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RUSSIA'S PARTY SYSTEM AND THE 2007 DUMA ELECTIONS

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Analysis

The Upcoming 2007 Duma Elections and Russia's Party System

By Henry E. Hale, Moscow

Abstract

President Vladimir Putin's October 1 announcement that he will lead the United Russia party list in the 2007 Duma election marks a watershed in Russian party politics since it is the first time a sitting president has agreed to any sort of party affiliation. At the same time, Putin continues to insist on his "non-party" status, refusing to become a formal member. These actions reflect a leadership ambivalence toward parties that is typical of systems with strong executive authority. More significant for Russia's party system, though, will be what Putin does next.

The Dilemma of Partisanship for Presidents

Pro-presidential parties represent a mixed blessing for any president, and presidents who dominate their political systems feel this tension most acutely. On one hand, a pro-presidential party can be a very useful instrument of rule. If successful, it can provide a large basis of support in the parliament, bring up a steady supply of new cadres for executive positions, usher presidential supporters into elective offices across the country, and keep presidential supporters in line when a president leaves office so as to avoid succession crises. These are the benefits most observers note when discussing the United Russia Party's remarkable rise to prominence under the Kremlin's wing.

There is a darker side to pro-presidential parties, however, as far as presidents themselves are concerned. If the party is truly strong, commanding significant mass loyalties and organization, then such a party also has the potential to constrain the president. Furthermore, a party too closely associated with the president might make political missteps that tarnish the reputation of the president himself. And most worrisome of all, such a party might take on a life of its own. Such a party could, for example, fall under the influence of ambitious younger politicians who might want to challenge presidential authority. The party might also gradually become invested in particular sets of ideas on which its institutional interests start to depend; should the president want to do something different, the "pro-presidential" party can become a source of resistance.

Russia's presidents and their advisors have consistently recognized both the pluses and minuses of pro-presidential parties. While some like Gennady Burbulis urged then-president Boris Yeltsin to invest his personal authority in establishing a pro-presidential party permanently on Russia's political scene, others like Andranik Migranyan urged him to avoid the con-

straints that such a party could bring. Yeltsin's strong instinct for political survival led him to the latter tendency, as he refused to formally lead, join, or even associate himself with the party list of any of the pro-presidential parties created under his watch, most notably the 1993-vintage Russia's Choice and the Our Home is Russia of 1995. Yeltsin's fears regarding the potential for pro-presidential parties to "backfire" were indeed partially confirmed in 1994–95, when his first "party of power" sharply condemned the Chechen war that he had launched.

Putin has also clearly recognized both the advantages and disadvantages of pro-presidential parties. While United Russia leaders and activists have long called on him to formally join and lead the party, Putin refused to do so even as he endorsed it for the 2003 elections and even as he agreed to head its parliamentary party list in 2007. Thus observers last month were treated to the odd spectacle of Putin lavishing praise on the party while accepting its invitation to head the party list at the same time that he specifically qualified this acceptance by saying that he wanted to remain "nonpartisan."

Due to this dilemma of partisanship, presidents who are not originally elected as party nominees have incentive to wholeheartedly invest their own authority in a single strong party only when forced to do so by the rise of an alternative party that threatens their interests in ways that cannot be reliably countered by presidential institutions (formal and informal) alone. Yeltsin himself never faced such a threat. In 1991, he cruised to victory on the basis of personal popularity gained through his vociferous opposition to Communist Party incumbents. While the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) mounted a mighty challenge in 1996, Yeltsin found he could defeat it by mobilizing his allies in mass media, recently privatized big business, and other spheres of society dependent on presidential favor.

By 1999, however, a different situation had emerged. When the political opponent was not seen as an odious or dangerous force by most media and big business, but was instead the popular tandem of a former Prime Minister and strong Moscow mayor, Yeltsin's inner circle found that the media, business, and even administrative structures that had brought it victory in 1996 were now fragmenting. Many, indeed, started actively backing the rival coalition, Fatherland-All-Russia. Most worrisome of all, this coalition appeared to be winning as of summer 1999, just months before the parliamentary election and less than a year before the presidential contest was scheduled (in which Yeltsin was not allowed to run). As is well known, an absolutely wild series of events eventually led to the victory of Yeltsin's team, backing an originally little known candidate named Vladimir Putin. But such extraordinary circumstances could not be counted on to all fall into place again for the next succession. Indeed, 1999 made it apparent to the incumbent clique that presidential structures alone could not ensure long-term victory.

It was against this backdrop of near-defeat in 1999 that Putin's team began pushing the development of a pro-presidential party in earnest, leading Putin to endorse one more openly and unequivocally than Yeltsin had ever done. The president's supporters adopted a whole series of laws and administrative reforms that served to advantage what became the United Russia Party. Television, now brought more securely under state influence, more uniformly favored United Russia relative to its main rivals. And in the most recent step, Putin with great fanfare and media acclaim announced his decision to lead United Russia's party list.

But then again, it still remains striking what Putin did not do: join United Russia or accept a position of formal leadership, which could have been arranged had he wanted it and which would have made the party significantly stronger given his high approval ratings and authority. Putin thus continues to forego available opportunities to strengthen the party that he supports most and that he calls essential to securing Russia's stable future development. Putin's strategy is thus not solely an attempt to build a hegemonic party. It also reflects a fear of certain unpleasant side effects that such a dominant party can trigger. Through his seemingly asymptotic movement toward United Russia, therefore, Putin appears intent on finding new ways to "have his political cake and eat it too," gaining the benefits of a presidential party without personally taking on the risks.

