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KOMMENTAR

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Patronage and Power: Russia's Dominant Party Regime

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Abstract: Following the election cycle of 2007–2008, Russia prepares to enter a phase marked by a change of presidents but continuity in the model of legislative-executive relations that was established under Vladimir Putin. During Putin's presidency, Russia created an authoritarian dominant party regime. In such a system, patronage and coercion are used to ensure the dominant party's control of elective offices. In Russia, United Russia's commanding majority in parliament ensures that the president and government can enact their legislative agenda without opposition. The arrangement allows parliamentarians to enjoy substantial material benefits and patronage opportunities as champions of powerful commercial interests in return for conceding authoritarian powers to the president.

Keywords: Russia · Elections · Duma · Party regime

Zusammenfassung: Im Ergebnis der Parlaments- und Präsidentschaftswahlen 2007–2008 wird Russland zwar von einem neuen Präsidenten regiert, die spezifischen Beziehungsmuster zwischen Exekutive und Legislative, die unter Vladimir Putin etabliert wurden, bleiben jedoch erhalten. Während Putins Präsidentschaft wurde ein autoritäres, dominantes Parteiensystem geschaffen, in dem Patronage und Zwang die Kontrolle der dominanten Partei über Wahlämter gewährleisten. Die Mehrheit von „Einiges Russland" in der Duma stellt sicher, dass Präsident und Regierung ihre legislative Agenda ohne nennenswerte Opposition verwirklichen können. Diese Konstellation eröffnet den Abgeordneten die Möglichkeit, materielle Gewinne zu realisieren und Patronagemöglichkeiten zu nutzen. Abgeordnete setzen ihre machtvollen kommerziellen Interessen durch und billigen dem Präsidenten im Gegenzug eine autoritäre Herrschaft zu. Die Hintergründe und Folgen der Wahlen werden in diesem Beitrag kommentiert.

Schlagwörter: Russland · Wahlen · Duma · Parteiregime

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1. United Russia and the Dominant Party Regime[1]

Following the election cycle of 2007–2008, Russia prepares to enter a phase marked by a change of presidents but continuity in the model of legislative-executive relations that was established under Vladimir Putin. Over the 2000–2008 period, coinciding with the Third and Fourth Convocations of the State Duma and the two terms of Putin's presidency, Russia created an authoritarian dominant party regime. In such a regime, the party and the state are closely intertwined. The party uses its access to state resources and policies to win commanding victories in regional and national legislative elections. In return for their assured path to office, the elected legislators of the party guarantee the president assured passage of any legislation he proposes. In Russia, United Russia plays this role. In the Fourth Duma (2003–2007), United Russia's faction held a two-thirds majority, and following the December 2007 election, has entered the Fifth Convocation with an even wider margin.[2] The size and cohesion of the United Russia faction provide the president and government 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.

The proposed arrangement under which Dmitrii Medvedev, formerly first deputy chairman of the government, assumed the presidency with United Russia party support, while Vladimir Putin moves to become chairman of the government is novel and may prove unstable. Nonetheless, its success requires a continuation of United Russia's ability to provide the president and prime minister with a solid majority in parliament as well as a unified chain of command stretching into the regional executive and legislative offices. It will also require at least tacit coordination with the political structures that have previously been outside the party's orbit but essential elements of the president's coalition – the security forces and the state corporations. How these will be controlled under the Medvedev-Putin tandem remains to be seen.

Nonetheless, the essential outlines of the legislative-executive relationship as it emerged under Putin are now clear. One aspect, the disciplined voting of the president's allies in parliament, has been extensively documented in the literature (Remington 2006b; Chaisty 2005a, 2005b). Less widely publicized, but of no less importance for Russian politics, however, is the activity of dominant party legislators as entrepreneurs and brokers in the political arena. Their status as legislators affiliated with the dominant party gives them numerous opportunities to satisfy their appetites for money and influence. Once a piece of legislation has reached the floor for a vote, members of the dominant party rarely deviate from the party line. But in order to reach agreement on the final language of the legislation, deputies in the State Duma and members of the Fede-

1 Some of the material on which this article is based will appear in Thomas F. Remington, "Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations under Vladimir Putin," forthcoming in a special issue of Europe-Asia Studies entitled "Power and Policy in Putin's Russia," under the editorship of Richard Sakwa.

