to the communist regime," support for "western-style free-market economics and the radical 'shock' method of getting there."[81]

Main component of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the government itself, and accordingly was perceived as the 'party of power'.[82] The party included

> …the president's chief of staff, the president's former state secretary, five deputy prime ministers, the foreign minister, plus the ministers of information, science, culture, and the environment.[83]

The common ideological categorization for political parties using the left-right scale can not be easily applied to the 'parties of power' because their policy choices in elections are shaped not by ideological considerations but by their close ties to the executive. Therefore, the fact that higher government officials were members of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) and it utilized its connection with the executive for electoral aims was more important than the party's support for free-market liberalism.[84]

---

[81] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 54.

[82] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 29.

[83] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 119.

[84] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 31.

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) focused on its 'administrative capital' rather than on 'ideational capital' of its leadership. In this respect, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), being the 'party of power,' had some advantages. President Yeltsin, as the 'boss' of the party, planned the first Duma elections for less than three months after he had illegally called new elections and suppressed the opposition in the Congress. This sudden election gave no time to the opponents of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) to do preparation. Moreover, main opponents of Yeltsin, like former Vice President Rutskoi's party, were banned from the election. [85]

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had the advantage of employing regional leaders, who were seeking benefit from the new presidential regime. Major banks gave important support to Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). The party enjoyed disproportional coverage on television compared to its rivals, since at the time all of Russia's major television networks were state-owned.[86]

Rulers of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) were sure that the party would be the winner of the 1993 election. They were sure because Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the 'party of power'. As the 'party of power', they thought that they would get the support that Yeltsin got in the April referendum. They assumed that the party would get the support of the voters who were in favor of continuing economic

[85] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 54.

[86] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

reforms.[87] However, the actual result of the 1993 Duma election was certainly a surprise for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). All of the over-confident and optimistic predictions were proved to be wrong.

3.3 Electoral Performance of the Russia's Choice Party

The results of the December 1993 parliamentary elections were disappointing for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). [88] Contrary to the public opinion polls that assumed that Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) would get around 40 percent of the vote, the party got only 14.5 percent. This score was far below 21.4 percent of Vladimir Zhirinovsky's winner Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, and was not significantly higher than 11.6 percent of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. The performance of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was surprising as just eight months before the 1993 parliamentary elections Yeltsin had managed to get the approval of the majority for his presidency and his economic reform plan in the 1993 referendum.[89]

[87] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 119-120.

[88] See Table 1 for the detailed results of the 1993 Duma elections.

[89] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 115.

3.4 Factors Behind the Electoral Failure of the Party

The factors resulting in the electoral failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in the December 1993 parliamentary election can be found in the party's strategic decision mistakes made during the election period regarding the composition, organization, and leadership of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), and its conduct of the election campaign. The main factor, however, leading to the failure of the party was Yeltsin's nonparticipation in the party. Yeltsin wanted to be above party politics and was suspicious of them.

The first factor leading to the failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in the December 1993 was Yeltsin's nonparticipation in the party. The electoral strategy of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) mainly relied on its 'administrative capital'. This strategy was defected as President Yeltsin refused to actually join the party and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin was more interested in the Party of Russian Unity and Accord than in Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*).[90] President Yeltsin preferred to stay outside of 'the fight of party politics'. Indeed, it was hard for him to support one electoral bloc, as his cabinet members had joined four different blocs. He believed that the 'pro-reform' movements would win the majority of the seats after the election, and so wanted to play the role of a "power broker and mediator between them."[91]

---

[90] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 55.

[91] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 127.

The execute in Russia, due to the great powers that 'superpresidency' provided it, for a long time did not need parties to maintain its position in the Russian political system. In such a situation, the possible dangers rather than advantages of creating a true presidential party were taken into consideration. Accordingly, political parties initially created with the encouragement of Yeltsin were later ignored. The fate of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was no exception to this trend. In 1993 parliamentary election, most of Yeltsin's government was on the list of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), but he refused to join the party. Following the bad performance of the party, it soon became evident that President Yeltsin was planning to create another 'presidential party'. Indeed, after the election, as supposed by the 'principal-agent problem', in 1994 and 1995 Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) opposed Yeltsin's decision to send the army to Chechnya, which was one of the most significant issues of the time. Egor Gaidar, as the party leader and acting prime minister, managed to gain power of his own. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) created to be loyal to Yeltsin turned out to work against him.[92]

Confirming the premises of 'principal-agent problem', President Yeltsin was suspicious of political parties in Russia. Although State Secretary Gennady Burbulis, who was Yeltsin's closest adviser, repeatedly advised Yeltsin to create a presidential party he always rejected doing so. Concerning this point, Burbulis mentioned "Yeltsin feared a party would limit him, that it would commit him to a policy

[92] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 208-209.

position and limit his freedom of action."[93] Again confirming the 'principal-agent problem', another advisor of Yeltsin warned that Egor Gaidar and some others in Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) were in party building efforts to become independent of Yeltsin and they would not be loyal to Yeltsin after the creation of a powerful party. Therefore, Yeltsin tried to delay the creation of such a party, thinking that the establishment of it would not be in his interests.[94]

Non-participation of Yeltsin in the party created important problems for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). It became difficult for the bloc to offer 'polarized' options to the electorate in the campaign. That is, if the voters saw President Yeltsin and Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) identical, the campaign would have been more successful, as there would be two real choices—for or against the president. Polls in October 1993 showed that 28.1 percent of the voters would make their decision depending on the leader of the blocs, whereas only 6.8 percent depending on party programmes and 3.6 percent on campaign promises. [95]

The leadership of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was also influential in party's performance. In 1993, Egor Gaidar was only first deputy prime minister. He was

[93] Jerry F. Hough, "Institutional Rules and Party Formation," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 52.

[94] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 209.

[95] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 127.

seen as a 'man of ideas', not as a 'powerful administrator'.[96] Gaidar was new in Russian party politics and had no experience with electoral campaigning. In addition, he lacked many of Yeltsin's leadership features. Moreover, with the absence of Yeltsin, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) could not get the votes of President Yeltsin's some electorate.[97]

The second factor leading to the failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in the December election was related to its party-building plan. The plan aimed to replace, rather than develop, the old Democratic Russia network and ideology. It gave emphasis to the employment of powerful elites and governors, which are were not committed to market or democracy. This led to the alienation of a group of activists and supporters, and weakened the party's 'ideational' basis.[98] Accordingly, four electoral blocs emerged: Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), Yabloko, the Party for Russian Unity and Accord, and the Russian Movement for Democratic Reform. In the end, the proportional representation (PR) votes for the reformist movements were split. Candidates from these blocs contested against each other in 122 districts of the 225 single member races. Notably, Gaidar and Yavlinsky clashed with each other, rather than targeting Zhirinovsky.[99]

---

[96] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 55.

[97] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 127-128.

[98] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 55.

[99] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 128-129.

The third factor behind the failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the unsuccessful election campaign for the 1993 Duma election. Defects of the campaign can be grounded on practices of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*).

The election campaign of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was disorganized and ineffective. The campaign did not include a definite electoral calendar, a campaign message, or a target group in the society. Gennady Burbulis, who was the campaign strategist, preferred to create for the party the image of a "party of status quo: the party of power, the party of action, the party of the president, and the party of continued reform," and ignored building campaign promises, defining policy stances, and making alliances with other electoral blocs.[100]

Assuming the role of the 'party of power' led to overconfidence in the election campaign. President Yeltsin's victory in October 1993 and his support for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) caused overconfidence. The focus of the party was on the experience of the party candidates, claiming that the party would certainly be the winner, and little attention was given to the reformist ideas that had important public support.[101] Initial television advertisements of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) represented the party as if it had already won the election. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) did not care much about the election campaign, in particular, about public

[100] Ibid.

[101] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 54-55.

rallies or demonstrations to persuade candidates or a direct message to the electorate. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) promised nothing attractive to the voters.[102]

Russia's Choice's ineffective use of the means of media during the campaign process contributed to the failure in the 1993 Duma election. Although the party enjoyed more time on television than the other competitors did, it could not focus on general problems of the voters. Concerning this point, McFaul mentions one of the party's television advertisements, in which a "wealthy, well-dressed family of three with a large, well-fed St. Bernard going out to vote Russia's Choice." In general, media usage of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) showed that it was far away from the realities of Russia.[103]

The factors behind the unsuccessful media campaign of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) were various. As a result of overconfidence, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) did not pay much attention to the media campaign process, to the message and content of the commercials, as shown by the example of an unrealistic Russian family going to vote for the party. Again related to the careless approach to the campaign, television advertisements became 'decentralized' and 'unfocused'. That was the case as Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had worked with ten different advertisement firms. This resulted in the lack of common theme or message in the advertisements. The teams responsible for television activities of Russia's Choice

[102] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 129.

[103] Ibid., p. 130.

(*Vybor Rossii*) were not experienced. Coming from wealthy classes of Russia, they could not create meaningful messages for the masses concerning the realities of Russia.[104]

The misjudgment of opponents was another mistake of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in December 1993 election campaign. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) miscalculated their opponents for the election. It focused its criticisms mainly on the Russian Communist Party, Civic Union and to a lesser degree, on Yavlinsky. However, they ignored Zhirinovsky. Russia's Choice's late attack on Zhirinovsky did not help anything.[105]

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in December 1993 election campaign lacked coordination between its parts and among its leaders during the election campaign. Coordination between Moscow and the regions was very low, as a result of the problems between Democratic Russia and Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). This led to problems concerning the distribution of party materials from Moscow to the regions and harmony of election themes between national and regional campaigns. Indeed, Democratic Russia and Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) regional members offered different lists of local candidates for the regional party list.[106]

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., pp. 130-131

[106] Ibid.

After the 1993 Duma elections, Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), later renamed as Democratic Party of Russia, has continued to weaken. Finally, the party lost its status as the 'party of power' to the new project, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Egor Gaidar stayed as the party leader, but other important figures left the party to establish different political parties that contested in the 1995 Duma elections.[107] Forty-three parties were in the ballot in 1995, including eight blocs that were direct successor of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), and twenty electoral blocs whose leaders were once in Democratic Russia.[108] The rise of the contestants and especially the emergence of the new 'party of power' significantly affected Democratic Party of Russia's performance in the 1995 election. The party received only 3.9 percent of the vote and nine district seats. This was a significant defeat in comparison with the results in the 1993 election.

3.5 Conclusion

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had significant 'political capital' at the beginning of its political presence. Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the creation of Yeltsin's advisors.[109] As the main component of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was the

[107] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 56.

[108] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 135.

[109] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 54.

government itself, it was perceived as the 'party of power'.[110] The bloc included the president's chief of staff, the president's former state secretary, five deputy prime ministers, the foreign minister, plus the ministers of information, science, culture, and the environment.[111]

Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had the advantage of employing regional leaders, who were seeking benefit from the new presidential regime. These allies of the party were trying to increase the number of pro-Yeltsin districts. In addition, due to the Kremlin involvement in the party, major banks gave sufficient support to Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), and it enjoyed disproportional coverage on television in comparison with its rivals, since at the time all of Russia's major television networks were state-owned.[112]

Consequently, rulers of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had optimistic expectations about bloc's performance in the coming 1993 Duma elections. This optimism was mainly based on the advantages that the bloc enjoyed by being the 'party of power'. As the 'party of power', they thought that they would get the support that Yeltsin got in the April referendum.[113] However, the actual result of the 1993 Duma election was certainly a surprise for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). All the over-confident,

---

[110] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 29.

[111] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, p. 119.