The Impact of Putin's Decision to Lead United Russia's List

Putin's decision to head United Russia's list nevertheless marks a qualitative breakthrough in the link between

party and president in Russia, constituting a step that neither he nor Yeltsin had taken before. What exactly is broken through to, however, will depend on what Putin does with his new status as a semi-party man during the remainder of the campaign and shortly after the election. While scenarios are infinite, I will focus here on several realistic possibilities that are most interesting from the point of view of Russia's party system development.

Perhaps the biggest question is whether Putin will in fact step down, ceding the presidency to someone else during this election cycle. While the Kremlin clearly takes great pride in thwarting all the speculations of those who would dare call themselves experts, I tend to believe that Putin actually wants to leave executive politics. And not simply because he has said so, but because of the way he has said so. A man who secretly intends to stay on would most likely cite "the desire to be with my family" or some other concern that would be easily overridden by the mass popular calls for the great leader to remain. But Putin has said that to change the constitution (or violate its spirit) so that he could stay on would damage the constitutionality that he has consistently said he has fought hard to establish. Such words are not impossible to take back, but they unnecessarily raise the cost of reversing oneself if that is one's real intention. I also do not expect Putin to try to become a Russian Deng Xiaoping, pulling all the strings of power from behind the scenes, or perhaps from the prime ministerial post. In Russia's "patronal presidential" system, someone as smart as Putin who wants to maximize power would not leave the presidency, even temporarily, especially when the law could be changed to allow a third term with relative ease. Of course, what we cannot rule out is that some shock (such as a major terrorist tragedy) could occur that forces Putin to change his mind.

Should this happen and Putin decide to remain president, we would most likely see a continuation of the status quo party system: a president who favors United Russia but refuses to meld his own authority into it as a party member or formal leader, thereby weakening its potential to become a truly hegemonic party. So long as the economy is doing well or the regime proves otherwise successful in sustaining popular support, United Russia is likely to appear to be dominant and to accumulate a hard-core base of supporters that could eventually weather times of crisis or succession. But if times turn hard sooner rather than later, other parties would gain an opening and the party system could again become truly competitive.

The converse scenario also deserves consideration: Putin simply departs the political scene entirely, leaving a United Russia supermajority in the Duma and

hand-picking a successor, who would then run for the presidency, like before, as an independent. This would also likely produce a situation much like we have today, with United Russia having a rather vulnerable hold on dominant party status. But this vulnerability would be accentuated since it is doubtful that a successor will be able to replicate Putin's eight-year success in sustaining the high approval ratings that have helped underpin United Russia's own ratings.

Even as Putin wants to free himself from the day-to-day executive decisionmaking and formal duties of the presidency, though, he may still want to retain a kind of veto power, finding a position that would enable him to be a check on any unwanted initiatives of the new president. Among his options are several with interesting implications for the party system. In particular, there are two ways in which he might well use United Russia to bind not himself, but his successor.

One would be to actually accept his Duma seat so as to become both the formal and informal leader of United Russia, unmistakably fusing his personal appeal with that of the party. This would have the major effect of boosting the authority of the party as a distinct institution, one that would no longer be linked primarily to executive power. Survey research shows that United Russia is not an empty vessel, and that there is a high degree of consistency between certain policy views held by its electorate (for example, for deepening marketization as opposed to a return to socialism), perceptions of what United Russia stands for, perceptions of what Putin stands for, and patterns of voting and loyalty to United Russia. By linking himself to the party in the way supposed here, Putin would likely anchor the party more firmly than before in this ideational capital, the kind of capital that would give the party a true base of power separate from the state. As head of parliamentary United Russia, then, Putin would have a strong mechanism by which to check the new chief executive, even if the latter continues Russia's tradition of formally nonpartisan presidents.

A second option would be for Putin to essentially force his successor to do what neither he nor Yeltsin

did: run for the presidency as a United Russia nominee, thereby making the presidency a "partisan" office for the first time. This becomes thinkable if United Russia is able to win a large enough majority to credibly claim to represent all but the fringe elements of Russian society, if United Russia nomination would not be seen as likely to alienate significant numbers of voters who would otherwise vote for the successor. Thus while presidents themselves may not want to subject themselves to the constraints that a ruling party could bring, they may want to subject their *successors* to such strings as a way of checking their behavior, tying them to a particular course of action that does not interfere with the interests or goals of the outgoing leader. Of course, this "binding" effect would be most powerful if Putin assumed parliamentary leadership of the party himself. In this way, Putin could succeed in restricting the autonomy of the future presidents, tying them more tightly to the party-embedded course he has laid out, without formally altering the constitution or betraying its spirit.

Conclusion

In short, Putin's decision to head United Russia's party list but not to become a party member illustrates that the dilemma of partisanship continues to be a major factor in Russian presidential politics. Whether United Russia becomes a truly dominant party along the lines of Mexico's PRI or Japan's LDP will depend heavily on whether Putin, upon leaving office, finally fuses his authority with that of the party and makes party membership the price a would-be successor must pay for his personal endorsement and hence election. While observers are correct to note the danger that this latter eventuality could reinforce authoritarian government much as the Communist Party did in the USSR, there is also some room for hope there. So long as Putin himself is not the president in that scenario, there would remain a major source of party authority that is independent of the presidency and that is associated with certain values, a situation that could create the possibility for democratic accountability to develop over time in Russia.