2 At any given time, the United Russia faction had 306 to 308 members in the Fourth Convocation. It begins the Fifth Convocation with 315 members.

ration Council often have occasion to serve as advocates for the interests of the agencies, firms and industries that sponsor them. Therefore, although the president may push some bills through in a matter of weeks, days, or even hours, bargaining over other bills can take months or even years. This makes parliament – and the United Russia party – an arena in which organized interests, both private and bureaucratic, compete for power over public policy by working through their allies in parliament. By the same token, United Russia is more a target of intensive lobbying than a source of unified and consistent policy direction for the country.

The involvement of members of the dominant party in representing powerful interest groups can be explained by the political logic of an authoritarian dominant party regime. The exercise of power in such a regime is costly. The regime requires a steady stream of revenues to preserve the loyalty of a national network of public officials. The money can come from many sources – kickbacks from private companies awarded procurement contracts by the state, slush funds maintained by state and parastatal firms and placed at the disposal of needy legislators, or teams of experts contributed by private interests to law-makers – but the need for it is constant. There are many mouths to feed. Governors and mayors, state officials at the center and in the regions, directors of enterprises, and other public figures, who are expected to mobilize support for the party, all need a stream of revenues, job opportunities, pork barrel projects, and policy successes to sustain their own networks of clients and followers. Legislators need discretionary funds to run their election campaigns (indeed, they may need to contribute as much as $1 or 2 million $US to the party simply to obtain a place on the party list) (Tolstykh 2007: 258). Once elected, they seek budget funds to finance projects in their home regions. In effect, a dominant party regime is a giant patronage machine fueled by the state's control over productive resources (Hale 2005; Kitschelt/Wilkinson 2007; Ross 1999; Magaloni 2006; Smith 2005).

To be sure, in an authoritarian regime, party patronage is reinforced by selective coercion and intimidation of opposition forces, control over the mass media, and manipulation of elections (Magaloni 2006; McMann 2006). But coercion is also costly and potentially risky (Dahl 1971; Levitsky/Way 2002). Therefore a regime in which the ruling party can afford to rely on patronage more than coercion, and meet its financial needs through rents from natural resource exports, has an advantage over one in which the regime is obliged to finance its political needs by confiscation and predation. It is easier to finance a dominant party when state revenues are growing because diverting state revenues to patronage does not require imposing losses on any segments of society. In this respect, President Putin has been fortunate, since the steady rise in the world price of oil and gas since 1999 has allowed him to satisfy the elite's demands and at the same time to raise popular living standards.

Because the dominant party regime is financed by resources contributed by interests seeking benefits from the state, the party gives its elected officials in the national and regional legislatures ample opportunity to meet their financial needs through the exercise of their legislative powers. Quite apart from their formal right to cast or withhold a vote on a bill or amendment on the floor of parliament, members of both chambers of parliament have many opportunities to employ their powers on behalf of particular organized interests. In both chambers, legislators can initiate bills and amendments,

engage in negotiations for or against particular bills and amendments in their factions and committees, call for interpellations (*zaprosy* – inquiries about a specific issue directed toward the government), demand that the procuracy investigate an allegation of criminal wrong-doing (concerning, for example, a rival of the company at whose behest the deputy is acting), publicize (or conceal) a scandal through their speeches, newspaper articles, and inquiries during government hour, hold hearings directed at building support for legislation on a particular subject, meet with government officials, select staff members and experts to work on a particular project, help to mediate conflicts between major interests, initiate the creation of a special commission or working group to deal with an issue, and work to speed up or slow down the scheduling of a piece of legislation for a vote (Sobyanin/Novosil'tseva 2004: 36-40). The members' need for a continuous flow of revenues leads them to seek out opportunities for legislative action on behalf of the organized interests that support them. These interests may be state or private businesses, industries or sectors, administrative agencies, or regional political establishments. Indeed, in many cases, deputies maintain their active associations with particular industries even while serving as members of parliament (Tolstykh 2007). Published price-lists of parliamentary services leaked by Duma staff members indicate that deputies are often well-remunerated for their efforts ("Gleb Grigor" 2002; Ivanova 2008).

Since United Russia has gained the ascendancy in the State Duma, it has given its members new institutional resources with which to accommodate their need to serve particularistic interests. For example, notwithstanding the extreme centralization of power within the party faction, it has *increased* the number of legislative committees, thereby creating new opportunities for patronage in particular policy jurisdictions for influential members of the faction.