[112] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 54-55.

[113] Michael McFaul, "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy," in *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 119-120.

certain and optimistic predictions were proved to be wrong. The party got only 14.5 percent of the party list votes. This score was far below 21.4 percent of Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and slightly higher than 11.6 percent of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

The factors resulting in the electoral failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in the December 1993 parliamentary election can be found in the party's strategic decision mistakes made during the election period, regarding composition, organization, and leadership of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), and its conduct of the election campaign. There were important faults in the electoral strategy of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), which greatly relied on its 'administrative capital'. This strategy was defected as Yeltsin refused to actually join the party. [114] The main factor, therefore, leading to the failure of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) was Yeltsin's nonparticipation in the movement. Yeltsin wanted to be above party politics and was suspicious of them, as mentioned by the principal-agent problem concept. The execute in Russia, thanks to 'superpresidency', for a long time did not need parties to maintain its position in the political spectrum. In such a situation, the possible dangers rather than advantages of creating a true presidential party were taken into consideration by Yeltsin.[115] The absence of Yeltsin created important problems for Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) and significantly affected its electoral power and consequently its electoral success.

[114] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 55.

[115] Ibid., pp. 208-209.

Table 1: Results of 12 December 1993 Parliamentary Election

	Votes, %			Seats		
	List	SMD		**List**	**SMD**	**Total,%**
Valid Votes	50.6	50.6				
Invalid Votes	3.7	4.0				
Total Votes (% of electorate)	54.3	54.6				
Liberal Democratic Party	21.4	2.7		59	5	14.3
Russia's Choice	14.5	6.3		40	30	15.6
Communist Party	11.6	3.2		32	16	10.7
Women of Russia	7.6	0.5		21	2	5.1
Agrarian Party of Russia	7.4	5.0		21	12	7.3
Yabloko	7.3	3.2		20	3	5.1
Russian Unity and Concord	6.3	2.5		18	1	4.2
Democratic Party of Russia	5.1	1.9		14	1	3.3
Movement for Democratic Reforms	3.8	1.9		0	4	0.9
Civic Union	1.8	2.7		0	1	0.2
Future of Russia	1.2	0.7		0	1	0.2
Cedar	0.7	0.5		0	0	0
Dignity and Charity	0.7	0.8		0	2	0.4
Independents	—	45.2		—	146	32.5
Against all	3.9	14.8		—	—	—
Others	0.0	0.7		0	0	0
Invalid ballots	6.8	7.4				
Total	100	100		225	224*	100

* One seat left vacant in Chechnya due to political situation.

Source: The table is taken from www.russiavotes.com
<http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

CHAPTER 4

OUR HOME IS RUSSIA

This chapter discusses Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), which was the second 'party of power' in post-Soviet Russia. The chapter examines the formation, characteristics, electoral performance, and the factors behind the performance of the party. Exploring these points is helpful in understanding the differences between the United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) and Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), and how the former has achieved its success as a 'party of power'.

4.1 Formation of the Our Home Is Party

When Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) failed to win a majority in the first Duma after the 1993 parliamentary elections, President Yeltsin and the Kremlin decided to create a new 'party of power' for the 1995 Duma elections. President Yeltsin lost his confidence in Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) not only when it failed to meet his electoral expectations, but also when the party opposed his decision to launch the first Chechen war in late 1994 and early 1995. Following the decision of creating a new 'party of power', President Yeltsin, on April 25, 1995, announced that the party would be 'right-of-center' and would support the government.[116]

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, was established in May 1995. Party's main function was supporting the Chernomyrdin government in the 1995 Duma elections and then setting the basis

[116] Ibid., p. 71.

for Yeltsin's reelection campaign in the coming presidential elections of 1996. As Stephan White states Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) was a 'party of power': "a coalition of the postcommunist political and economic *nomenklatura*, with differing views but a common interest in maintaining their privileged position."[117] Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) included representatives of the government, important figures of the gas and petroleum industries, and some of the regional elites.[118] However, the party represented two constituencies above all: first, the energy complex with which Chernomyrdin was connected, and second, the metallurgical complex with which the first vice-premier Oleg Soskovets was connected.[119]

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) quickly managed to get attention of the Russian political environment, mainly due the 'common interest' mentioned by Stephan White. Prime Minister Chernomyrdin was at the center of this attention due to his career at Gazprom. Indeed, some called Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) as '*Nash dom – Gazprom*'.[120] Chernomyrdin was not seen as a 'radical shock therapist', but as a 'pragmatist industrialist', after his career as the head of Gazprom before joining the government. When he was in office, between the 1993

[117] Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics The Management of a Postcommunist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 44.

[118] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 6.

[119] Stephen White, Matthew Wyman and Sarah Oates, "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.49, No.5, 1997, p. 771.

[120] Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 44.

and 1995 elections, Russia's economy was still worsening. However, Chernomyrdin was not blamed as much as President Yeltsin and Egor Gaidar, who were the initiators of the 'problematic' reforms. Joiners to the party could have advantage

> …not only from direct access to government, but also from the support of the super-rich Gazprom and even from public association with a moderate, pragmatic approach to reform.[121]

Considering these points, Chernomyrdin was a good choice for the new party-building project.

The Kremlin began to create the new 'party of power' around Chernomyrdin, firstly by changing nearly all of the cabinet. Exceptions to this change included Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) loyalists Andrei Kozyrev, Anatoly Chubais, and Agrarians Aleksandr Zaveriukha (deputy prime minister) and Aleksandr Nazarchuk (minister of agriculture). This cabinet change with the leadership of Chernomyrdin helped to get the support of the powerful regional elites. Even though some governors refused to join the party formally, they encouraged the building of party branches in their regions. In fact, Vladimir Putin those days was the regional coordinator of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) in St. Petersburg as second-in-command of Mayor Sobchak.[122] Our Home Is Russia's list was headed by Victor Chernomyrdin, together with Nikita Mikhalkov, a film director that won the Oscar prize in 1994 with

[121] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 72.

[122] Ibid.

his film 'Burnt by the Sun', and General Lev Rokhlin who had directed the attack on Grozny but refused to accept the state prize for his success.[123]

4.2 Characteristics of the Our Home Is Party

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) played a 'pro-governmental', or 'party of power' role, like Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) did in 1993. The party was accepted as the new 'party of power', as many cabinet members, important figures in the government, and high-ranking regional officials joined the party. Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) managed to combine "state administration with private capital," like in the case of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in 1993.[124] However, the 'party of power' in 1995 was a 'centrist' and not a 'reformist' one like Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). In April 1995, Chernomyrdin announced that he would lead a 'center-right' party. This shift was directly related to the change in the policy of the Yeltsin government, as a response to the harsh economic decline following the 'shock therapy' policies carried out from 1992 to 1995.[125]

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) stated its position as "reasonable centrism grounded in common sense," which was to be followed by a program claiming

[123] Stephen White, Matthew Wyman and Sarah Oates, "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.49, No.5, 1997, p. 771.

[124] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 35.

[125] Christopher Marsh, *Russia at the Polls: Voters, Elections and Democratization*, Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002, pp. 78-79.

"stability and development, democracy and patriotism, confidence and order."[126] The party asked

> … the support of 'all who value our common home – Russia, who want progress without revolutionary upheavals, who are tired of disorder, and who are devoted to the Fatherland'; its election program, adopted in August 1995, emphasized three priorities: the 'spiritual renewal of Russia', including the rights and freedoms of the individual; the 'integrity of the country', including public order; and the 'development of a market economy together with a greater degree of social protection'.[127]

President Yeltsin and Victor Chernomyrdin, clearly avoiding ideology, decided to follow an 'anti-ideational' campaign for Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) for the 1995 parliamentary elections.[128] The lack of ideology was substituted with promises for "'stability' and a government of 'professionals' who would rule without 'shocks' and 'experimentation'."[129] These promises were formulated also in party's campaign slogan – 'On a firm foundation of responsibility and experience'.[130]

During the election campaign, as well as having the support of big businesses, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) had the advantage of having access to the government apparatus and to the mass media. The party enjoyed significant freedom

---

[126] Laura Belin and Robert Orttung, *The Russian Parliamentary Elections of 1995: The Battle for the Duma*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997, p. 34.

[127] Stephen White, *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 45.

[128] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 73.

[129] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 35.

[130] Stephen White, Matthew Wyman and Sarah Oates, "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.49, No.5, 1997, p. 771.

on campaign expenses. One remarkable example concerning advertisement expenses was the invitation of celebrities, like the German supermodel Claudia Schiffer, to the party's public events.[131] Indeed, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*)

> … bought nearly a quarter of all political advertising, worth about $4 million at the advertised rate, and it was also the largest purchaser of television commercials. When this was added to the support of individual candidates, advertising in the press and in other ways, it had clearly spent much more than the permitted maximum. Our Home, in addition, bought nearly an hour of air time on the second national TV channel, which was more than the free time it had been allocated and a further violation of the law.[132]

4.3 Electoral Performance of the Our Home Is Party

In the 1995 parliamentary election, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) received 10.1 percent of the party list vote and won 10 district seats,[133] whereas the Communist Party of the Russian Federation got 22.3 percent, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia 11.2 percent and Yabloko 6.9 percent of the vote.[134] The results were once again disappointing, after the performance of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) in 1993, for the ones seeking the first place for the 'party of power'. [135]

---

[131] Ibid.

[132] Ibid., p. 777.

[133] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 173.

[134] Grigory Golosov, "Who Survives? Party Origins, Organizational Development, and Electoral Performance in Post-communist Russia," *Political Studies*, XLVI, 1998, p. 539.

[135] See Table 2 for the detailed results of the 1995 Duma elections.

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) was less successful than Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) had been in 1993. The 1993 election was done following Yeltsin's dissolution of the Congress of People's Deputies. Many opponents of the government, therefore, were doubtful about voting, as they thought that there would not be fair voting. Pro-government voters, on the other hand, managed to gather in larger numbers in order to achieve a victory. However, coming to the 1995 election, although there were once again concerns about electoral fraud, many of the opponents of the government believed that voting might be influential. Consequently, the support for Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) "fell to about one voter in ten," although "its expenditure in terms of the seats that it won was higher than that of the Communist Party and Yabloko."[136]

Finally, in the 1999 Duma elections, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) got just 1.2 percent of the party list vote and 2.6 percent of the single member district votes. The results confirmed that the Kremlin had already abandoned Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) as the 'party of power'.

4.4 Factors Behind the Electoral Failure of the Party

The factors behind the electoral failure of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) in the December 1995 parliamentary election were related mainly to the disadvantages, rather than advantages, of being the 'party of power'. Neil Robinson explains the failure of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) in 1995 election by

[136] Stephen White, Matthew Wyman and Sarah Oates, "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.49, No.5, 1997, pp. 783-784.

refereeing to a weakness that is a natural feature of the parties organized by governments:

> …they were 'weak organizations' with shallow social roots because they relied on the resources of government to provide them with the means to compete electorally and did not build up mass organizations or mobilize voters through strong organizational structures.[137]

Robert Moser mentions the costs of being a 'party of power'. The 'party of power', with its important advantage over economic and political resources had the possibilities to use an effective media campaign against its rivals. In addition, party lists of the 'party of power' were full of the best-known politicians. However, these advantages provided by the state power turned out to be problem for the party.[138] President Yeltsin tried to exploit the public image of Chernomyrdin that he was not considered being in Yeltsin's 'family'. He thought that Chernomyrdin would not be affected by the negative aspects of his administration and could have important popular support. However, Yeltsin's plan did not become very successful.[139] The association of the party with the social and economic problems of the country in the transition from communism shadowed the advantages of the resources that the party had enjoyed. This resulted in a certain degree of public opposition.[140] In the public,

---

[137] Neil Robinson, "Classifying Russia's Party System: The Problem of 'Relevance' in a Time of uncertainty," in *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, ed. John Lövenhardt. Frank Cass, 1998, p. 173.