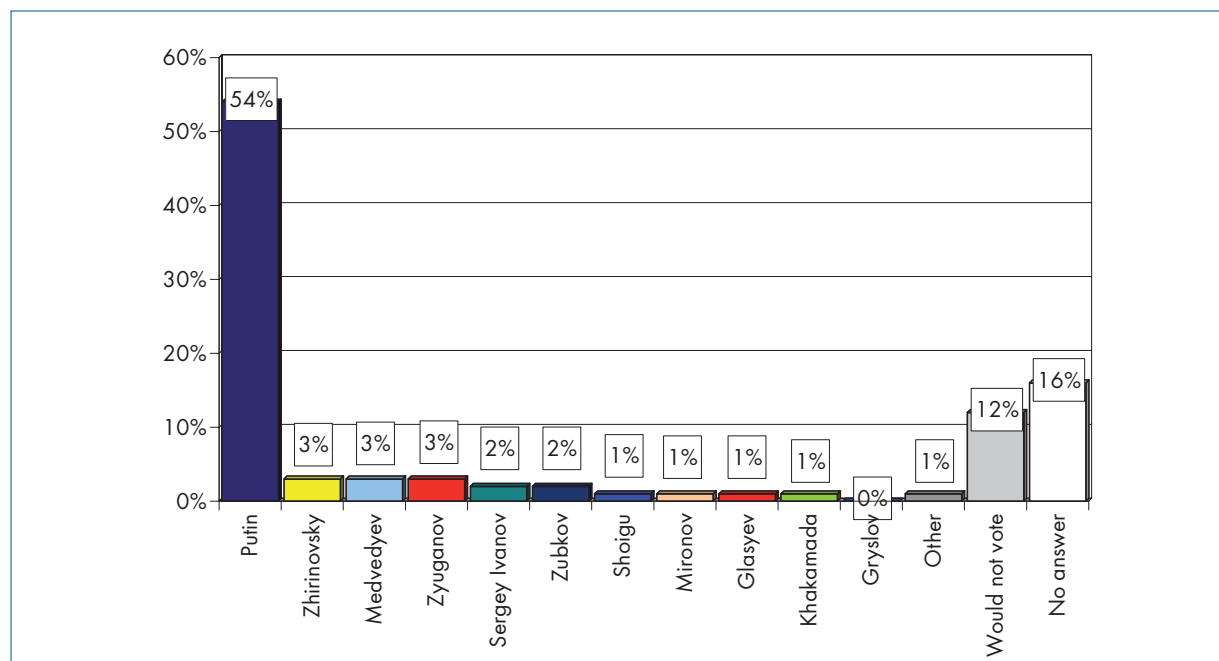
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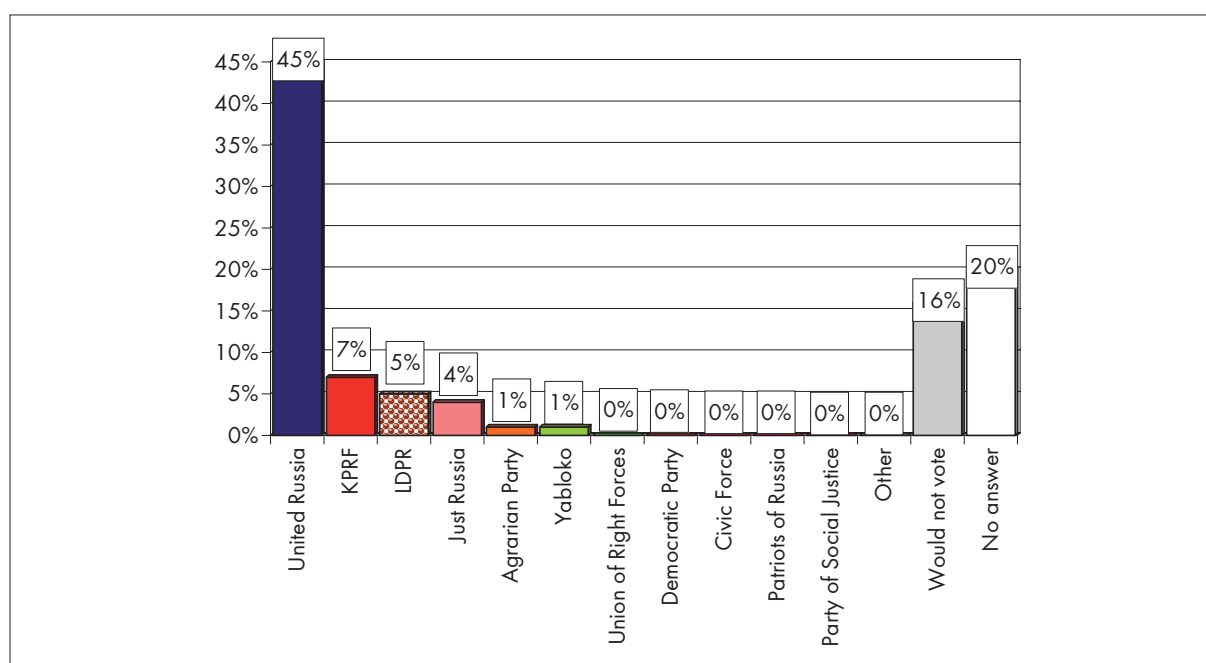
Graphs

Pre-Election Opinion Polls

If Presidential Elections Were Held Next Sunday, Which Politician Would You Vote For?



If Duma Elections Were Held Next Sunday, Which Party Would You Vote For?



Source: Opinion Survey by the Public Opinion Fund (FOM) of November 3-4 2007,
<http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0745/d074501>

Analysis

Political Trends in the Russian Regions on the Eve of the State Duma Elections

By Vladimir Gel'man, St. Petersburg

Abstract

During previous State Duma campaigns, the Russian regions were an arena for battle among various parties. In particular, in 1999, there was intense conflict between the Fatherland-All Russia bloc, set up by the regional leaders, and the pro-Kremlin Unity. On the eve of the 2007 elections, the Kremlin wants the United Russia party of power to have unquestioned dominance in the new Duma, and is trying to remove the possibility of any unexpected outcome which would block a complete victory. As a result, the political landscapes of the regions are increasingly identical and loyal to the Kremlin.