Likewise, the party uses the position of "deputy chair of the Duma" to multiply points of access to the legislative agenda for individual members. Each deputy chair of the chamber, along with the speaker and deputy speaker of the chamber, serves on the Duma's steering committee, the Council of the Duma. Since the Council of the Duma sets the agenda and calendar for the chamber, each deputy chair has an opportunity to press for the priority of particular pieces of legislation in which a particularly influential constituency has a stake. In the first two Convocations, the Council of the Duma comprised the leaders of each faction in a power-sharing arrangement that facilitated cross-faction bargaining. Beginning with the Third Duma, however, when the Unity faction took the initiative in allocating leadership positions, the Council began to reflect the power of the majority to impose its will on the chamber. In the Fourth and Fifth Convocations, United Russia increased the number of deputy chairman positions and kept most of them for itself. Therefore, although the United Russia faction controls agenda-setting in the chamber, it has created multiple channels of access to the agenda for influential figures within the faction.

The third structural change in the Duma is the formation of deputy groups *within the United Russia faction itself*. In the Fourth Convocation, the deputies raised the threshold

needed to register deputy groups from 35 to 55.[3] As a result, no groups formed. However, the United Russia faction was so large that it established an informal practice in which internal groups could pursue their interests separately, with the faction leadership resolving which legislative initiatives and positions to pursue in the name of the faction. One such internal group, for example, whose core were the deputies from the old Fatherland party associated with Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov, lobbied for the interests of the city of Moscow. Another, built around the old Regions of Russia group, represented the interests of the oil and gas industry (Tolstykh 2007: 256). The internal group system is another way of multiplying channels for intiating legislation and forging agreements. To advance a legislative proposal, United Russia deputies first work to obtain the agreement of their particular group, and to seek the approval of the faction leadership only once their group has agreed to support the initiative. The blessing of the faction leadership, however, ensures that the bill will be scheduled for floor action and pass. This system apparently suited the United Russia faction leadership, because the faction met before the opening of the Fifth Convocation and voted on the division of its members into four subgroups again.

United Russia has not only gained a dominant position in the State Duma, it also has taken control of most legislative and executive offices around the country (Gel'man 2006a, 2006b). By 2006 the party held a majority in 78 of 86 regional legislatures. 72 regional governors and 90 per cent of mayors were members of the party. By mid-2007 the party reported a membership of 1.25 million and 45,000 regional, local and primary branches (Reuter/Remington, forthcoming). The announcement that President Putin would head the party's list in the Duma election of December 2007 boosted United Russia further. The combination of heavy administrative pressure, extremely biased media coverage, large scale falsification of results in some regions, and the genuine popularity of Putin combined to give United Russia a huge electoral victory: United Russia received, according to official results, 64.3 per cent of the vote. Some regions achieved particularly notable results: In Chechnya, for example, turnout was reported to be 99.37 per cent and the vote for United Russia was 99.36 per cent. Ingushetia followed close behind, with 98.29 per cent turnout and 98.72 per cent voting for United Russia. Indeed, the importance of various types of administrative pressures in ensuring a crushing victory for the party may be judged by the remarkably high correlation between reported turnout by electoral district and the vote for United Russia. For the 150 electoral reporting units nationwide, the correlation between turnout and the vote for United Russia was .90. As a result of the 2007 election, United Russia holds even more seats in the Fifth Duma than it held in the Fourth. *Table 1* shows the breakdown of factional membership in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Dumas.

3 Under the Duma's rules, a deputy group was entitled to enjoy the same rights and privileges as a party-based faction, if it could demonstrate that it had at least 35 – later 55 – registered members. Such groups were a feature of all three of the first Convocations. They gave members from single-member district seats opportunities to use their groups to lobby on behalf of their clients.

Table 1: Party Factions in 3rd, 4th and 5th Duma Convocations

	3rd Duma (2000–2003)		4th Duma (2003–2007)		5th Duma (2007–2011)	
	Party list vote (%)	Seats in Duma (%)	Party list vote (%)	Seats in Duma (%)	Party list vote (%)	Seats in Duma (%)
Unity/ United Russia*	23.32	18.4	37.40	68.00	64.30	70.0
OVR	13.33	10.2				
CPRF	24.29	20.2	12.65	11.56	11.57	13.0
LDPR	5.98	3.9	11.49	8.00	8.14	9.0
SPS	8.52	7.3	3.97	0.00	0.96	0.0
Yabloko	5.93	4.8	4.32	0.00	1.59	0.0
Motherland/ A Just Russia**			9.04	8.67	7.74	8.0

* Unity merged with OVR in 2001 to form United Russia.