[138] Robert Moser, *Unexpected Outcomes: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Representation in Russia*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, p. 124.

[139] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 6.

[140] Robert Moser, *Unexpected Outcomes: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Representation in Russia*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, p. 124.

the party was clearly associated with the government performance, which certainly did not mean any advantage. President Yeltsin's popularity was very low due to the war in Chechnya and the economic conditions in the country. Opposition parties tried to play on this and wanted to relate the problems of the Yeltsin administration to Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*).[141] They became successful at their efforts. Our Home Is Russia's election programme was seen as the conduct of the government since the 1993 elections. Indeed, following the 1993 elections, the government had not been successful. The poor performance of the government was expressed in voter preferences that only 17% of the party's voters fully and 37% with reservations identified themselves with Our Home Is Russia's programme and slogans, whereas 43% of the Communist Party's voters fully and 32% with reservations did so with the Communist Party's programme and slogans.[142]

Coming to the 1999 parliamentary elections, another major factor affecting the party's success was again related to the costs of being the 'party of power'. The cost was related to the identification of voters with the 'party of power', which can change over time. Grigory Golosov gives the example of a voter, who in 1995 elections developed 'identification' with Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*). Golosov claims that this identification was not mainly based on the 'center-right' ideological position of the party. The identification was with the 'party of power'. In 1999 elections Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) was on the ballot paper, but it was no longer the 'party of power'. Therefore, the voter who previously had

[141] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 73.

[142] Stephen White, Matthew Wyman and Sarah Oates, "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.49, No.5, 1997, p. 787.

identification with Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) had to shift his support to the new 'party of power'.[143]

Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), following its successful initial strategy of focusing on its 'administrative assets' as the 'party of power', failed to make any improvement in its 'ideational capital'. Even after the 1995 Duma elections the party continued to avoid creating an 'ideational basis'. This situation made Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) open to externally imposed changes in its administrative assets. However, the real damage for the party came in March 1998, when President Yeltsin dismissed Chernomyrdin as prime minister and appointed Sergei Kirienko to his place.[144] Indeed, Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin had a "surprisingly harmonious" relationship since his appointment in December 1992, until economic difficulties increased significantly.[145] Recalling the premises of 'principal-agent problem', as in the case of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*), Chernomyrdin's dismissal was largely related to the concerns of President Yeltsin that Chernomyrdin was becoming an option for presidency and a threat for his power and status.[146] However, Sergei Kirienko could not stay as prime minister for long. The August 1998 financial and economic crisis resulted in his dismissal and

[143] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 48.

[144] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 73.

[145] Thomas F. Remington, *Politics in Russia*, 3rd ed., London: Pearson Longman, 2004, p. 60.

[146] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 209.

decreased President Yeltsin's popularity significantly.[147] After the dismissal of Chernomyrdin, the 'party of power' lost much of its power. Then governors of the party, who were kept together with their aim to have access to Chernomyrdin, started seeking new alliances. Party's new leader, Vladimir Ryzhkov, tried to build an ideational basis, mainly a conservative one, for the party in 1998 and 1999. However, this did not work out, and Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) received only 1.2 percent of the party-list vote and seven district seats in the 1999 election.[148]

4.5 Conclusion

The Kremlin decided to create a new 'party of power' for the 1995 Duma elections, when Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) failed to meet Yeltsin's electoral expectations in the 1993 parliamentary elections. Subsequently, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), led by Victor Chernomyrdin, was established. Party's main function was supporting the Chernomyrdin government in the 1995 Duma elections and then working for Yeltsin's reelection campaign in the presidential elections of 1996.

Coming to the 1995 Duma elections, Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), as the 'party of power', had important advantages concerning the ability to use the political and economic resources of the country as compared to the other political

[147] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 40.

[148] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 73; Stephen Hanson, "Instrumental Democracy: The End of Ideology and the Decline of Russian Political Parties," in *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, ed. Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 177.

parties. However, in the election the party received 10.1 percent of the party list vote and won 10 district seats. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation got 22.3 percent, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia 11.2 percent and Yabloko 6.9 percent of the vote. The results were once again disappointing as Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) could not get the first place as the 'party of power', just like Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) could not do so in 1993.

The factors behind the electoral failure of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) in the December 1995 parliamentary election were mainly related to the disadvantages, rather than the advantages, of being the 'party of power'. As Robinson stated the 'parties of power' were weak organizations without strong social roots or mass organizations to mobilize voters because they relied on government resources to compete electorally.[149] The dependence of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) on government resources and its image as the 'party of power' led to the association of the party with the unpopular government and the president. Social and economic problems of the country associated with the party meant a major disadvantage for the party. In addition, President Yeltsin's popularity was very low and this had a devastating effect on the electoral performance of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*). [150]

[149] Neil Robinson, "Classifying Russia's Party System: The Problem of 'Relevance' in a Time of uncertainty," in *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, ed. John Lövenhardt. Frank Cass, 1998, p. 173.

[150] Robert Moser, *Unexpected Outcomes: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Representation in Russia*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, p. 124.

Coming to the 1999 parliamentary elections, another major factor affecting the party's success was again related to being the 'party of power', however, the abandoned one. Being the old 'party of power' was influential in the performance of the party as identification of voters with the 'party of power' changed accordingly. In 1999 elections Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) was no longer the 'party of power'. Therefore, voters who previously had identification with Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) had to shift their support to the new 'party of power'.[151]

The final factor affecting electoral performance of Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) in the 1999 parliamentary elections was the dismissal of Chernomyrdin as prime minister by Yeltsin in March 1998.[152] After the dismissal of Chernomyrdin, the 'party of power' lost much of its real power. As the 'principal-agent problem' suggests, Chernomyrdin's dismissal was largely related to the concerns of Yeltsin that Chernomyrdin was becoming an option for presidency and a threat for Yeltsin's power and status.[153]

[151] Grigory Golosov, *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004, p. 8.

[152] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 73.

[153] Ibid., p. 209.

Table 2: Results of 17 December 1995 Parliamentary Election

	Votes, %			Seats		
	List	**SMD**		**List**	**SMD**	**Total, %**
Valid Votes	64.4	62.9				
Invalid Votes	1.3	1.4				
Total Votes (% of electorate)	65.7	64.3				
Communist Party	22.3	12.6		99	58	34.9
Liberal Democratic Party	11.2	5.4		50	1	11.3
Our Home Is Russia	10.1	5.5		45	10	12.2
Yabloko	6.9	3.2		31	14	10.0
Women of Russia	4.6	1.0		0	3	0.7
Communists of the USSR	4.5	1.8		0	1	0.2
Congress Russian Communities	4.3	2.9		0	5	1.1
Workers' Self-Government	4.0	0.7		0	1	0.2
Russia's Choice	3.9	2.6		0	9	2.0
Agrarian Party of Russia	3.8	5.9		0	20	4.4
Great Power	2.6	0.6		0	0	0
Forward Russia!	1.9	1.5		0	3	0.7
Union of Labor	1.6	0.9		0	1	0.2
Pamfilova–Gurov–Lysenko Bloc	1.6	0.7		0	2	0.4
Power to the People!	1.6	1.9		0	9	2.0
Cedar	1.4	0.4		0	0	0
Ivan Rybkin Bloc	1.1	1.5		0	3	0.7
Stanislav Govorukhin Bloc	1.0	0.7		0	1	0.2
Russian Unity and Concord	0.4	0.4		0	1	0.2
Independents	—	31.2		—	77	17.1
Against all	2.8	9.6		—	—	—
Others	6.6	6.6		0	6*	0
Invalid ballots	1.9	2.3				
Total	100	100		225	225	100

* Six small parties winning one single-member seat each.

Source: The table is taken from www.russiavotes.com
<http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

CHAPTER 5

UNITED RUSSIA

This chapter discusses the United Russia party, which is the last and the most successful 'party of power', in post-Soviet Russia. In this regard, the chapter examines the origin, formation, characteristics, electoral performance, and the factors behind the performance of the United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*). The findings are helpful in understanding the difference of United Russia (*Edinaya Rossiya*) from the former 'parties of power'.

5.1 Origins of the United Russia Party

The United Russia was established as the merger of the Unity and the Fatherland-All Russia party in 2001. Accordingly, the following part briefly covers the formation, characteristics and electoral performance of, firstly, the Fatherland-All Russia (*Otechestvo - Vsya Rossiya*) and then the Unity (*Edinstvo*) party before moving on to the United Russia.

The Fatherland (*Otechestvo*) was created mainly to serve the presidential aims of Moscow's Mayor Yury Luzhkov. He aimed to extend his support beyond the capital city.[154] Luzhkov started to develop 'ideational capital'

> … on important national issues, shortly after Russia's 1996 presidential election. Many of these flirted with ethnic Russian

[154] Richard Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2000, p. 89.

> nationalism, asserting a territorial claim on the Russian-populated but Ukrainian city of Sevastopol, threatening to arm Serbia if NATO launched a ground war to protect Kosovo in 1999, and declaring reunification with Russians in neighboring countries to be a national goal. At other times, though, he stressed the need for good relations with the West. He advocated consolidating Russia's 89 regions into 10-13 provinces, implying that there would no longer be federal regions designated as homelands for particular ethnic minorities like the Tatars. He also sought to stake out a "left-center" position between the far-left Communists and the political "right" occupied by the Yeltsin administration and parties like Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces. At one point, he proclaimed British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour Party to be a model, advocating "capitalism, but with a very serious system of social support for the people."[155]

Luzhkov criticized Yeltsin administration and the economic policies it followed. At his criticisms, Luzhkov enjoyed the support of Gusinsky's NTV. They labeled President Yeltsin and team as 'the Family', meaning a mafia-like organization. Concerning 'shock therapy', Luzhkov stated "it was corrupt privatization that had transferred important state assets to the control of a criminal oligarchy."[156]

However, Luzhkov mainly failed to get the support of elite groups, on which he had built his strategy and relied on. Consequently, on August 17, 1999, Luzhkov agreed to transfer his presidential aims to Yevgeny Primakov, who President Yeltsin dismissed as prime minister in May. Subsequently Luzhkov and Primakov formed an alliance with All Russia (*Vsya Rossiya*) led by Tatarstan's President Mintimer Shaimiev and St. Petersburg Governor Vladimir Yakovlev. The result was the Fatherland-All Russia bloc (*Otechestvo - Vsya Rossiya*), also joined by parts of the

[155] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 80.

[156] Ibid., p. 81.

Agrarian Party and Women of Russia. The bloc became one of the favorites for the December 1999 election.[157]

The party, however, won just 13 percent of the party-list vote, far below initial expectations, although its nominees managed to win 31 district seats.[158] The Fatherland-All Russia (*Otechestvo - Vsya Rossiya*) relied on its leader's popularity and its 'administrative capital'. Bloc's 'anticorruption rhetoric' backfired after Kremlin's media attack on Luzhkov and Primakov. The party followed a 'non-response' policy to these attacks, even the popularity of Luzhkov and Primakov dropped significantly. Henry Hale gives two explanations for this policy. Firstly, members of the party were overconfident in the strength of their leader's popularity and believed that nothing could damage the loyalty of their governors. Therefore, the party did not care too much about developing a response to the attacks. Secondly, party's campaign organization was a 'quick' one. Luzhkov and Primakov groups never really merged and made independent campaign decisions. In addition, persons responsible for the campaign, mainly chairman of the campaign Georgy Boos, were not experienced and refused to appoint professionals, as they believed that the victory was certain.[159]

[157] Ibid.