Merging Regional Political Machines into United Russia

The most reliable means of guaranteeing electoral loyalty among the regions has become naming regional leaders as members of United Russia. Accordingly, the entire regional state apparatus is now at the service of the party of power, making it one large electoral “political machine.” Among the weapons in the arsenal of these regional “machines” is one-sided coverage of the elections in the mass media, administrative pressure on the voters and the opposition, and, sometimes, even falsification of the voting results. While initially the governors acted only at the regional level, now, as part of United Russia, they have been united into the country-wide “hierarchy of power.”

In the 2003 Duma elections, 29 governors (less than one third) headed regional lists of United Russia. In Russian political slang, governors who participated in the elections were “locomotives” (*parovozy*): the governors rounded up votes for the party of power, but did not themselves become deputies in the parliament, preferring to remain on as governors. After Putin cancelled direct gubernatorial elections in 2004, the process of including the governors into United Russia became more all-encompassing. By the spring of 2007, 70 of 85 governors announced that they were participating in the party of power. Sixty-five of these joined the regional lists of United Russia in the Duma elections, which also included 14 highly-placed bureaucrats from regional administrations, 12 chairmen of regional legislatures, and 26 mayors of regional capital cities. Three governors are leading party lists for elections to regional legislatures that will take place in December 2007 simultaneously with the Duma elections. The few governors who did not join United Russia typically were elected to their posts before 2004 with the support of the Communists and have little

chance of being reappointed by the president under current legislation.

The governors' membership in the party of power has served two goals. First, the governors are seeking to use United Russia as an instrument for controlling their regions. Second, the Kremlin is seeking to control the governors through United Russia. On the eve of the 2007 electoral campaign, the governors of two regions – Novgorod-the-Great and Samara – were forced to resign, partly because it was feared that they would not collect enough votes for United Russia. The functionaries who replaced them are leading United Russia's party lists. After President Putin announced on October 1 that he would lead United Russia's federal list, the merger of the “party of power” with the government apparatus in the center and the regions was complete.

Winning At Any Cost

In the elections to the 14 regional legislatures that took place in March 2007, United Russia won 46 percent of the vote on average, a score that gave it the majority of mandates in almost all regions. Using these figures as a guide, United Russia representatives on the eve of the Duma elections initially sought to win no fewer than half of the votes. However, after Putin announced that he would lead the United Russia list, the party planners increased their indicators and now have the goal of winning two-thirds of the seats in the Duma. The leaders of United Russia have turned the vote into a “referendum on Putin,” and the governors were ordered to secure the Kremlin's desired result at any cost. They must surpass the number of votes Putin won for his election to a second term in 2004, when 71 percent of the voters backed him with 61 percent turnout. The presidential administration released an informal directive that turnout for the December 2 elections must not drop below 70 percent.

Since most public opinion polls indicated that such a high level of participation in the elections is unlikely in most regions, the increased turnout will be achieved with a variety of administrative measures. In addition to organizing the voting of military conscripts, the homeless, and people who have USSR passports but are not technically Russian citizens, several governors are pressuring public sector workers, demanding that they vote in polling booths organized where they work rather than where they live to ensure that the authorities will have better control over the vote. In the regions, there is increased pressure on journalists who are critical of United Russia. For example, in Mordovia, two opposition papers were closed, while in Saratov Oblast 11 criminal cases were filed against journalists who published investigative articles about the activities of United Russia General Secretary Vyacheslav Volodin, who is from the region. Additionally, the spurt of inflation and the rapid growth of retail prices in the regions in fall 2007 created a challenge for the United Russia campaign, provoking dissatisfaction among the voters. In order to bring the situation under control, the governors froze prices on essential products, which strengthened demand and increased tension on the eve of the voting.

Simultaneously, the governors are actively participating in the campaign backing a third presidential term for Putin launched by the Kremlin in October 2007. In Russian cities stretching from Tver to Kamchatka, a wave of demonstrations has supported Putin and the extension of his powers. Although formally the governors have stood aside from these mass actions, which are presented as free expressions of the popular will, in fact the rallies are being held at the direction of the regional administrations. In Novosibirsk, for example, a mass demonstration took place under the aegis of a social organization led by Governor Viktor Tolokonsky's wife. It is noteworthy, however, that only 27 of the 65 governors running on the United Russia list received official permission to use the name and image of President Putin in the regional campaign for United Russia. These governors are the most influential in their regions and have the trust of the presidential administration.

Little Chance for the Opposition

In these conditions, the positions of all other parties in the regions have been severely undermined. In compar-

ison to the regional elections of 2006-2007, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia has reduced its activity in the regions. In several regions, a sharply negative campaign has been rolled out against the liberal party Union of Right Forces, which in the spring 2007 regional elections won almost 8 percent of the vote and could claim support from some of the United Russia electorate. The other liberal party, Yabloko, is seriously weakened, with significant support only in a small number of regions (such as St. Petersburg and Karelia) and its campaign in the regions is not very active.

The greatest blow in the campaign fell on Just Russia, the party headed by Federation Council Chairman Sergei Mironov that is seeking to be a second party of power. This organization tried to attract to its lists well-known regional politicians, but now the Kremlin is exerting great pressure on it, seeking to push voters to United Russia. After the Kremlin turned on Just Russia, strong candidates were excluded from its lists, including the banker Aleksandr Lebedev in Moscow and Yekaterinburg Duma Deputy Yevgeny Roizman (in fact, the branch of the party that he headed in Sverdlovsk Oblast even left the Just Russia party). Several regional politicians who had joined the party, including the mayor of Voronezh, withdrew their membership. One party member who is a deputy in the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly even suggested disbanding the party and having all its members join United Russia.