** A Just Russia formed in 2006 from the merger of Motherland, the Pensioners' Party, and the Party of Life.

Large-scale manipulation of the electoral process was also used to ensure a massive victory for Dmitrii Medvedev in the presidential election on March 2, 2008. For example, although the official total of eligible voters in December 2007 was said to be 109.15 million, by March, the number was officially set at 107 million. The reason for the adjustment probably had to do with the fact that in the Duma election, higher reported turnout was closely associated with higher vote totals for the United Russia party. In the presidential election, the objective was probably to ensure the desired percentage of votes cast for the Kremlin's chosen candidate (Coalson 2008). As in the December Duma election, the authorities also made free use of absentee voting, by which voters obtain a certificate indicating that they will vote at a location other than the one where they reside, and then vote repeatedly at multiple locations. But the simplest and most widely employed tactics for ensuring the desired vote totals were outright falsification of election tallies by the district electoral commissions, and the refusal to register the candidacies of serious opposition figures. Thus the same practices that are used to guarantee a landslide victory for United Russia in Duma elections are deployed to bring about a commanding victory for the party's candidate in the presidential election.

In the upper chamber, the Federation Council, United Russia does not operate as a formal party faction, inasmuch as no political factions are recognized. However, it operates on an informal basis as a source of political guidance and leadership. Even after the restructuring of the Federation Council so that all of its members serve on a full-time basis (from 1996 until the 2000 law, the members of the Federation Council were the governors and legislative chairs of the regional territorial subjects of the federation; after the new law passed, the governors and legislatures of the regions appointed full-time representatives to occupy their regions' seats in the Federation Council), the Federation Council, much more than the State Duma, continued to rely on the chamber leadership, committee chairs, and permanent staff for political direction (Remington 2003a). As in the State Duma, members make use of their parliamentary status to lobby

for the interests of their principals, including both the heads of the regional executive and legislative bodies whom they formally represent, and for other commercial interests. Recently Forbes Magazine reported that there are twelve billionaires (that is, individuals whose net worth is greater than $ 1 billion US) currently serving as members of the Federation Council. (Some had served in the State Duma, but President Putin let it be known that he disapproved of having billionaires sit in the Duma. So some entered the upper house instead.) Combined, the net worth of these twelve individuals is $ 41 billion. The Russian Federation Council has the distinction of having a larger number of billionaires as its members than any other legislative chamber of the world. The benefits for wealthy members of their parliamentary status include immunity from prosecution and greater access to state officials. In turn, their status as parliamentary representatives helps the governors and legislatures that appoint them as they wield their influence in Moscow on behalf of the political and commercial interests of their home regions (Brown 2008). It is also widely believed that Federation Council members make substantial payments to the regional officials who appoint them to their seats.[4] Given the Putin administration's well-publicized legal prosecution of high-profile business people who defied the regime, it is likely that the billionaires and millionaires in the Federation Council are content to support the Kremlin's legislative agenda in return for the opportunity to pursue their own business interests in peace.

2. United Russia and Putin's Agenda

2.1 The Third Duma

The December 1999 elections created the conditions that enabled Putin to establish a dominant party regime. Even though the pro-Putin party, Unity, held only 18.4 per cent of the seats in the Third Duma, it became the pivotal faction – pivotal in the sense that almost no majority coalition could be formed without it. Yet although it was pivotal, it had to resort to constant bargaining for support, even from its allies (Remington 2006a, 2001b, 2003b). Nonetheless, the Kremlin was able to deploy it skillfully. President Putin's advisors intervened early in the process of distributing leadership posts in the Duma to ensure that Unity would control the chamber. They did so in part to block the election of Evgenii Primakov to the speakership and to draw the SMD-based deputy groups into an alliance with Unity. The tactical alliance formed between Unity and the communists to elect the communist Seleznev as speaker and to exclude OVR, SPS, and Yabloko from the power-sharing arrangement left OVR in a weakened and dependent position. The strategem – devised by Vladislav Surkov – was a brilliant example of what would become a pattern of Kremlin control of the parliamentary manoeuvers of its clients in the Duma.

4 In January 2001, for example, the then-governor of Krasnoyarsk stated that some wealthy entrepreneurs had offered him money for a seat in the Federation Council. The going price at the time was said to be about $ 500,000. Shortly before this, the chairman of the chamber, Egor Stroev, denounced the rumored practice of selling seats (RFE/RL Russian Federation Report, vol. 3, no. 4, January 24, 2001).

In 2001, Unity established a formal alliance with three other parliamentary factions, the Fatherland-All Russia party faction and two deputy groups (deputy groups were formations made up primarily of single-member district deputies who preferred not to join with one of the party-based factions).[5] The two groups with which Unity forged a pro-government voting coalition were People's Deputy and Russia's Regions. Later in 2001, OVR was absorbed into United Russia through its merger with Unity. Then in the Fourth Duma, the members of People's Deputy and Russia's Regions simply became informal but recognized caucuses operating within United Russia (Tolstykh 2007, 254-7).