[158] See Table 3 for the detailed results of the 1999 Duma elections.

[159] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 81-82.

According to Sakwa, the Fatherland-All Russia's failure was

> due to its establishment at the administrative-power level. It was a party not so much based on ideology or a coherent programme, as on the presentation of itself as a putative party of power, although in this case its main innovation was that it saw itself as a counter-party of power in opposition to Yeltsin's Kremlin.[160]

However, the Fatherland-All Russia lost significant power with the emergence of real 'party of power', the Unity, which had administrative and financial support of the Kremlin.[161]

After dismissing Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) as the 'party of power', the Kremlin decided to create a new party on October 3, 1999. With this aim, the Unity, or Medved (named after the bear which was its symbol), was formed by the Kremlin just three months before the December 1999 Duma elections. The main aim of establishing this party was to challenge the main opponent of the Kremlin - the Fatherland and All-Russia Party of Luzhkov and Primakov -and to create a base in the new parliament.[162] What forced Kremlin to follow such a counterattack was the fact that in the absence of an obvious alternative to Yeltsin as leader, regional leaders had been joining the Fatherland. Some of these leaders were Tatarstan's President Mintimer Shaimiev and Putin's main rival St. Petersburg Governor Vladimir

[160] Richard Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 16, No.3, September 2000, p. 99.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 44.

Yakovlev.[163] The Fatherland-All Russia had the support of regional governors and enjoyed the popularity of Primakov. The strong position of the party posed a real threat for the presidential succession that the Kremlin wished to happen.[164]

The party had important 'administrative capital' as a presidentially sponsored party, like the direct involvement of Igor Shabdurasulov, who was the first deputy head of Yeltsin's administration.[165] One of the main organizers of the Unity movement was a media oligarch, Boris Berezovsky. Berezovsky persuaded regional governors to support the Unity rather than the Fatherland-All Russia Party.[166]

In the beginning, very few people believed in the formation of the Unity party. Their concern was that the movement would not be serious as it was organized just a few months before the elections even without an elementary program. However, concerns were to be answered gradually by the selection of the leader cadre.[167] Unity's leaders were chosen based on their popularity. The Kremlin aimed that this would assure the success of other unknown candidates of the Unity.[168] In this respect, the minister of emergency situations Sergei Shoigu; the world champion

[163] Peter Truscott, *Putin's Progress: A Biography of Russia's Enigmatic President, Vladimir Putin*, London: Simon and Schuster, 2004, p. 107.

[164] Richard Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2000, p. 90.

[165] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 82.

[166] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 44.

[167] Ibid., p. 45.

[168] Peter Truscott, *Putin's Progress: A Biography of Russia's Enigmatic President, Vladimir Putin*, London: Simon and Schuster, 2004, p. 107.

wrestler Alexander Karelin; and General Alexander Gurov, who, being in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, fought against the Russian mafia, were chosen as the leaders.[169]

Richard Sakwa gives a comprehensive definition of the Unity party:

> Unity was certainly not a modern political party, but neither was it a mass movement. It was perhaps the best example of a political association made to order by power elites, to act as the simulacrum of a competitive political organization and to occupy the space where genuine political parties should belong.[170]

Lilia Shevtsova indicates that

> Unity was a virtual creation. Right up to the elections, it had no ideology and no structures. It was a ghost movement…[The] new types of politicians shared, however, one amusing characteristic: self-confidence. They did not pretend to have wise thoughts or ideas or even ambition. They wanted only to be Putin's supporters and were sure this would guarantee them victory…[171]

President Yeltsin named Vladimir Putin prime minister in August 1999. Putin's decision to send troops to Chechnya following the terrorist bombings in Moscow gave him great popularity in the public. As Putin's popularity began to rise, the Unity's campaign focused on supporting the new prime minister. In this respect,

---

[169] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 45; Sarah Oates, "The Dirty Road to the Duma: The 1999 Russian Duma Elections," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 3, May/June 2000, p. 6.

[170] Richard Sakwa, "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999-2000," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 16, No.3, September 2000, p. 87.

[171] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, pp. 45-46.

Shoigu expressed their "key goal to win a sizable Duma fraction to help Putin in the Duma."[172] Putin compensated for the defects of the party.[173] Therefore, the party was ready to serve Putin.

However, Unity could become a real power only if Putin supported it openly.[174] Putin distanced himself from Unity when his popularity was higher than the bloc's popularity in October and November. He did so as there was no signal that Unity would succeed. Kremlin policymakers thought that it would be a mistake if Putin would support one party and endanger the support of other voters. Finally, by mid-November polls showed that the Unity would get over 5 percent of the votes.[175] However, Putin hesitated to take side with the Unity until November 24, 1999, until he declared that he would support Unity. Consequently, the new party was perceived as 'the party of Putin'. Accordingly, Unity's rating that was below 4 percent in late October, raised to 19 percent by late November.[176] One quarter of all voters supported the Unity, whose only clear identity was that it backed the prime minister. The party offered no program during the campaign except promises to save Russia through the "strong hand of Vladimir Putin."[177]

---

[172] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 84.

[173] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 46.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 84.

[176] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 46.

[177] Sophie Lambroschini, "Russia: Old Voting Habits Die Hard," RFE/RL, December 9, 1999. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1092957.html> (Accessed on 9 August 2008)

The Kremlin utilized Unity to support Putin's candidacy for presidency and weaken the Fatherland-All Russia and Grigory Yavlinsky's Yabloko, which were supporting different presidential candidates. All was planned to guarantee Putin's victory in the coming presidential elections in 1999. The Kremlin forced Russia's governors to give up supporting Luzhkov and Primakov, who were Putin's major opponents. The regional leaders, accordingly, gave up supporting the Fatherland and All-Russia.[178]

The results of the December 1999 parliamentary election proved that the Russian democracy was controllable. As a result of the Kremlin's plans, the Unity received 23 percent of the vote and the Union of Right Forces, which had decided to take part with Putin in time, got 9 percent of the vote. Those movements formed a base for Vladimir Putin in the Duma. [179] The Communist party received 24 percent, the Fatherland and All-Russia 13 percent, the Zhirinovsky bloc 6 percent, and Yabloko 5 percent of the vote. [180]

5.2 Formation of the United Russia Party

After the 1999 parliamentary election, creators of the Unity wanted to turn the Unity into a strong and full-bodied party for the next elections. The Unity was formed initially as a bloc of small preexisting organizations less than three months before the 1999 election. After the successful election results, party leaders on December 27,

---

[178] Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis, Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 47.

[179] Ibid.

[180] See table 3 for detailed results of the 1999 Parliamentary election.

1999 agreed that they would form the Unity formally as a 'movement'. In the party congress, which took place on February 27, 2000, the Unity movement was officially established. Subsequently, Russian authorities registered in the movement.[181]

With the aim of turning the Unity into a full-fledged party, leaders of the party, more assertively than the leaders of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) and Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), tried to establish a 'party of power' having well developed local party infrastructure. Sergei Shoigu at party congresses in October and December 2000 stated that the Unity had many local organizations, registered 200.000 members, and had gathered "enough deputies in regional legislatures to form deputy groups or fractions in 47" of the regional legislatures.[182]

In 2001, due to the initiatives of the Unity leaders, who were trying to build a full-fledged and powerful party, the Unity's Duma fraction joined with the Fatherland-All Russia and two registered groups of independent deputies, namely People's Deputy and Russia's Regions, and formed a coalition in the Duma. Finally, in 2001 the United Russia was established as the merger of the Unity and the Fatherland-All Russia.[183]

---

[181] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 230.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid., p. 231.

5.3 Characteristics of the United Russia Party

The United Russia's organizational model is "Kremlin-based external governance," which is independent of the party leadership. While party officials are responsible for the regular party tasks, the Kremlin serves as "extra-party rulers," who are in charge of the strategic decision-making.[184] Therefore, the 'party of power' is like a firm

> …whose assets are owned not by its management but by a large multi-sectoral holding company, which hired its management and personnel and could easily replace them from time to time.[185]

Coming to the 2007 Duma elections, for example, many of the former members of the United Russia were not included in the party list, and lost their seats whatever the election results were.[186]

The 'external governance' model made the United Russia a very disciplined and centralized organization. The Kremlin has strict control over the party. "No internal opposition or factionalism is tolerated" within the party, and the Kremlin regulates the "discussions within the party."[187]

---

[184] Vladimir Gelman, "From 'Feckless Pluralism' to 'Dominant Power Politics': The Transformation of Russia's Party System," *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No.4, 2006, p. 553.

[185] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No.6, August 2008, p. 920.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 921.

Being a 'party of power' led to the United Russia's lack of ideology. The Kremlin needed the United Russia to preserve the status quo. During the 2007 Duma election campaign, the party did not have clear policy stances on major issues, except its loyalty to the President Putin and the political regime. The United Russia's main election campaign was calling voters to vote for 'Putin's Plan'. The lack of ideology helped the United Russia to achieve its success, as it gave the party space for political maneuvering.[188]

The United Russia, being the 'party of power', played a subordinate role in policy adoption and implementation. The Kremlin wanted party politicians to be obedient followers rather than autonomous partners. This strategy of Kremlin created 'asymmetry' in party government. The executive rarely appointed "rank-and-file party members, even MPs" to secondary important posts, "while top federal and regional executive officials joined United Russia."[189]

The role of the United Russia outside the parliamentary politics is limited. The party has a symbolic presence in the government. [190] For example, When Mikhail Kasyanov's cabinet of ministers resigned in February 2004, the United Russia wanted to take part in the new cabinet formation. However, Putin proposed Mikhail Fradkov as the new prime minister. The United Russia had little influence when Fradkov formed his cabinet and had to accept the decision of the Kremlin. Indeed,

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Vladimir Gelman, "From 'Feckless Pluralism' to 'Dominant Power Politics': The Transformation of Russia's Party System," *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No.4, 2006, p. 551.

even four members of the cabinet were from the United Russia during Fradkov's (2004–2007) and Viktor Zubkov's (2007–2008) governments, [191] the party could not influence government policies. This was the case as the members were accountable to the president rather than to the party. [192]

The United Russia's ineffectiveness in policymaking was mainly a result of the institutional design and the presidentialism in Russia.

> It was similar to that in Mexico, where presidentialism coincided with a party-based authoritarian regime for decades. The dominant party in Mexico, despite the presence of its members in all levels and branches of government, simply approved proposals initiated by the president and his cabinet of technocrats rather than serving as a key active actor in the policy-making process.[193]

Vladimir Gelman indicates the characteristics of the United Russia and states the role of the party in Russian politics:

> These features of United Russia as a dominant party—'external governance', nonideology, and its secondary role in policy making—produced certain consequences for Russia's emerging party-based authoritarianism. In sharp contrast to the Soviet experience of Communist Party rule, which was best characterised as a 'party-state' regime, UR dominance could be labelled as 'state-party': not only did the dominant party itself informally serve as a branch of the presidential administration, but party politics as a whole in Russia performed the same role.[194]

---

[191] Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov, and ministers Sergei Shoigu, Alexei Gordeev and Yuri Trutnev.

[192] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, pp. 921-922.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid.