Today only the Communist Party of the Russian Federation has a stable organizational structure and base of support in the regions, but its potential is limited, and the Communists are not capable of presenting a serious challenge to United Russia.

Although the public opinion polls show a variety of results, most experts agree that the party of power will achieve its goals without massive falsification of the vote. Several ethnically-defined regions have a reputation for falsifying elections since the 1990s, including the republics of the North Caucasus and rural areas in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. However, the extent of falsifications in the regions could be significantly expanded in the upcoming elections.

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Tables

Results of the Last Regional Elections

Comparison of Voters' Turnout for the Elections on October 8, 2006 with Previous Elections

	Elections of 8.10.2006	Date of previ- ous elections	Turnout for previous elections	Turnout for Duma elections of 7.12.2003	Turnout for presidential elections of 14.03.2004
Republic of Karelia	33.0%	28.04.2002	50.0%	52.8%	56.4%
Republic of Tyva	53.1%	02.06.2002	60.0%	55.7%	72.8%
Republic of Chuvashia	43.7%	21.07.2002	38.2%	58.4%	66.7%
Primorskoe Region	39.5%	09.12.2001	31.4%	46.0%	66.0%
Astrakhan Oblast	43.7%	28.10.2001	36.4%	53.5%	59.3%
Lipetsk Oblast	44.9%	14.04.2002	43.3%	52.4%	67.6%
Novgorod Oblast	31.0%	21.10.2001	29.1%	51.0%	54.5%
Sverdlovsk Oblast	27.9%	14.04.2002	33.3%	49.1%	56.8%
Jewish Autonomous Oblast	43.5%	28.10.2001	40.3%	58.9%	69.7%

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 1, December 2006, p. 69.

Results of the Elections of October 8, 2006 According to Party Lists

	Republic of Karelia	Republic of Tyva	Republic Chuvashia	Primorskoe Region	Astrakhan Oblast	Lipetsk Oblast	Novgorod Oblast	Sverdlovsk Oblast	Jewish Autonomous Oblast
United Russia	38.92%	46.38%	51.89%	48.27%	38.73%	50.65%	43.75%	40.54%	55.32%
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	12.77%	5.45%	19.49%	12.14%	13.58%	10.66%	14.68%	7.27%	18.54%
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	8.86%	3.55%	8.93%	5.85%	6.71%	4.29%	7.03%	5.51%	4.52%
Motherland		2.25%	6.25%	2.26%	16.09%		3.33%	2.39%	4.49%
Russian Party of Life	16.19%	32.25%		4.40%		11.71%	5.53%	11.51%	4.64%
Pensioners' Party	12.06%			9.13%	9.62%	11.19%		18.75%	9.92%
Patriots of Russia	4.39%	3.96%	5.40%	1.82%	2.52%	2.14%	5.74%	1.09%	
Will of the People	1.58%			1.04%	0.88%	0.87%	1.21%	0.31%	
Free Russia							11.03%	3.20%	
Freedom and Rule of the People				8.67%					
Yabloko				2.02%				2.47%	
Democratic Party of Russia					1.00%	1.46%	0.94%		
Peoples' Party of the Russian Federation					1.07%				
Republican Party of Russia					1.07%				

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 1, December 2006, p. 75.

Seats in the Legislative Assemblies after the Elections of October 8, 2006 According to Proportional Representation

	Republic of Karelia	Republic of Tyva	Republic Chuvashia	Primorsky Region	Astrakhan Oblast	Lipetsk Oblast	Novgorod Oblast	Sverdlovsk Oblast	Jewish Autonomous Oblast
United Russia	11	9	14	13	14	17	7	7	5
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	4	–	5	3	5	3	3	1	2
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	2	–	3	–	–	–	1	–	–
Motherland		–	–	–	6		–	–	–
Russian Party of Life	5	7		–		4	–	2	–
Pensioners' Party	3			2	4	4		4	1
Free Russia							2	–	
Freedom and Rule of the People				2					

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 1, December 2006, p. 76.

Comparison of Voters' Turnout for the Elections on March 11, 2007 with Previous Elections

	Elections of 11.03.2007	Date of previ- ous elections	Turnout for previous elections	Turnout for Duma elections of 7.12.2003	Turnout for presidential elections of 14.03.2004
Republic of Dagestan	80.8%	16.03.2003	65.0%	84.7%	94.1%
Komi Republic	40.2%	02.03.2003	44.1%	53.3%	57.6%
Stavropol Region	42.8%	16.12.2001	39.3%	49.5%	60.5%
Vologda Oblast	36.1%	24.03.2002	39.7%	56.4%	62.4%
Leningrad Oblast	31.4%	16.12.2001	32.1%	46.5%	58.0%
Moscow Oblast	29.8%	16.12.2001	29.6%	53.7%	58.5%
Murmansk Oblast	30.9%	09.12.2001	28.3%	52.8%	57.7%
Omsk Oblast	50.4%	24.03.2002	40.6%	55.4%	66.8%
Oryol Oblast	56.5%	24.03.2002	54.7%	73.9%	83.0%
Pskov Oblast	41.1%	31.03.2002	43.8%	56.7%	61.1%
Samara Oblast	36.8%	09.12.2001	31.4%	51.4%	58.7%
Tomsk Oblast	44.0%	16.12.2001	42.9%	55.5%	65.9%
Tyumen Oblast	47.2%	16.12.2001	34.6%	55.1%	72.2%
St. Petersburg	33.3%	08.12.2002	29.6%	43.9%	57.5%

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 3, May 2007, p. 78.