The "coalition of the four," representing 234 members at the point it formed in spring 2001, became a reasonably reliable base for voting majorities for legislation sponsored by the government and president (Remington 2006a). When some single-member district deputies from the two allied deputy groups refused to support a government initiative, Unity could usually count on support from the LDPR or SPS to pass legislation.

Putin used this narrow majority led by Unity to enact an ambitious agenda of legislation aimed at stimulating economic growth (Sakwa 2004). In many cases, his proposals revived Yeltsin-era initiatives that had been blocked previously by the communist and nationalist opposition. In others, they reflected a new sense of urgency about the need to reverse Russia's economic stagnation that threatened to relegate Russia to permanent backwardness.

Beginning with his first message to parliament in July 2000, Putin laid out an ambitious program of policy measures aimed at spurring investment, innovation, and growth that he wanted to enact into law. These included a flat income tax rate, lower taxes on profits, a lower social tax, stronger protections on property rights, less intrusive regulation of business, banking reform, property rights in land, labor relations, reform of the customs regime, and a new law on political parties. The following year, in his April 3, 2001, message, he called for new legislation on federal relations, criminal and civil procedure, administrative reform, lightening of the regulatory burden on business, further tax cuts, reform of the pension system, a system of mandatory federal health insurance, a new labor code, and intellectual property rights protection.

Putin's 2002 message was even more far-reaching. He called for legislation clarifying division of responsibility of the federal government and regional governments, reform of local government, a series of judicial reforms (including delineation of the jurisdictions of general and arbitration courts, reform of the criminal code, new codes of civil and arbitration court procedure, a law on arbitration tribunals *[treteiskie sudy]*, amendments to the law on the procuracy, and penal reform), reform of the structure of the state bureaucracy and the rules governing state employment, reform of banking, reform of bankruptcy law, and legislation harmonizing Russian trade law with WTO standards. Moreover, he called for breaking up the large natural monopolies (the gas

5 The Fourth Duma raised the threshold requirement for membership for such groups, and none formed. Therefore henceforth, with the elimination of all SMD seats from the Fifth Duma and the adoption of the "imperative mandate" rule providing that a deputy who leaves his faction loses his seat, there will be no more deputy groups unless the rules are changed again.

industry, electric power, and railroads), and for reform of the housing and utilities sector. This was the most ambitious program of his first term.

However, the spring and summer of 2003 – the same time that the assault on Yukos began – marked a pronounced turn away from comprehensive economic reform in Putin's legislative agenda. The president's 2003 message made very little mention of new legislative priorities, calling only for the acceleration of the development of reforms of the state administration, and development of a new law on citizenship. Putin's 2004 and 2005 messages likewise touched only lightly on economic and institutional reform and emphasized instead the need to improve state services in the spheres of health, education, and other areas of social policy. Thus, even as his control over the legislative process grew, his interest in using it to advance a sweeping reform agenda decreased. The modernizing phase of Putin's policy agenda ended even before the end of his first term.

Working through Unity and its allies in the Duma, Putin won some significant legislative victories. The first several bills of his package of tax reform passed by the end of the spring 2000 term. 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 Labor Code (first reading), a 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), as well as 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, the elimination of the last remaining turnover tax, reduced taxes on small businesses, passed a new code of procedure for arbitration courts, and a law on sales of agricultural land. All of this legislation would have been difficult if not impossible to pass in the 1990s. Putin's success reflected both the changed balance of political forces in the parliament and the Kremlin's skillful management of its relations with parliament.

To be sure, Putin's efforts in the modernization agenda were not always successful. Resistance came not from the parliament, however, but from the state bureaucracy. The ambitious goal of overhauling the state administration, emphasized in Putin's 2002 message, was watered down and eventually forgotten. A presidential commission worked for two years to come up with an ambitious plan to restructure the federal executive, eventually reviving an old Yeltsin-era reform scheme. This plan, called "administrative reform," was implemented in March 2004. Rather than restructuring the procedures for recruiting, training and promoting federal civil servants, enforcing discipline and accountability within the bureaucracy, and rationalizing the organizational structure of the executive branch by eliminating redundancies, the new plan simply reshuffled responsibilities of officials at the top. Observers noted that although the ostensible purpose of

the reform was to make the executive branch more streamlined and efficient, the plan ended up increasing the number of federal-level executive bodies from 57 to 72. Moreover, the plan was based on a presidential decree. Duma participation in the reform was negligible. It was confined to one package of bills making technical changes to the "Law on Government." As a Rodina deputy pointed out, there was no involvement on the part of the legislature in the reforms. The project of administrative reform was widely regarded as a failure and an embarrassment.