5.4 Electoral Performance of the United Russia Party

In the 2003 Duma elections, presidential forces achieved an important victory, whereas the opposition, on the right and the left, suffered a significant defeat. Since the late 1980s, no other political party managed to achieve such a dominant position in the Russian Duma.[195] The United Russia took 37.6 percent of the party list vote. Together with deputies elected in single-member districts, the party took two-thirds of the seats in the Duma. [196]

The United Russia enjoyed significant advantages among the other political parties in the Duma after the 2003 election. For example, in the Duma's Council only three members were not from the United Russia. These members were Vladimir Zhirinovsky from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia's, Valentin Kuptsov from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, and Dmitry Rogozin from Rodina. The United Russia assured its dominance in the Duma by winning all twenty-nine chairs of the Duma's committees. This gave it significant power in controlling the legislative agenda setting.[197]

After the 2003 Duma elections, the United Russia managed to take control of the most legislative and executive offices in the Russian Federation. The party, by 2006, had the majority in 78 of the 86 regional legislatures. In addition, 72 regional

[195] Thomas F. Remington, "Parliamentary Politics in Russia," in *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, ed. Stephen White, Z. Gitelman and R. Sakwa, New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2005, p. 51.

[196] See table 4 for the detailed results of the 2003 Duma elections.

[197] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 8.

governors and 90% of mayors were already members of the United Russia. By mid-2007, the party achieved a membership of 1.25 million and established 45,000 regional, local and primary branches.[198]

In the 2007 parliamentary election, the United Russia received 64.3% of the vote. [199] Now the United Russia has more seats than it had in the Fourth Duma. Some regional results in the 2007 Duma elections were noteworthy. In Chechnya, the turnout was 99.37% and the United Russia got 99.36% of the votes. Similarly, in Ingushetia, the turnout was 98.29% and the party got 98.72%. [200] The results meant that the United Russia had won almost two of every three votes, and received a total of votes nearly two times larger than the party got in 2003. [201]

5.5 Factors Behind the Electoral Success of the Party

The decision of President Putin to head the United Russia's party list in the 2007 Duma elections, even he was not a member of the party, significantly helped the party to achieve its success in the election. In addition, Putin stated that he might become prime minister if there was a proper president to work with. Accordingly,

[198] Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No.6, August 2008, p. 968.

[199] See Table 5 for the detailed results of the 2007 Duma elections.

[200] Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No.6, August 2008, p. 968.

[201] Ian McAllister and Stephen White, "'It's the Economy, Comrade!' Parties and Voters in the 2007 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No.6, 2008, p. 946.

Putin's talks became the election campaign of the United Russia, in which he called voters to support the United Russia and attacked his political opponents. [202]

Identification of President Putin with the United Russia and its positive effects for the electoral performance of the party in 2003 elections is well documented by Stephen White referring to a research based on a national representative survey conducted between December 21, 2003 and January 16, 2004:

> Supporters of United Russia were grouped in a somewhat different category, in that they were defined by their support for President Putin rather than for the party itself (one of our younger respondents thought, quite wrongly, that Putin was actually a member of the party). In Tula, I was told, "almost everybody voted for United Russia precisely because it was the president's party. Russians love their president and don't want to go against him." It was the "presidential party," others explained, and so it was "bound to win." Many took their lead from family and friends. "So far as I can remember," Nelia told me, "my parents spoke positively about only one person, who is unfortunately not alive any more, [and that is Alexander] Lebed. I like Putin myself, in principle, so I voted for United Russia, not because it reflects my interests, but simply because of Putin." (Sergei, a government official in his early thirties) He liked the strength of United Russia himself, but not its "bureaucratism and lack of ideals." He liked Putin, "but not Gryzlov." Elvira, a housewife in her early twenties, voted for United Russia "because my husband told me to—it was all the same to me." Nikolai, in Riazan' openly admitted that he had little idea what the party stood for. He simply "voted that way, because Putin asked us to." These remarks were corroborated by the survey evidence, which showed that United Russia voters were a remarkably precise crosssection of the entire population, and that little about their views was particularly distinctive.[203]

[202] Ibid., p. 939.

[203] Stephen White, "Russians and Their Party System," *Demokratizatsiya*, 2006, pp. 15-16.

During the 2007 election campaign, the United Russia, in addition to having President Putin on the party's federal list, had significant advantages of other kinds. The party enjoyed disproportionate access to the mass media and to the state resources. Accordingly, the United Russia received from 57 to 62% of all prime-time political news coverage between 1 October and 22 November, much more than its opponents did. [204] Unfair media activities were observed also during the 2003 Duma election campaign. At that time, the United Russia received pre-election airtime about two times more than the Communists received did. In addition, about 80 percent of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation's TV coverage had negative themes.[205] During the 2007 election campaign period, the name of the United Russia was mentioned twice the Communist Party's name was mentioned in media coverage. Moreover, the United Russia was mentioned in "a positive way" and "taking the initiative" in the country.[206]

Despite the requirements of the law, the state was directly involved in the campaign, giving the United Russia significant advantage over its opponents:

> In Nizhnii Novgorod, for instance, foremen went round the workforce at the city's massive vehicle factory telling them to vote for Putin's party, Putin's party, and to phone in after they had left the polling station: 'Names would be taken, defiance

[204] Ian McAllister and Stephen White, "It's the Economy, Comrade!' Parties and Voters in the 2007 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, 2008, p. 942.

[205] Andrei Kunov, Mikhail Myagkov, Alexei Sitnikov and Dmitry Shakin, "Putin's 'Party of Power' and the Declining Power of Parties in Russia," *Foreign Policy Centre*, London, April 2005, p. 10.

[206] Ian McAllister and Stephen White, "It's the Economy, Comrade!' Parties and Voters in the 2007 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, 2008, p. 942.

> punished'. Some, leaving nothing to chance, were told to obtain absentee certificates and fill them out in front of their immediate superiors. The factory director, a senior United Russia official, was able to report that nearly 80% of the workforce had voted; one of the factory workers became a deputy himself. Elsewhere in the city, teachers handed out leaflets promoting 'Putin's Plan' and told the children to lobby their parents. Some were 'threatened with bad grades if they failed to attend ''children's referendums'''; at other schools, parents were simply 'ordered to attend mandatory meetings with representatives of United Russia'. At university level, students were told that unless they voted for the ruling party they would be evicted from their dorms. Evidently very concerned, they went out and 'voted ''like a line of soldiers'''[207]

Another measure taken using the state resources in order to enhance the United Russia over its opponents was about the membership recruiting. The party claimed a membership of 300,000 in early 2003; 880,000 in early 2005; and over a million by the spring of 2006. [208] However, Stephen White mentions that these members have been recruited in a 'Soviet' manner:

> In a shopping complex in the Moscow region, for instance, each retail unit had been ordered to provide two members; there had

[207] Ian McAllister and Stephen White, "'It's the Economy, Comrade!' Parties and Voters in the 2007 Russian Duma Election," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, 2008, pp. 942-943; I personally witnessed some of the points mentioned by McAllister and White concerning the involvement of the state apparatus in advancing the United Russia against its rivals during the election campaign for the 2007 Duma elections during my stay in the city of Orel in Russia between September 2007 and May 2008. In the university where I had the chance to spend two semesters, my friends informed me that representatives from the United Russia party visited the university and told the instructors to ensure a United Russia victory among the students if they do not want to face the consequences of a different result. Accordingly, the instructors told the students to vote for the United Russia, if they do not want any problem concerning their diplomas.

[208] Stephen White, "Russians and Their Party System," *Demokratizatsiya*, 2006, p. 14.

> been similar instructions in a Tula armaments factory, and local employees in the town of Velikie Luki were being fired or had their wages withheld unless they took out membership.[209]

Therefore, the state leverage, biased media coverage, adjustments of election results in some regions, and Putin's popularity were influential in the electoral success of the United Russia in 2007 Duma elections. [210]

However, the decision of the ruling elite in the Kremlin to support the development of a real and powerful 'party of power' was the main reason behind the United Russia's success. Putin decided to get use of a 'dominant party' in order to pursue his political aims. The achievement of this aim was based on creating a party-based authoritarian regime in Russia. The reasons why Kremlin took such a decision are discussed below.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet states experienced wide range of authoritarian regimes. In the Russia Federation, the authoritarian regime under President Yeltsin in the 1990s was mainly a 'personalist' one, despite the fact that the Kremlin encouraged the establishment of 'parties of power'. However, in the 2000s, under Putin's rule, a change in Russia's authoritarian regime happened, following the rise of the United Russia, which managed to dominate the Russian electoral and parliamentary politics since the parliamentary elections of 2003 and 2007. This change was that during 2000s, the Kremlin put significant effort in

[209] Ibid.

[210] Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 968.

building a dominant party, which could effectively contribute to the continuation of Russia's authoritarian regime, especially following the presidential election in 2008.[211] Such a change concerning the authoritarian regime in Russia was decided because 'party-based' authoritarian regimes are likely to live longer than the 'personalist' and 'military' types of authoritarian regimes. [212]

The Kremlin's decision to create a dominant party was shaped mainly from the experiences of the Yeltsin years, when his 'personalist' regime became seriously unpopular for the Russian public due to its poor performance and caused a leadership succession problem.[213] The leadership succession problem was felt significantly during the 1999–2000 parliamentary and presidential elections when the Fatherland–All Russia party, established by formerly loyal elites to the Kremlin, threatened President Yeltsin and his team. In the end, the Kremlin managed to save itself using the Unity.[214]

Here, the concerns of the Kremlin and the solution it followed can be described by the 'principal-agent problem'. According to this logic, the main factor affecting the

[211] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 917.

[212] See Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003, pp. 47–88.

[213] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 917.

[214] Henry Hale, "Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *World Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2005, p. 147; Olga Shvetsova, "Resolving the Problem of Pre-election Coordination: The 1999 Parliamentary Elections as an Elite Presidential ''Primary''' in *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, ed. Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 223–227; Richard Sakwa, "Elections and National Integration in Russia," in *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, ed. Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 134.

formation of a presidential party is the relative power of the president and opposition. Incumbent presidents are more likely see risks rather than benefits in establishing a presidential party, when they feel they do not need parties to guarantee success in elections for themselves or a successor. However, when an opposition party emerges with important elite support and noteworthy power, like the emergence of the Fatherland–All Russia, a president feels obligated to form a presidential party in order to counter the rivals.[215]

Vladimir Putin and his team, taking into consideration the experiences of the Yeltsin years, decided to create long-term bases for ensuring the stability and continuation of Russia's new political regime. This task to done in three steps:

> First, they had to monopolise and strengthen the instruments of their administrative control over the political and policy agenda in order to impose their will on all segments of the elite. Second, they had to prevent any opportunities for alternative coordination among elites by the demolition or co-optation of all independent organisational entities (such as parties, interest groups, NGOs and the media). Third, they had to ensure the longterm loyalty of elites and masses to the status quo regime, irrespective of its performance, personal qualities of leadership and the like.[216]

In order to achieve these goals, the 'soft' personalist authoritarian regime of Russia of the early 2000s was the least appropriate option. In this regime type, it is easier to

[215] Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 207-208.