Results of the Elections of March 11, 2007 According to Party Lists

	Repub- lic of Dag- estan	Komi Repub- lic	Primor- skoe Region	Vologda Oblast	Len- ingrad Oblast	Mos- cow Oblast	Mur- mansk Oblast	Omsk Oblast	Oryol Oblast	Pskov Oblast	Samara Oblast	Tomsk Oblast	Tyumen Oblast	St. Peters- burg
United Russia	63.67%	36.18%	23.87%	41.90%	35.24%	49.57%	42.19%	55.65%	39.02%	45.42%	33.54%	46.79%	65.89%	37.37%
Communist Party of the Russian Federation	7.22%	14.26%	14.13%	13.44%	17.07%	18.61%	17.47%	22.41%	23.78%	19.46%	18.98%	13.37%	8.37%	16.02%
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	0.81%	13.61%	11.80%	10.83%	12.13%	6.81%	12.59%	4.29%	7.34%	8.41%	11.59%	12.87%	10.80%	10.89%
Just Russia	10.68%	15.49%	37.64%	20.91%	20.94%	8.86%	16.18%	4.83%	12.60%	15.68%	15.14%	7.90%	8.74%	21.90%
Union of Right Forces		8.80%	7.73%		7.00%	6.90%		5.87%	6.98%		8.11%	7.78%		5.17%
Agrarian Party	9.12%			9.39%										
Russian Ecological Party "The Greens"											7.62%			
Patriots of Russia	7.07%				3.67%	2.05%	5.04%	2.03%	3.06%	4.18%	1.38%	3.75%		5.60%
Yabloko		3.65%				4.09%	2.94%					3.65%		
»Volkswille«		1.92%						1.42%	2.09%					
Democratic Party of Russia									1.31%	0.85%			1.03%	
Socialist Unity Party of Russia										0.91%				
Conceptual Party "Unification"												1.06%		
Russian Communist Workers' Party – Russian Party of Communists													2.53%	

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 3, May 2007, p. 84.

Seats in the Legislative Assemblies after the Elections of March 11, 2007 According to Proportional Representation

	United Russia	Communist Party of the Russian Federation	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia	Just Russia	Union of Right Forces	Agrarian Party	Russian Ecological Party "The Greens"	Patriots of Russia
Republic of Dagestan	47	5	—	8	—	7	—	5
Komi Republic	6	2	2	3	2	—	—	—
Stavropol Region	6	4	3	10	2	—	—	—
Vologda Oblast	7	2	2	4	—	2	—	—
Leningrad Oblast	10	5	4	6	—	—	—	—
Moscow Oblast	33	12	—	5	—	—	—	—
Murmansk Oblast	8	3	2	3	—	—	—	—
Omsk Oblast	16	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oryol Oblast	12	7	2	4	—	—	—	—
Pskov Oblast	11	5	2	4	—	—	—	—
Samara Oblast	11	5	3	4	1	—	1	—
Tomsk Oblast	11	3	3	2	2	—	—	—
Tyumen Oblast	13	1	2	1	—	—	—	—
St. Petersburg	23	9	5	13	—	—	—	—

Source: Monitoring of regional election campaigns on October 8, 2006. Informational bulletin of the National Center for Democratic Processes, Issue no. 3, May 2007, p. 86.

Documentation

List of "Snubbed Governors"

65 of 85 governors are on the candidates' list of "United Russia".

6 governors who did not take part in the primaries within the party were put on the lists: Mamsurov (North Ossetia), Mitin (Novgorod), Aryakov (Samara), Khoroshavin (Sakhalin), Geniatulin (Chita), Matviyenko (St. Petersburg).

On the other hand, 5 governors who took part in the primaries within the party did not make it onto the list: Zyasykov (Ingushetia), Kiselyov (Arkhangelsk), Zhamsuyev (Autonomous Oblast of the Buryats of Aginsk), Kozhemyako (Autonomous Oblast of the Koryaks), Potapenko (Nenets Autonomous Oblast).

2 governors are not on first, but on second place in their regions: Lebed (Khakasia) after Viktor Simin, Matviyenko (St. Petersburg) after Boris Grylov.

Therefore, 20 governors are not on the list [of United Russia] – or, to be precise, 19 governors and one acting governor.

Zyasykov (Ingushetia)*

Batdyev (Karachai-Cherkessia)

Torlopov (Komi)**

Chirkunov (Perm)**

Chernogorov (Stavropol)**

Kiselyov (Arkhangelsk)*

Vinogradov (Vladimir)****

Maksyuta (Volgograd)****

Kulakov (Voronezh)**

Shaklein (Kirov)**

Tsikunov (Kostroma, acting governor)

Bochkaryov (Pensa)***

Shpak (Ryazan)

Ipatov (Saratov)***

Maslov (Smolensk)***

Volkov (Jewish Autonomous Oblast)

Zhamsuyev (Autonomous Oblast of the Buryats of Aginsk)*

Kozhemyako (Autonomous Oblast of the Koryaks)*

Potapenko (Nenets Autonomous Oblast)*

Abramovich (Chukotka)

* - took part in primaries within the party in 2007

** - was top candidate for "United Russia" during the regional elections

*** - is top candidate for "United Russia" for the regional elections of December 2, 2007

**** - Communist

Batdyev, Shpak, Volkov (Jewish Autonomous Oblast), Abramovich, Zikunov belong to none of the above four groups.

Source: <http://di09en.livejournal.com/17329.html>, 6. November 2007

Opinion

The Hope of Yabloko, or Why We Are Taking Part in the Elections

Galina Mikhaleva, Moscow

Abstract

In the authoritarian system of bureaucratic clans that has firmly established itself in Russia, the existence of the Russian Democratic Party Yabloko seems absurd. In this commentary, the author, a member of the Yabloko Executive Committee, explains why it is important that Yabloko takes part in the elections despite all obstacles.