2.2 Putin and the Fourth Duma

Following the December 2003 elections, the United Russia faction quickly established near total control over the Duma and centralized power within the faction. For all of its control over the Duma, however, United Russia remained entirely subordinate to the president. The victorious party contributed almost no members to the new government in 2004 although it had expected to be rewarded with several posts. Consultative procedures such as the "zero reading"[6] that in the previous Duma gave pro-government factions an opportunity to bargain for concessions from the government on budget and tax bills before and during law-making were forgotten. Some bills were simply railroaded through all three readings in a matter of a few weeks.

The turn away from modernization and economic growth in Putin's legislative agenda that began in spring 2003 continued in his second term and the Duma's fourth Convocation. Especially after Beslan in 2004, Putin's proposals centered on centralizing 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.

Putin's 2004 message to parliament explicitly signalled the shift in his policy agenda. Putin declared that whereas in previous messages he concentrated on large-scale socio-economic reforms, now his priority would be tasks affecting individual families and citizens: quality and accessibility of housing, education, and health care. As in previous years, some of his policy priorities were reflected in legislation submitted to and passed by the Duma. However, there were no follow-on legislative packages in some major areas of social policy, such as health care and education.

In quantitative terms, the Fourth Duma was more productive than the Third, passing over a thousand laws. President Putin continued to sign nearly everything the Duma passed (over 90 per cent of the bills passed by the Duma in third reading were signed by the president in the Third and Fourth Convocations). But the record of legislative achievements of the Fourth Duma reflected a different legislative agenda from that of the Third, one that accommodated Putin's interest in centralizing power and at the same time gave the dominant party enormous opportunities to meet its funding needs. Thus, although much of the legislation the Duma passed consisted of measures centralizing

6 The "zero reading" refers to the informal practice of consultation between the pro-government factions in the Duma and the government before a bill's official first reading on the floor. It was used in particular for budget legislation to ensure that the pro-government factions' major political needs were satisfied, thus guaranteeing that the bill would pass smoothly through the subsequent stages of the legislative process.

power, such as the laws replacing direct election of governors with presidential appointments, eliminating single-member district seats from the Duma, further restricting the rights of political parties, and increasing administrative restrictions on non-governmental organization, the Duma also, at the president's behest, created a number of new state corporations, social spending programs, and state investment funds. These initiatives generate substantial opportunities to provide jobs and income streams for state officials, Duma deputies, and party functionaries. In effect, parliament entered into a grand bargain with the president, delegating wide autocratic power to Putin in return for a plethora of patronage opportunities for the elite.

The Duma readily enacted Putin's initiatives centralizing power. A bill restricting the conditions under which groups can hold demonstrations – liberalized only slightly between first and second readings – passed easily despite the fact that even the Patriarch criticized it. A bill making it still more difficult for initiative groups to organize a nationwide referendum passed with impressive speed. The president submitted it on May 18; two weeks later the Duma passed it in first reading, and nine days later the bill passed in second and third readings. All amendments that were proposed to it were defeated. The bill provides that to initiate a referendum, the organizers must form initiative groups in over half the subjects of the federation and each regional group must have at least 100 citizens. They have two months after registration to hold their meetings and must gather at least two million signatures.

The terrorist crises of 2004 also shaped the legislative agenda. Following the February 6, 2004 Moscow subway bombing, fighting terrorism became a high priority for both the government and the Duma. Deputies took advantage of the opportunity to appear tough on terrorists. The Duma passed amendments to the Criminal Code authorizing life imprisonment for individuals convicted of terrorism. After Beslan in September, the Duma also considered a large new package of anti-terrorism measures, including new controls on immigration and airport security. The head of the Duma's security committee declared that the concept of "terrorist act" was no longer useful, and that the country needed to think of itself as being at war: "an unconventional war without a front line, a war in which we have an enemy inside the country and we should learn to create security zones around vital objects" (RFE/RL Newsline, September 13, 2004). Security legislation rose to the top of the priority list as United Russia drew up the legislative agenda for the fall session. Many of the bills the Duma took up restricted civil and political rights (proposing limits on rights of residence, privacy of e-mail, allowing one to lend one's car to another person, use of jury trial in terrorism cases, large-scale bank transactions, media freedom to report on hostage events, and so on). The opposition parties tried to outflank United Russia, proposing a bill that would lift the moratorium on the death penalty but the pro-government majority defeated it. United Russia maintained the initiative, however, proposing in December a comprehensive new anti-terrorism bill that had been prepared by the FSB[7] in December and that gave the police wider powers to prevent acts of terrorism if they suspected that a terrorist act was about to be committed. Under such circumstances, the FSB could declare a "regime of terrorist threat" and place the media and society under control, using wiretapping, mail in-