[216] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 917.

lose stability in comparison with the other type of authoritarianisms. Therefore, there existed two other types of authoritarian regimes for the ruling elite in Russia. The first was a 'hard' personalist authoritarianism, in which the loyalty of elites and masses would be assured by the strong use of coercion. However, this strategy would be costly for the Kremlin: firstly, as the Kremlin would need "a large investment in a large-scale coercion apparatus" to avoid disobedience, secondly, as there would be the risk of international isolation and political chaos in leadership succession.[217]

The second option of was more appealing to Kremlin, as the costs of repression were extremely high in post-Soviet Russia. The 'party-based' authoritarian regime option could accomplish the three mentioned steps necessary for ensuring the stability and continuation of Russia's new political regime:

> …the establishment of monopolist control, the prevention of alternative coordination, and the building of long-term loyalty; but was less coercive and thus less costly for the Kremlin than the 'hard' personalist authoritarianism. Indeed, it could lower the regime's costs of toleration without the risk of the loss of power due to open political contestation. [218]

[217] Ibid., p. 918.

[218] Ibid; see also Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Three other features of a 'party-based' authoritarianism were significant:

> It could enhance the regime's legitimacy due to both efficient political patronage and discouragement of alternatives to the status quo; it could effectively and flexibly perform policy adoption and implementation due to the non-ideological nature of the dominant party; and it would maintain elite consolidation and recruitment through mutually reinforcing bureaucratic and political mechanisms of control.[219]

5.6 Conclusion

The factors resulting in the electoral success of the Unity, then the United Russia in December 1999, 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections were related to the advantages, rather than disadvantages, of being the 'party of power'. In the cases of Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) and Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*), the disadvantages of being the 'party of power' were influential in the failures. The United Russia achieved significant support from the state resources in achieving its electoral successes in the 2003 and 2007 Duma elections.

However, the decision of the ruling elite in Kremlin to support the development of a real and powerful 'party of power' is the main reason behind the United Russia's success. Putin decided to get use of a 'dominant party' in order to pursue his political aims. Achieving his aims made it necessary to establish a party-based authoritarian regime in Russia.

[219] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 918.

Table 3: Results of 19 December 1999 Parliamentary Election

	Votes, %			Seats		
	List	**SMD**		**List**	**SMD**	**Total, %**
Valid Votes	60.5	60.3				
Invalid Votes	1.2	1.3				
Total Votes (% of electorate)	61.7	61.6				
Communist Party	24.3	13.4		67	46	25.1
Unity	23.3	2.1		64	9	16.2
Fatherland–All Russia	13.3	8.6		37	31	15.1
Union of Right Forces	8.5	3.0		24	5	6.4
Liberal Democratic Party	6.0	1.5		17	0	3.8
Yabloko	5.9	5.0		16	4	4.4
Communists of the USSR	2.2	0.7		0	0	0
Women of Russia	2.0	0.5		0	0	0
Party of Pensioners	1.9	0.7		0	1	0.2
Our Home Is Russia	1.2	2.6		0	7	1.6
Congress Russian Communities	0.6	0.7		0	1	0.2
Nikolaev–Fedorov Bloc	0.6	1.0		0	1	0.2
For Citizens' Dignity	0.6	0.2		0	0	0
Movement in Support of the Army	0.6	0.7		0	2	0.4
Russian People's Union	0.4	1.1		0	2	0.4
Russian Socialist Party	0.2	1.0		0	1	0.2
Spiritual Heritage	0.1	0.9		0	1	0.2
Cedar	—	0.2		—	0	0
Independents	—	41.7		—	114	25.3
Against all	3.3	11.6		—	—	—
Others	2.9	0.6		0	0	0
Invalid ballots	1.9	2.2				
Total	100	100		225	225	100

Source: The table is taken from www.russiavotes.com <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

Table 4: Results of 7 December 2003 Parliamentary Election

	Votes, %			Seats		
	List	**SMD**		**List**	**SMD**	**Total, %**
Valid Votes	54.8	54.3				
Invalid Votes	0.9	1.1				
Total Votes (% of electorate)	55.7	55.4				
United Russia	37.6	23.2		120	102	49.3
Communist Party	12.6	10.8		40	12	11.6
Liberal Democratic Party	11.5	3.1		36	0	8.0
Motherland	9.0	2.9		29	8	8.2
Yabloko	4.3	2.6		0	4	0.9
Union of Right Forces	4.0	2.9		0	3	0.7
Agrarian Party of Russia	3.6	1.7		0	2	0.4
RPP-PSS: Pensioners– Fairness	3.1	0.5		0	0	0
PVR-RPZh: Rebirth–Party of Life	1.9	2.6		0	3	0.7
People's Party	1.2	4.4		0	17	3.8
Conceptual Party Unity	1.2	0.0		0	0	0
New Course: Automobile Russia	0.8	0.4		0	1	0
Greens	0.4	0.1		0	0	0
Development of Enterprise	0.4	0.4		0	1	0
Great Russia-Eurasian Union	0.3	0.8		0	1	0
Communist Workers	—	0.1		—	0	0
Others	1.7	2.1		0	0	0
Independents	—	26.8		—	68	15.1
Against all	4.7	12.9		—	3	0.7
Invalid ballots	1.6	2.1				
Total	100	100		225	225	100.0

Source: The table is taken from www.russiavotes.com <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

Table 5: Results of 2 December 2007 Parliamentary Election

Electorate	109,145,517	**%**		
Valid Votes	68,777,136	63.01		
Invalid Votes	759,929	0.70		
Total Votes	69,537,065	63.71		
	Votes	**%**	**Seats**	%
United Russia	44,714,241	64.30	315	70.0
Communist Party	8,046,886	11.57	57	12.7
Liberal Democrats	5,660,823	8.14	40	8.9
Fair Russia	5,383,639	7.74	38	8.4
Agrarian Party	1,600,234	2.30	0	-
Yabloko	1,108,985	1.59	0	-
Civic Strength	733,604	1.05	0	-
Union of Right Forces	669,444	0.96	0	-
Patriots of Russia	615,417	0.89	0	-
Party of Social Fairness	154,083	0.22	0	-
Democratic Party of Russia	89,780	0.13	0	-

NB: Seats are assigned by the largest remainder method to the lists of parties winning a minimum of 7.0 percent of the national vote.

Source: The table is taken from www.russiavotes.com <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_today.php > (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

CHAPTER 6

THE UNITED RUSSIA AFTER 2007 DUMA ELECTIONS

This chapter examines, firstly, the rise of the United Russia and the efforts of the ruling elite in order to assure the success of the party in achieving its present status in Russian political system. Later, the chapter focuses on the cooperative relationship between Vladimir Putin and the Duma. Lastly, the chapter examines the relationship between Vladimir Putin, both as the President and then as the Prime Minister, and the United Russia. Covering these points is helpful in understanding the presidential plans of building a one party dominant regime in Russia and the usage of it for achieving political goals.

6.1 The Rise of the United Russia Party

In Russia, the authoritarian regime building using the United Russia required significant "political investment" and a "long compensation period." Political, institutional and organizational efforts of the Kremlin were very important for the creation of an authoritarian regime in Russia. [220] The enhancement of the United Russia as a party was at the core of this project.

Changing Russia's 'non-party-based' regime into a 'party-based' authoritarian regime was carried out through steps. In 2001, the United Russia was established as the merger of the Unity and the Fatherland-All Russia. The party consequently gained the majority in the Duma and established its dominance. In 2003 Duma

[220] Ibid.

elections, the party list received 37.6% of the votes. However, the United Russia managed to create 'manufactured super-majority', by coalition policies in single member districts and institutional changes concerning the parliamentary rules. The party got more than two-thirds of the seats in the legislature. As a result, both the United Russia's "parliamentary dominance strengthened," and "alternatives to it became irrelevant."[221]

In 2001–2003, reforms concerning regional electoral systems were launched in order to improve the performance of the United Russia in regional legislatures and acquire political control over the regions. Even though the United Russia gained most of the votes in many regional legislative elections in 2003–2004, it was only a limited success for the party. The United Russia's local branches performed well if they were taken by regional governors and served as their political vehicle.[222] In addition, governors often gave their support to parties other than the United Russia. However, following the abolition of gubernatorial elections in early 2005, the appointment and survival of regional chief executives largely depended on their loyalty to the United Russia. As a result, most of them joined the United Russia. Consequently, the United Russia established majorities in almost all regional legislatures and by 2007 achieved regional dominance. Regional politics in Russia, with some exceptions, could not create meaningful alternatives to the United Russia.[223]

---

[221] Ibid., pp. 918-919.

[222] Grigory Golosov, "What Went Wrong? Regional Electoral Politics and Impediments to State Centralization in Russia, 2003–2004," *PONARS Policy Memos*, 337, 2004, <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0337.pdf> (Accessed on 15 May 2008)

[223] Vladimir Gelman, "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 919.

Beginning in 2003 the Kremlin initiated new institutional changes aiming to decrease the party competition. The electoral threshold for parliamentary representation in the State Duma and most regional legislatures increased from 5% to 7%. The new federal law on political parties brought harder organizational and membership requirements for political parties. As a result, not only the formation of new political parties has become very difficult, but also, only 15 out of 46 previously existing Russian political parties managed to participate in the December 2007 Duma election. The survival of small party entities became very difficult as pre-election party blocs from 2005 were prohibited. Lastly, the electoral system reform of the State Duma, which was a change from mixed to party list representation, not only increased the United Russia's own party discipline and loyalty to the Kremlin, but also helped the 'party of power' to assure its electoral dominance during the 2007 parliamentary elections. Many factors, ranging from unfair campaigns to the high approval rate of Vladimir Putin ensured the United Russia's success. No other political party could present an alternative to it.[224]

6.2 Vladimir Putin and the State Duma

Vladimir Putin, as compared to President Yeltsin, has been successful in working in harmony with the Duma. Putin managed to fulfill his legislative aims, firstly, through the help of the Unity party.

> In the spring 2001 term alone, the Duma enacted the Land Code (in second reading; the third reading occurred as soon as the Duma reconvened in September); the first bill in a package of pension reform bills (first reading); a new Labour Code (first

[224] Ibid.

> reading); comprehensive tax reform, including a low flat income tax rate, a unified tax for all social assistance funds, a lower excise tax, a lower profits tax, a lower rate on transactions in hard currency, a new sales tax, and a lower tax on production-sharing agreements (all in second reading); the first bill in a package of judicial reform legislation (first reading); Part 3 of the Civil Code, liberalizing inheritance rights (first reading); a set of reforms lowering the regulatory burden for business, including laws on the registration of businesses, licensing of businesses, regulation of stock companies, money laundering, and three laws on banking reform (all passed through third reading); and a law on the regulation of political parties (through third reading). The spring 2002 term was similarly productive from Putin's standpoint. The Duma passed legislation on standards and on bankruptcy, elimination of the last remaining turnover tax, reduced taxes on small businesses, a new code of procedure for arbitration courts, and a law on sales of agricultural land.[225]

All of this legislation would have been difficult to pass in the 1990s. Putin's success confirmed the new balance of political forces in the parliament and his successful management of relations with the Russian parliament. After the December 2003 elections, although the United Russia established near total control in the Duma, it remained subordinate to the president.[226]

The Fourth Duma was more productive than the Third Duma. Putin mostly accepted what the Duma passed. However, the Fourth Duma had a different legislative agenda from the Third one. This new agenda included Putin's aims of centralizing power and giving the United Russia significant financial support.[227] Putin's legislative agenda that began in 2003, which included the shift from modernization

[225] Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.60, No.6, August 2008, p. 973.

[226] Ibid., pp. 973-974.

[227] Ibid., p. 975.

and economic growth, continued in his second term. After 2004, Putin's proposals were mainly about centralizing his political power.