Elections Without a Choice and the Trappings of a Party System

Legislative changes and political practices during President Putin's second term in office have all but completely eliminated competition in Russia's parliamentary elections, which were not free to begin with, by removing almost all options for the opposition to be represented in the State Duma. Putin's consent to lead the "United Russia" party list has completed the process of creating optimal conditions for the party of power and of corrupt bureaucrats. The Russian political spectrum consists almost exclusively of sham political parties that are expected to participate in sham elections with pre-arranged results. The 14 parties currently participating in the elections can be distinguished as belonging to the following groupings.

Administrative parties that support Putin and his policies and enjoy various degrees of support from the Kremlin:

- United Russia includes all of the country's political and business heavyweights on its party lists, which are topped by ministers and governors, complemented by artists, athletes, workers, and farmers (following the Soviet model);
- Just Russia, which is made up of second-tier bureaucrats and defectors from other parties who are concerned about retaining their seats in the State Duma; Putin's decision to campaign for United Russia has created an ambiguous and ultimately hopeless situation for this party, since it cannot compete with a Putin-led party while simultaneously supporting him;
- The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, which has been weakened by the loss of a series of prominent politicians and corporate supporters. The usefulness of its continued existence is also questioned because there is no longer any requirement for an additional faction to supply the necessary votes for constitutional amendments in parliament.

Administrative projects that are also subordinated to the Kremlin, but which play a subordinate or proxy role serving to solidify the position of their political leaders and to create the illusion of a full-fledged party system: The Agrarian Party, the People's Union, the Peace and Unity Party, and the Social Justice Party.

Deception projects created by the Kremlin in order to siphon off votes from the opposition: The Democratic Party of Russia, the Citizens' Force, the Green Party, and the Patriots of Russia.

True opposition parties such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation or the Russian Democratic Party Yabloko that have an ideological foundation, a real membership base, and regular showings of strong voter support.

The Union of Right Forces is a borderline case that so far incorporates the diverse positions and strategies both of administrative parties and of a partisan business project that is based on buying votes, as well as elements of opposition.

A range of well-known politicians and political groups with various political leanings now finds itself as part of the *non-conformist opposition* and cannot participate in elections due to their lack of party status, such as "The Other Russia." Several formerly legal parties, the best-known of which is the Republican Party, were unable to register under the new election laws.

Between 2004 and 2007, there were repeated attempts to form parties, movements, and coalitions within the opposition spectrum in various forms. Among these were "Committee 2008," the United Civil Front, and the People's Democratic Union, all of which were members of "The Other Russia" confederation, which also united left-wing organizations such as the National Bolshevik Party, the Vanguard of Red Youth, and others. All attempts to form a united opposition with a common basis failed as a result of conflicts and divisions. Today, the actors include "The Other Russia" (formed by Edvard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party and the United Civil Front of Garry Kasparov) and

the People's Democratic Union of Mikhail Kasyanov and Irina Khakamada. Despite earlier assurances to the contrary, Vladimir Ryzhkov did not win a slot on the party list of the Union of Right Forces after his Republican Party was refused registration and left the "Other Russia" alliance.

The difficult position in which these politicians and groups find themselves is, on the one hand, due to legislation forbidding the formation of party blocs and banning participation by the representatives of one party in the lists of another group. On the other hand, instead of unity in adversity, the differences in political views, internal conflicts, and inept tactics have weakened the opposition.

Boycott or Participate in the Elections?

In the current political debate among Russia's conformist and non-conformist opposition, there are two different positions vis-à-vis the elections that have also been debated within Yabloko. Some regard the upcoming elections as a pure sham and believe that to participate in this process would only help legitimate the regime. Others argue that the campaign is the only remaining option for communicating one's own point of view to the voters and that participation in the polls is therefore necessary.

The representatives of the non-conformist opposition have very ambiguous and constantly shifting views in this matter. The leaders of "The Other Russia" (Kasparov and Limonov), who have long accused Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces of having come to an arrangement with the Kremlin because of their participation in polls and called for a boycott of the Duma elections, ended up presenting a party list of their own to the Central Election Committee. Nevertheless, the party was not registered. On the other hand, former prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov and the People's Democratic Union, who left their alliance, and radical Communist Viktor Anpilov, who left and then re-joined it, continue to call for an election boycott. At the same time as they were urging a boycott, the various actors were trying to organize internal primaries in order to nominate a presidential candidate, first in unison and then separately. Within Yabloko's internal party discussion, one group also advocated an election boycott after the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaya and after the party had been excluded from the elections in Karelia and refused registration in St. Petersburg, where Yabloko's prospects had been good. However, the dominant view remained that participation in the elections was necessary for the following reasons:

- They constitute the only opportunity to communicate our point of view on the political regime, the

economic and political development of the country, and our alternative proposals to the voter, irrespective of how limited our options are, due to the lack of any access to important television stations.

- We have obligations towards our party members and supporters, who expect us to take part in the elections.
- If we should decide to boycott the polls, we would jeopardize the continued existence of the party, which would thus be unable to remain an organized force until the moment when authoritarian tendencies may weaken and the opposition gains a genuine chance of political participation again.
- Maintaining an organizational structure without party status is only possible in two ways: Either by transforming the group into an NGO, or through the creation of a resistance group using subversive strategies. Should events develop in a certain way, the second option appears to be the more likely one. It should only be chosen, however, after all alternatives in the legal political arena have been exhausted.
- Furthermore, the latest legislative changes, leading to a distortion of results at the level of the regional electoral committees and censorship of important media, combined with a lack of potential for resistance, mean that a boycott would be a nonsensical choice.