7 FSB ist the Federal Security Service.

tercepts, limiting travel, and prohibiting meetings and strikes (Polit.ru, December 17, 2004; February 27, 2006). The anti-terrorism bill was finally passed in third reading in February 2006. The bill's most immediate effect was to resolve an inter-bureaucratic struggle for the right to exercise command of anti-terrorism operations (apparently one reason for the long delay in its enactment). Eventually the FSB won the fight and gained the right to command military, police and other law-enforcement agencies in the event of a terrorist incident.

Putin took a far more expansive view of the anti-terrorist imperative than simply expanding and clarifying police powers to interdict terrorist acts. In addition to the post-Beslan reforms (elimination of direct gubernatorial elections, replacement of the mixed electoral system by an all-PR system, and establishment of the Public Chamber) he justified other restrictions on political rights by referring to the terrorist threat. For instance, Putin defended a bill sharply limiting the autonomy of non-governmental organizations as being necessary "to secure our political system from interference from outside, as well as our society and citizens from the spread of terrorist ideology" (Polit.ru, November 30, 2005). The post-Beslan bills on the presidential appointment of governors, Public Chamber, and all-PR elections for the Duma moved through the Duma rapidly. It was proposed by the president on September 4 and submitted on September 28. The Duma took it up the next day. It is difficult to imagine that the bill had not already been drafted and was awaiting an opportune moment to be submitted. The Public Chamber bill had not been drafted at the point that Putin made his speech, and was only submitted in December, as was the law eliminating single-mandate district seats from the Duma in favor of an all-PR electoral system. Both moved rapidly through the legislative process, however, once submitted. The Public Chamber bill passed in third reading in March 2005, and the reform of the electoral system in April 2005.

3. Distributive Fights within the Duma

Looking only at the record of executive-initiated legislation passed by parliament may suggest that legislation proposed by the president or government generally enjoys smooth passage through parliament. This is not always the case. Certainly for the most part, United Russia's command of the Fourth Duma ensured passage, sometimes at a lightning pace, of the president's agenda. Yet on a number of issues, United Russia was itself divided as a result of conflicts among interest groups representing diverse segments of the state administration or powerful private commercial interests. In many cases, billions of rubles in revenues were at stake. The Duma, and in particular the United Russia faction, became an arena for such battles. The Russian expert on lobbying, Pavel Tolstykh, describes a number of such cases occurring in the Fourth Duma. Among these are the following:

1. Over a series of proposed amendments to the law on advertising, the brewing industry fought (unsuccessfully) the vodka industry over the right to advertise beer on prime time television, including during broadcasts of international sporting events.

2. A controversial law on mandatory automobile liability insurance backed by the insurance industry passed despite widespread opposition from drivers, but the industry was unsuccessful in seeking to lower the tax rate on insurance company revenues.

3. In a fight over legislation mandating liability insurance for operators of hazardous facilities, the insurance industry was pitted against the atomic power industry, defense and other manufacturing interests, and particularly the energy industry.

4. Transneft' and the Russian Railways firms, two giant state firms with strong ties to opposing Kremlin factions, fought over the routing of the planned oil pipeline from Eastern Siberia to the Pacific Ocean, which was to include a spur to China. Under the plan, the route of the pipeline would come within 800 meters of the shoreline of Lake Baikal. Russian Railways, whose monopoly on transporting oil in the region would have ended with the pipeline, took the side of the environmental lobby and that of the governor of Irkutsk oblast, who strongly opposed allowing the pipeline to pass so near to Baikal. The legislation approving the proposal favored Transneft', but, in a subsequent twist, President Putin personally intervened, and demanded that the pipeline be routed so as to lie outside Baikal's watershed.

5. Gazprom fought the oil majors, including Rosneft', over legislation granting Gazprom exclusive rights to export all natural gas. The law was written ambiguously so that it could be interpreted as giving Gazprom an exclusive right over the export even of gas condensate and the gas (*poputnyi* gaz, or associated gas) extracted as a byproduct of oil drilling operations. Rosneft', Lukoil, TNK-BP and other major oil companies opposed Gazprom over the legislation. Because the oil and gas industries are represented by competing factions around Putin (Igor' Sechin, deputy chair of the presidential administration, and the silovik faction control Rosneft'; Dmitrii Medvedev, newly elected president, was chairman of the board of Gazprom), the president and government avoided taking sides. Eventually elements of the government agreed to support modifying the law so as to allow oil companies to export associated gas and condensate, a modest setback for the Gazprom lobby.