> His legislative initiatives, for the most part, were directed at ending the independence of regional governors, the mass media, opposition parties and organizations, and reducing parliament's accountability to local constituencies.[228]

In addition to these, the Duma following Putin's request, created "new state corporations, social spending programmes, and state investment funds," which generated important opportunities "to provide jobs" and income promotions for "state officials, Duma deputies and party functionaries." Therefore, the Duma agreed with Vladimir Putin to give him significant power in return for "patronage opportunities for the elite."[229]

The policy development by legislative enactment rather than presidential decree became more evident in Putin's second term and in the Fourth Duma. The efficient process of "moving legislation from initial conception through to enactment and signing" emerged due to "the close integration of presidential initiative, government ministries and experts, and parliamentary committees." This close integration in the legislative agenda of the Fourth Duma enabled Putin to expand his control over the state and gave the deputies many politically and economically beneficial "spending programmes, state corporations and investment funds."[230]

---

[228] Ibid., p. 974.

[229] Ibid., p. 975.

[230] Ibid., pp. 978- 979.

6.3 Vladimir Putin and the United Russia Party

During his two terms of presidency, Vladimir Putin has managed to get use of the United Russia party for his political aims. He has reasserted federal control by strengthening his vertical authority. To this end, the United Russia has served as "a means of projecting the center's power into the regions."[231] Although the balance of power in center-regional relations has changed in favor of the Kremlin since Putin's election in 2000, this did not mean that regional governors and republican elites have no resources to use against the center. In fact, despite his authority, Putin has found it beneficial to continue President Yeltsin's strategy of bargaining with the regions in order to manage inter-governmental relations. Putin's co-opting of regional elites was evident in the United Russia's decision-making structures. Regional elites constituted half the membership of the party's supreme council.[232] Thirty regional leaders were on the United Russia's All-Federal list of candidates for the 2003 Duma elections. In terms of political benefits, co-opting regional elites has enabled the Kremlin to secure votes in the regions through elites' control over the local media, courts, electoral commissions, and electoral financing. The co-optation of authoritarian regional leaders, with the ability to deliver the desired election results

[231] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 7.

[232] Nikolai Petrov, "Russia's 'Party of Power' Takes Shape," *Russian and Eurasian Review*, Vol. 2, No. 16.
http://jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=16&issue_id=628&article_id=4550/
(Accessed on 17 August 2008)

through fraud and manipulation, has serious implications for democratic consolidation in Russia.[233]

Vladimir Putin is famous for the term 'managed democracy'. Until now, he has been successful in achieving it. 'Managed democracy' is a political system in which emphasis is placed on political stability. In Russia elections are held but results are more or less known. Serious political challenges to the executive either are absent or silenced. The 2003 Duma election was a turning point in strengthening of the Kremlin and Putin's political rule, although 'managed democracy' had always been present in Russia. The United Russia became the first successful 'party of power' in post-Soviet Russia. Today, in Russia, the continuation of 'managed democracy' is assured using the legislature, which is dominated by the United Russia. [234]

The United Russia, being Putin's party, gained two-thirds of the seats in the parliament in the 2007 elections. After Putin announced that he would appoint regional governors directly, many of the current governors quickly decided to join his party. [235] After 2007, the United Russia is playing the same role that the Communist Party played in Soviet times. The United Russia is an 'instrument' in the hands of the ruling elite. According to the latest data, 70 out of 89 regional governors, two-thirds of civil employees, and thousands of famous personalities have

[233] Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol.53, No.1, January-February 2006, p. 7.

[234] Stephen K. Wegren and Andrew Konitzer, "Prospects for Managed Democracy in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 6, September 2007, pp. 1025-1026.

[235] Steven Rosefielde and Romana Hlouskova, "Why Russia is Not a Democracy," Comparative Strategy, Vol. 26, 2007, pp. 218-219.

joined the party in recent years. The pressure on politicians remaining outside the party is increasing.[236]

During the two terms of Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia has created an authoritarian dominant party regime. In such a regime, the party and state are closely intertwined. The party uses its access to state resources and policies to win overwhelming victories in regional and national legislative elections. In return for their assured path to office, the elected legislators of a dominant party guarantee the president assured passage of any legislation he proposed. [237]

> United Russia exemplifies the party's role linking president and parliament. In the Fourth Duma (2003–2007), United Russia's faction commanded a two-thirds majority, and following the December 2007 election, has entered the Fifth Convocation with an even wider margin. The size and cohesion of the United Russia faction provide the president and government with a solid bloc of voting support in the Duma. In the upper chamber, the Federation Council, where no formal party factions are allowed, the president enjoys an even larger margin of control over the voting of the members, both through direct instruction from the president's staff to the members and through an informal caucus of United Russia members.[238]

Vladimir Putin's policy of using the United Russia for achieving his political aims continues after his term as president ended. After becoming the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, he still utilizes the dominance of the United Russia party in the Duma for his political agenda. Concerning this point, Oktay F. Tanrısever states that

---

[236] Ibid.

[237] Thomas Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, p. 960.

[238] Ibid., p. 1.

the 2007 election results enabled Putin to implement his strategy of maintaining his political power after leaving the presidency. Putin nominated Dmitry Medvedev as his successor. Putin felt safe, thanks to the power that United Russia has in the Duma, that if Medvedev behaved independently he could control him using the power of the party. Medvedev, asked Putin to become Prime Minister and form the new government when he becomes the next president of Russia. Consequently, Putin gained the control of the United Russia, which is the most powerful party in Russia, and his close friend became the president. All these helped Putin to strengthen his power and control over the executive and legislative in the Russian Federation.[239]

The 2007 Duma elections were significant for Putin's political career. Therefore, he actively participated in the election campaign of the United Russia. Putin linked 2007 Duma elections to the Russian presidential elections of 2008. He claimed that the results of the 2007 Duma elections would affect his decision after leaving the presidential office. In the end, efforts for increasing the votes of the United Russia also increased Putin's popularity. [240]

The 2007 Duma elections had significant implications for Russian political system after the end of Putin's second presidential term in 2008 concerning the usage of political power. Putin was at the top of the United Russia's party list, although he is

[239] Oktay F. Tanrısever, "Analyzing the Duma Elections in Russia," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 2, April-June 2008, pp. 81-92.

[240] Ibid.

not formally linked to the party. This policy stance of Putin helps him to control the developments in Russian politics even after the end of his presidency in 2008.[241]

6.4 Conclusion

The enhancement of the United Russia was at the core of authoritarian regime building in Russia.[242] Accordingly, the Kremlin took some administrational, economic and institutional measures to assure the success of the United Russia. In addition, Putin gave importance working in harmony with the Duma, in a sharp contrast to President Yeltsin. All these measures taken by Vladimir Putin ware directly related to his plans of continuing his political dominance in Russian political system using the Duma. In line with his plans, the United Russia has managed to get the majority in the Duma following the 2007 parliamentary elections. Now, Putin, as the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, utilizes the dominance of the United Russia party in the Duma for his political agenda.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to analyze the 'parties of power' in the Russian Federation. In this regard, firstly the thesis aimed at outlining the 'parties of power' in post-Soviet Russia along with the political party system and its development in the Russian Federation as a historical background. Secondly, the thesis focused on Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*) party examining its formation, characteristics, and electoral performance together with the factors behind the performance. Thirdly, the thesis examined Our Home Is Russia (*Nash dom – Rossiya*) with the same method followed in examining Russia's Choice (*Vybor Rossii*). Fourthly, the thesis focused on the United Russia *(Edinaya Rossiya*) again with the same method used in examining two former 'parties of power'. Fifthly, the thesis focused on the new role of the United Russia in Russian political system after 2007 Duma elections, along with its relationship to Putin, both as the President and then as the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

The main argument of the thesis is that as compared to the previous 'parties of power', which were affiliated mainly with the prime ministers without achieving party consolidation, the United Russia party has been successful in consolidating its party development and achieved a central status in the Russian political system.

The Second Chapter pointed out that the effectiveness of 'parties of power' in the Russian political system has been different during the presidencies of Yeltsin and

Putin. Under Yeltsin, 'parties of power' were mostly ineffective, whereas under Putin they had important roles in strengthening Putin's power.

After Putin's coming to power, Russia witnessed the creation of and effective and powerful 'party of power', the United Russia. The party achieving significant victories both in the 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections continues to dominate the electoral and parliamentary politics in Russia. After 2007 State Duma elections, the United Russia became a dominant party, which is established by the rulers of an authoritarian regime. The rise of the United Russia as a dominant party led to the significant destruction of Russia's major institutions.

As discussed in the Third Chapter, the factors resulting in the electoral failure of Russia's Choice in the December 1993 parliamentary election can be found in the party's strategic decision mistakes made during the election period, regarding the composition, organization, and leadership of Russia's Choice, and its conduct of the election campaign. There were important faults in the electoral strategy of Russia's Choice, which greatly relied on its 'administrative capital'. This strategy was defected as Yeltsin refused to actually join the party. The main factor, therefore, behind the failure of Russia's Choice was Yeltsin's nonparticipation in the party. Yeltsin wanted to be above party politics and was suspicious of them, as mentioned by the principal-agent problem concept. The execute in Russia, thanks to 'superpresidency', for a long time did not need parties to maintain its position in the political spectrum. In such a situation, the possible dangers rather than advantages of creating a true presidential party were taken into consideration by Yeltsin. The

absence of Yeltsin created important problems for Russia's Choice and significantly affected its electoral power and success.

The Fourth Chapter stated that the factors leading to the electoral failure of Our Home Is Russia in the December 1995 parliamentary election were related mainly to the disadvantages, rather than advantages, of being the 'party of power'. The costs of being a 'party of power', were influential in Our Home is Russia's electoral performance. The party as the 'party of power' had advantage over economic and political resources, with its party lists full of famous politicians. However, the association of the party with the social and economic problems of the country in the transition from communism shadowed the advantages of the resources that the party had enjoyed. Yeltsin's popularity, due to the war in Chechnya and the economic performance, was very low. Opposition parties utilized this point and linked the problems of the Yeltsin administration to Our Home Is Russia.

In the run to the 1999 parliamentary elections, another major factor affecting the party's success was again related to its identity as the 'party of power', as identification of voters with the 'party of power' can change over time. In 1999 elections Our Home Is Russia was no longer the 'party of power'. Therefore, the voter who previously had identification with Our Home Is Russia had to shift it to the new 'party of power'.

The real damage for the party came in March 1998, when Yeltsin dismissed Chernomyrdin as prime minister. After the dismissal of Chernomyrdin, the 'party of power' lost much of its real power. As the 'principal-agent problem' suggests,

Chernomyrdin's dismissal was largely related to the concerns of Yeltsin that Chernomyrdin was becoming an option for presidency and a threat for him.

The Fifth Chapter discussed that the factors behind the electoral success of the Unity, then United Russia in December 1999, 2003 and 2007 parliamentary elections were related to the advantages of being the 'party of power'. In the cases of Russia's Choice and Our Home Is Russia, the disadvantages of being the 'party of power' were influential in the failures. The United Russia party achieved significant support from state resources in achieving its electoral successes in the 2003 and 2007 Duma elections. However, the decision of the ruling elite in Kremlin to support the development of a real and powerful 'party of power' was the main reason behind the United Russia's success. Putin decided to get use of a 'dominant party' in order to pursue his political aims. Achieving these aims necessitated the creation a party-based authoritarian regime in Russia. Kremlin's decision to create a dominant party was shaped mainly from the experiences of the Yeltsin years. Yeltsin's 'personalist' regime became seriously unpopular for the Russian public. This situation was risky concerning leadership succession. Putin and his team, taking into consideration the experiences of the Yeltsin years, decided to create long-term bases for ensuring the stability and continuity of Russia's new political regime.