The first three slots of Yabloko's electoral list, which has already been approved by the Central Election Commission, feature the party chairman and his deputy (G. Yavlinsky and S. Ivanenko) as well as the country's best-known civil rights activist and former dissident Sergei Kovalev, who has been a consistent critic of the regime and the president. The electoral list of 97 regional groups and 342 individuals does not include any higher-ranking state officials or any oligarchs. It is an alliance of the active parts of our society and includes business executives, university lecturers, NGO directors, journalists, students, pensioners, ecologists, civil rights activists, and chairpersons of independent trade unions. The electoral list includes more young people and women than those of any other parties (10 and 28 percent, respectively).

What We Are Hoping For

The political system that has emerged in Russia in the run-up to the elections is a contradictory one. It could develop into a variety of different directions. One option is a strong autocracy, including the imposition of a single ideological line, elements of a cult of personality, and attempts to employ mobilization techniques. On the other hand, deploying the full force of the repressive state apparatus in order to prop up the regime

is infeasible, and this fact, combined with the absence of the Iron Curtain, means that key figures in politics and business have doubts concerning the maintenance of stability in a post-Putin Russia. Such doubts give rise to aggravated conflicts, with criminal methods of persecution being deployed not only against political opponents, but also within the executive structures of power.

Conflicts within the elite open up new opportunities both for “reformers” within the government and for the democratic opposition. It is important to exploit such opportunities (e.g., airtime on important TV stations) when they arise. But the most important task is to make all thinking citizens aware that there are alternatives to the current course of the country’s development and to the current president.

Translated from German by Christopher Findlay

About the author:

Dr. Galina Mikhaleva is a member of the Executive of Yabloko.

Reading Tip

The Russian Electoral Statistics Database

The Russian Electoral Statistics database, created by Grigorii Golosov under the auspices of the EU-funded IRENA project, is now available online. <http://db.irena.org.ru/> The database contains detailed information on 116 federal and regional-level elections held starting with December 2003: national presidential and legislative, 34 gubernatorial, 77 regional legislative (single or lower chambers), 3 regional legislative (upper chambers), and about all by-elections to these legislatures throughout the period. Everybody who has ever dealt with the existing publications of Russian electoral statistics by the Central Electoral Commission of Russia (<http://www.cikrf.ru> and <http://www.izbirkom.ru>) knows how user-unfriendly these publications are. At any given moment of time, they are also incomplete because some of the data tend to disappear without stating a reason or leaving a trace soon after the elections. To remedy these obvious shortcomings, Professor Golosov with the assistance of Dr Iulia Shevchenko created a database that attempts to combine user-friendliness with the comprehensiveness of the data. The data sources include the publications of the Central Electoral Commission and regional electoral commissions in the <http://www.izbirkom.ru> portal, the Internet sites of those regional electoral commissions that keep them on their own, and print publications. The database is going to be updated no less frequently than twice a year. The data are in Russian. However, interested English-speakers who know Cyrillic characters and can recognize the names of regions and political parties will not find the language barrier prohibitively high. In order to facilitate their effort, a user guide in English is provided.

http://www.irena.org.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=50&Itemid=103

About the Russian Analytical Digest

The Russian Analytical Digest is a bi-weekly internet publication jointly produced by the Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen (www.forschungsstelle-uni-bremen.de) and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich). It is supported by the Otto Wolff Foundation and the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russlandanalysen (www.russlandanalysen.de), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia (www.res.ethz.ch), and the Russian Regional Report. The Russian Analytical Digest covers political, economic, and social developments in Russia and its regions, and looks at Russia's role in international relations.

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Research Centre for East European Studies [Forschungsstelle Osteuropa] at the University of Bremen

Founded in 1982 and led by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Eichwede, the Research Centre for East European Studies (Forschungsstelle Osteuropa) at the University of Bremen is dedicated to socialist and post-socialist cultural and societal developments in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Research Centre possesses a unique collection of alternative culture and independent writings from the former socialist countries in its archive. In addition to extensive individual research on dissidence and society in socialist societies, since January 2007 a group of international research institutes is participating in a collaborative project on the theme "The other Eastern Europe – the 1960s to the 1980s, dissidence in politics and society, alternatives in culture. Contributions to comparative contemporary history", which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

In the area of post-socialist societies, extensive research projects have been conducted in recent years with emphasis on political decision-making processes, economic culture and the integration of post-socialist countries into EU governance. One of the core missions of the institute is the dissemination of academic knowledge to the interested public. This includes regular email service with nearly 15,000 subscribers in politics, economics and the media.

With a collection of publications on Eastern Europe unique in Germany, the Research Centre is also a contact point for researchers as well as the interested public. The Research Centre has approximately 300 periodicals from Russia alone, which are available in the institute's library. News reports as well as academic literature is systematically processed and analyzed in data bases.

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is a Swiss academic center of competence that specializes in research, teaching, and information services in the fields of international and Swiss security studies. The CSS also acts as a consultant to various political bodies and the general public.

The CSS is engaged in research projects with a number of Swiss and international partners. The Center's research focus is on new risks, European and transatlantic security, strategy and doctrine, state failure and state building, and Swiss foreign and security policy.

In its teaching capacity, the CSS contributes to the ETH Zurich-based Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree course for prospective professional military officers in the Swiss army and the ETH and University of Zurich-based MA program in Comparative and International Studies (MACIS), offers and develops specialized courses and study programs to all ETH Zurich and University of Zurich students, and has the lead in the Executive Masters degree program in Security Policy and Crisis Management (MAS ETH SPCM), which is offered by ETH Zurich. The program is tailored to the needs of experienced senior executives and managers from the private and public sectors, the policy community, and the armed forces.

The CSS runs the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), and in cooperation with partner institutes manages the Comprehensive Risk Analysis and Management Network (CRN), the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP), the Swiss Foreign and Security Policy Network (SSN), and the Russian and Eurasian Security (RES) Network.

Any opinions expressed in Russian Analytical Digest are exclusively those of the authors.

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