From these and other case studies that Russian scholars and journalists have reported, it is clear that high-stakes lobbying campaigns pit ministry against ministry, Duma committee against Duma committee, state firm against state firm. Enormous sums of money are involved. United Russia, seeking to support the government position, often finds it difficult because the government and the presidential administration are themselves divided. Therefore the final votes in second and third readings do not reveal the intensity and divisiveness of the issue. For example, despite the powerful interests lined up on either side of the bill on taxing minerals extraction, the bill was approved in the Duma with 382 affirmative votes in first reading, 362 in second reading, and 410 in third reading, and a margin of 125 to 1 in the Federation Council. By the time the majority has been built, the necessary agreements and compromises have been struck, and the entire United Russia faction falls into line.

The cases cited here, together with the substantial volume of pork barrel legislation adopted by the Duma in the Fourth Convocation, show that the pre-floor bargaining over legislation creates opportunities for individual deputies and groups of deputies to

advance the policy goals of wealthy and powerful bureaucratic and private interests and thereby to extract resources needed for their own political interests. The United Russia faction's own internal structure of sub-groups facilitates this intra-Duma lobbying by linking groups of its members with particular sets of constituencies. The divisions within the state administration and the business community over particular tax and regulatory policy disputes are then represented within the dominant party. Rather than imposing a particular vision or program on legislation, United Russia serves as a machine ensuring the perpetuation of power and spoils for the political elite in return for full support for the executive branch's policy and political objectives.

Generalizing, it is fair to characterize the relationship between the Kremlin and the Duma as asymmetric: the Kremlin can generally compel United Russia deputies to vote according to the desired line. But individual deputies, and the Duma collectively, have needs and resources of their own that require the Kremlin to attend to the deputies' political interests, since behind the deputies stand powerful political interests from business and the bureaucracy. Thus even in an asymmetric political environment, there is a bargaining process between executive and legislative branches, and when the executive branch itself is divided through the competing interests of ministries and agencies, the room for parliamentary initiative, persuasion, logrolling and lobbying is correspondingly increased.

The party of power in Russia has not achieved the single-minded mastery of the power and wealth associated with control of patronage that the Republican Party in the United States attained in the early 2000s. United Russia is united only in its support for and dependence on the Kremlin; it is divided when its principal clients take opposing sides. Under Putin, the president and the presidential administration provided policy direction but left it numerous opportunities to finance its members' needs. Having to accommodate the multiple and sometimes competing demands of special interests, its leaders negotiate compromises to pass legislation. United Russia is not a programmatic party, but a mechanism for extracting rents and distributing patronage. In this, it is little different from other dominant parties in other authoritarian states based on natural resource wealth. The United Russia dominant party regime differs from that of the PRI in Mexico, where the party effectively delegated super-presidential powers to the president in return for ensuring that the political elite was secure in power across elections (Weldon 1997; Magaloni 2006). In Russia, the party is the creature of the presidency. But future presidents, lacking Putin's considerable political resources, may come to rely more and more on the institutional resources of the party for controlling legislatures and ensuring electoral victories at the center and in the regions.

With Putin's decision to leave the presidency and occupy the prime minister's position as of May 2008, Russia appears likely to embark on an unprecedented and risky institutional experiment. Even more than in the past, Putin will need to rely on a solid majority in parliament to ensure the enactment of his policies into law. As he has repeatedly said, he needs a "functional" *(deesposobnyi)* parliament to be able to make the

new system work.[8] Given United Russia's dependence on the politics of patronage, it remains an open question whether it will have the capacity to harmonize the preferences of powerful clan and business interests sufficiently to give the government a solid basis of political support if the time comes when the government needs to impose unpopular policies on the country – for example, at the point when the regime can no longer rely on its natural resource rents to minimize distributional conflict.

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8 In his remarks during the "direct line" call-in session on October 18, 2007, for example, Putin explained why he had chosen to head the United Russia party list in the December Duma election. According to Putin, the parliament had been "non-functional" *(nedeesposobnym)* in the 1990s. As a result, it had been impossible to pass any well-thought-out policies. Instead reckless, populist laws were passed. "Therefore it is extremely important that after the 2007 elections, parliament be functional *(deesposobnyi)*." The main reason for why parliament had been functional *(deesposobnyi)* in the last few years was the fact that United Russia had led it. "For that reason I decided to head its list."

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