The Six Chapter stated that in Russia the authoritarian regime building using the United Russia required significant political investment and a long compensation period. The enhancement of the United Russia as a party was at the core of this project. Putin's administration did its best to make the United Russia a dominant party.

During the two terms of Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia has created an authoritarian dominant party regime. In such a regime, the party and state are closely intertwined. The party uses its access to state resources and policies to win overwhelming victories in regional and national legislative elections. In return, the elected legislators guarantee the president passage of any legislation he proposes .

Putin's policy of using the United Russia for achieving his political aims continues after his term as president ended. After becoming the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, he still utilizes the dominance of the United Russia party in the Duma for his political agenda. Putin, after becoming the Prime Minister gained control of the United Russia, which is the most powerful party in Russia. Accordingly, Putin managed to strengthen his power and control over the executive and legislative in the Russian Federation.

Until the creation of the United Russia, none of former 'parties of power' has managed to maintain its ties with the Kremlin until the next parliamentary election. The United Russia differs from the former 'party of power' projects, as it continued to get support of its creators in two subsequent Duma elections. Its main advantage, compared to the previous 'parties of power', was the support it enjoyed from the president. In the 2000s under Putin's rule, the 'party of power' became the major actor in the electoral and parliamentary arenas. This change was due to the concerns of the ruling elite about leadership succession. They aimed at creating a one-party dominant regime in order to maintain their status. As a result of this regime, Russian political party competition nearly disappeared. All political parties became

effectively controlled by the Kremlin and incorporated into the hierarchy of Russia's government. Major opposition political parties became extinct, and the United Russia manages to dominate party politics in Russia.

The features of the United Russia as a dominant party—'external governance', non-ideology, and its secondary role in policy making—produced certain consequences for Russia's emerging party-based authoritarianism. The United Russia has started to play the same role that the Communist Party did in Soviet times. However, in contrast to the Soviet experience of Communist Party rule, which was characterized as a 'party-state' regime, the United Russia's dominance could be labelled as 'state-party'. The United Russia has become the dominant party, and the party politics in Russia serve as a branch of the presidential administration, however under the supervision of Putin.

As the findings of the thesis demonstrate, the United Russia party has been successful in consolidating its party development and achieved a central status in the Russian political system, while the previous 'parties of power', which were affiliated mainly with the prime ministers, could not achieve party consolidation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bacon, Edwin. "Russia's Law on Political Parties: Democracy by Decree?" In *Russian Politics under Putin*, edited by Cameron Ross. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 39-52.

Balzer, Harvey. "Managed Pluralism: Vladimir Putin's Emerging Regime." *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2003, pp. 189-227.

Belin, Laura, and Robert Orttung. *The Russian Parliamentary Elections of 1995: The Battle for the Duma*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

Colton, Timothy J. "Parties, Leaders, and Voters in the Parliamentary Election." In *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, edited by Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 90-117.

Colton, Timothy J. "Superpresidentialism and Russia's Backward State." *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1995, pp. 144-148.

Colton, Timothy J. and Michael McFaul. *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000* Washington DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2003.

Dahl, Robert. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Easter, Gerald M. "Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS." *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2, January 1997, pp. 184-211.

Evans, Geoffrey, and Stephen Whitefield. "Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe." *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 23, No. 4, October 1993, pp. 521-548.

Fish, M. Steven. *Democracy from Scratch*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1995.

Fish, M. Steven. "The Pitfalls of Russian Superpresidentialism." *Current History*, Vol. 96, No. 612, 1997, pp. 326-330.

Fish, M. Steven. "The Predicament of Russian Liberalism: Evidence from the December 1995 Parliamentary Elections." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, March 1997, pp. 191-220.

Fish, M. Steven. "The Travails of Liberalism." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1996, pp. 106-117.

Fleron, Frederic J., Richard Ahl and Finbarr Lane. "Where Now in the Study of Russian Political Parties?" *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 1-2, March/June, pp. 224-252.

Geddes, Barbara. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Gelman, Vladimir. "From 'Feckless Pluralism' to 'Dominant Power Politics': The Transformation of Russia's Party System." *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2006, pp. 545-561.

Gelman, Vladimir. "Party Politics in Russia: From Competition to Hierarchy." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, pp. 913-930.

Golosov, Grigory. *Political Parties in the Regions of Russia: Democracy Unclaimed*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004.

Golosov, Grigory. "What Went Wrong? Regional Electoral Politics and Impediments to State Centralization in Russia, 2003–2004," *PONARS Policy Memos*, No. 337, 2004. <http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0337.pdf> (Accessed on 15 May 2008)

Golosov, Grigory. "Who Survives? Party Origins, Organizational Development, and Electoral Performance in Post-communist Russia." *Political Studies*, XLVI, 1998, pp. 511-543.

Golosov, Grigory, and Alla Likhtenshtein. "'Parties of Power' and Russian Institutional Design: Theoretical Analysis." *Polis*, Vol. 1, 2001.

Hale, Henry. "Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia." *World Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2005, pp. 133-165.

Hale, Henry. *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hanson, Stephen. "Instrumental Democracy: The End of Ideology and the Decline of Russian Political Parties." In *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, edited by Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 163-185.

Hough, Jerry F. "Institutional Rules and Party Formation." In *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, edited by Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 37-73.

Husky, Eugene. *Presidential Power in Russia*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.

Kitschelt, Herbert. "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies." *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1995, pp. 447-472.

Kitschelt, Herbert and Regina Smyth. "Programmatic Party Cohesion in Emerging Postcommunist Democracies: Russia in Comparative Context." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 10, December 2002, pp. 1228-1256.

Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka. *Post-Communist Party Systems*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Knox, Zoe, Lentini, P. and Williams, B. "Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State over Civil Society?" *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January-February 2006, pp. 3-14.

Kubiček, Paul. "Delegative Democracy in Russia and Ukraine." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 1994, pp. 423-441.

Kullberg, Judith S. and William Zimmerman. "Liberal Elites, Socialist Masses, and Problems of Russian Democracy." *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 3, April 1999, pp. 323-358.

Kunov, Andrei, Mikhail Myagkov, Alexei Sitnikov and Dmitry Shakin. "Putin's 'Party of Power' and the Declining Power of Parties in Russia." London: Foreign Policy Centre, April 2005, pp. 1-18.

Lambroschini, Sophie. "Russia: Old Voting Habits Die Hard." RFE/RL , December 9, 1999. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1092957.html> (Accessed on 9 August 2008)

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 2002, pp. 52-65.

Linz, Juan J. "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" In *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Mainwaring, Scott. "Presidentialism, Multipartism and Democracy: The Difficult Combination." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1993, pp. 198-228.

Marsh, Christopher. *Russia at the Polls: Voters, Elections and Democratization*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002.

McAllister, Ian and Stephen White. "'It's the Economy, Comrade!' Parties and Voters in the 2007 Russian Duma Election." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, 2008, pp. 931- 957.

McFaul, Michael. "Party Formation after Revolutionary Transitions." In *Political Parties in Russia*, edited by Alexander Dallin. Berkley: International and Area Studies, University of California Press, 1993, pp. 7-28.

McFaul, Michael. "Russia's Choice: The Perils of Revolutionary Democracy." In *Growing Pains: Russian Democracy and the Election of 1993*, edited by Timothy J. Colton and Jerry F. Hough. Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998, pp. 115-139.

McFaul, Michael. *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Migdal, Joel S. *Strong Societies and Weak States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Migdal, Joel S. "Strong States, Weak States." In *Understanding Political Development*, edited by Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington. Boston: Little, Brown, 1987, pp. 391-434.

Moser, Robert. 'The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia.' In *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, ed. J. Löwenhardt. London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp. 54-75.

Moser, Robert. *Unexpected Outcomes: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Representation in Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.

Oates, Sarah. "The Dirty Road to the Duma: The 1999 Russian Duma Elections." *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 47, No. 3, May/June 2000, pp. 3-14.

O'Donnell, Giullermo. "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1994, pp. 55-69.

Petrov, Nikolai. "Russia's 'Party of Power' Takes Shape." *Russian and Eurasian Review*, Vol. 2, No. 16, August 3, 2003. <http://jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=16&issue_id=628&article_id=4550/> (Accessed on 17 August 2008)

Petrov, Nikolai. "The elections since 1989: The end of the chapter?" In *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, edited by Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel and Stefani Hoffman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 226-249.

Remington, Thomas F. "Parliamentary Politics in Russia." In *Developments in Russian Politics 6*, edited by Stephen White, Z. Gitelman and R. Sakwa. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 41-60.

Remington, Thomas F. "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 6, August 2008, pp. 959-987.

Remington, Thomas F. *Politics in Russia*, 3rd ed. London: Pearson Longman, 2004.

Robinson, Neil. "Classifying Russia's Party System: The Problem of 'Relevance' in a Time of Uncertainty." In *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia*, edited by John Lövenhardt. London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp. 159-177.

Rose, Richard and Neil Munro. *Elections without Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Rosefielde, Steven and Romana Hlouskova. "Why Russia is Not a Democracy." *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 26, 2007, pp. 215–229.

Ryabov, Andrey. "The evolution of the multiparty system." In *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, edited by Yitzhak Brudny, Jonathan Frankel and Stefani Hoffman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 208-225.

Sakwa, Richard. "Elections and National Integration in Russia." In *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, edited by Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 121-141.

Sakwa, Richard. *Russian Politics and Society*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2002.

Sakwa, Richard. *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

Sakwa, Richard. "Russia's 'Permanent' (Uninterrupted) Elections of 1999-2000." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2000, pp. 85-112.

Shevtsova, Lilia. *Putin's Russia*. Translated by Antonina W. Bouis. Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003.

Shvetsova, Olga. "Resolving the Problem of Pre-election Coordination: The 1999 Parliamentary Elections as an Elite Presidential "Primary"" In *The 1999–2000 Elections in Russia: Their Impact and Legacy*, edited by Vicki Hesli and William Reisinger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 213-231.

Smyth, Regina. "Building State Capacity from the Inside Out." *Politics and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2002, pp. 555-578.

Stanovaya, Tatiana. "What Is the Russian Party of Power?" *RIA-Novosti*, June 14, 2005. <www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9177-21.cfm> (Accessed on 12 August 2008)

Stepan, Alfred, and Cindy Skach. "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus Presidentialism." *World Politics*, Vol. 46, 1993, pp. 1-22.

Tanrısever, Oktay F. "Analyzing the Duma Elections in Russia." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 2, April-June 2008, pp. 81-92.

The Results of the 1993 Duma Elections <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

The Results of the 1995 Duma Elections <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

The Results of the 1999 Duma Elections <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

The Results of the 2003 Duma Elections <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_elections_93-03.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

The Results of the 2007 Duma Elections <http://www.russiavotes.org/duma/duma_today.php> (Accessed on 14 August 2008)

Truscott, Peter. *Putin's Progress: A Biography of Russia's Enigmatic President, Vladimir Putin*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

Wegren, Stephen K. and Andrew Konitzer. "Prospects for Managed Democracy in Russia. " *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 6, September 2007, pp.1025 – 1047.

White, David. *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy*. Birmingham: Ashgate, 2006.

White, Stephen. "Russians and Their Party System." *Demokratizatsiya*, 2006, pp. 7-22.

White, Stephen. *Russia's New Politics: The Management of a Postcommunist Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

White, Stephen, Wyman, Matthew and Oates, Sarah. "Parties and Voters in the 1995 Russian Duma Election." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 5, 1997, pp. 767-798.