



### PUTIN 3.0: ONE YEAR LATER—EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

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## Developed Putinism: Change without Development

Richard Sakwa, Canterbury

### Abstract

One of the key features of Putinism is its adaptability to changing circumstances, in part derived from sensitivity to shifts in the balance of power between the various factions. What was a strength has now become a vulnerability, since intra-systemic change is severely constrained in terms of both policy scope and societal depth. The limits on evolutionary potential are now evident by a growing inability to respond to the new challenges in creative and progressive ways.

### Neither Black Nor White But Grey

Putin's leadership remains the subject of intense and polarised debate. For many he remains the saviour of Russia. He presided over years of unprecedented growth, and even weathered the economic crisis from late 2008 with relatively little damage because of textbook macro-economic management. Improvements in health care and welfare policies, accompanied by family support, have ameliorated the predicted demographic crisis. In international affairs Putin is seen as having restored Russia's status as an independent player, defending its interests while avoiding becoming boxed into some sort of 'pariah' status. After a string of still-born integration efforts in its neighbourhood, moves towards the creation of the Eurasian Union by 2015 look finally like a viable supranational project. Russia has allied with China in defence of the traditional postulates of state sovereignty and non-interventionism, while avoiding becoming the junior partner in what is becoming an increasingly unequal relationship.

Putin's critics take a very different view. His most intransigent opponents consider him the conscious executioner of Russian democracy from the very beginning, offering instead only the form while gutting political life of the competitiveness, dynamism and pluralism that a great nation deserves. Economic growth and rising living standards, declining poverty, and national integration are ascribed to buying off the population and opponents with the windfall energy rents. These rents allowed corrupt and self-serving elites to consolidate their power, using the language and forms of democracy to suppress dissent and pluralistic contestation. Fraudulent elections have deprived the regime of the final vestiges of legitimacy. The chimera of post-Soviet integration is little more than a distraction from the very real challenges facing the long-term viability of a resource-based and undiversified economy. Anti-Western rhetoric acts as a substitute for a genuine forward-looking programme, while Russia's 'cockiness' on the world stage reflects not a defence of traditional norms of international politics but the self-serving interests of an illegitimate ruling class. Authoritarian consolidation at home,

from this perspective, is reflected in an aggressive and counter-productive foreign policy.

Neither of these views does justice to the complex reality. Putin has been able to respond to some of the very real challenges facing Russia in a relatively competent and coherent manner. Thus his critics who accuse the regime of failing to deliver the basics of effective governance are off the mark. Even the various forthcoming mega-projects, from the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 to the World Cup in 2018, however wasteful the construction costs, are something in which the country can take pride. Nothing is black and white about a governance system caught up in the whirlpools of policy conflicts over the most appropriate developmental path, the country's place in Eurasia and in energy markets, and in general the position that Russia should adopt in a world torn between conflicting geopolitical blocs and weakened institutions of international governance, notably the United Nations system. However, the adaptability of the regime and its ability to provide public goods in a reasonably efficient and cost effective manner is declining, and the country finds itself increasingly locked in stalemate.

### Stages of Putinism

Putin remains the dominant political figure in Russian politics, and thus talk of 'Putinism without Putin' is off the mark. However, neither he nor the country has stayed the same. Although there are profound continuities in Putin's leadership style, at least four different phases in his rule can be identified, coinciding with the classic cycle of leadership politics in general.

The first phase was of remedial politics. In March 2000 Putin won election in a hard-fought ballot, and quickly set upon stamping his vision of 'remedial' politics on Russia. Although Putin was careful not to attack Yeltsin personally, his politics was based on the idea that in the 1990s the Russian state lost the ability to manage affairs, the economy declined, and powerful special interests had emerged that threatened governance in its entirety. The era is presented as a new 'Time of Troubles' (*smutnoe vremya*), which takes an act of supreme concentration to overcome. The latent powers of the Rus-

sian state, eclipsed by powerful oligarchs and governors in the 1990s, were re-activated. However, the only effective carrier of these powers was not the new forces unleashed by Russia's capitalist revolution, notably liberal political parties, an independent business class or an active civil society representing the forces of democratic modernity, but the bedrock of the Soviet system, which had been overthrown with so much fanfare in 1991: the vast bureaucracy and the equally vast security apparatus (collectively known as the *siloviki*). From the first the Putin system was marked by the contrast between the declared goals of the administration, and the means by which its aspirations were implemented.

The turning point that inaugurated the second phase of Putinite politics, a period of regime consolidation marked by intensified constraints, was the assault against the Yukos oil company and the arrest of its head, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, on 25 October 2003. Two logics of modernity collided. Khodorkovsky came to represent a more liberal and open style of politics and economic governance. Although the creation and development of Yukos in the 1990s was accompanied by the shortcomings and sharp practices typical of that era, nevertheless in the early 2000s the company was transformed and presented itself as the modern corporation that Russia needed to become a developed and diversified economy. Unfortunately, this programme became a sort of crusade, which was perceived to threaten once again the prerogatives of the state. The response of the statist and *siloviki* was not long in coming. The regime destroyed not only a political opponent but also the oil company.

The gap between the regime and the state became increasingly apparent. The distinction between the two wings of the 'dual state', the administrative regime and the constitutional state, already apparent in the Yeltsin years became wider. Too often, when talking about strengthening the state, Putin in fact only reinforced the prerogative powers of the regime. So instead of consolidating the rule of law, the authority of constitutional institutions such as parliament and the formal procedures of modern governance, administrative practices predominated. Putin never repudiated the formal framework of the constitution, and indeed the core of his political identity is that he is serving the constitution, but the sphere of discretion (which exists in all political systems) became extraordinarily wide. This allowed the legal system to be subordinated to political authority and in certain cases (such as in the Yukos prosecutions) undermined the consolidation of independent courts and the rule of law in general. These two phases make up what we can call 'classical putinism', in which the historical development of the system remained open.

In the third phase, between 2008 and 2012, Russia was governed by the 'tandem' form of rule. Dmitry Medvedev was constrained by the terms of the deal, but from the first showed signs of political independence and advanced a distinctive programme of his own. From his condemnations of 'legal nihilism' to supporting what he called 'modernisation', including measures to ease the pressure on businesses, Medvedev shaped a policy that was not anti-Putinite but represented a modification of some of the key features of classic Putinism. As a lawyer by profession, Medvedev was above all concerned with re-asserting the independence of the judiciary as part of a broader programme of strengthening the constitutional state against the arbitrariness of the administrative regime. While it is now customary to mock Medvedev's ineffectual style, in fact he represented a form of evolutionary development that could have maintained the achievements of the remedial aspects of Putinism while pushing back against the excesses of the consolidation period.

Just as Putin had transcended what he considered the limitations of Yeltsin's rule, so Medvedev, without condemning Putin the man, reflected the potential of the system to evolve by strengthening the institutions of the constitutional state, while clipping the wings of the partisans of the administrative regime. This was an idealistic but realistic possibility, and gained the support of a growing band of adherents who had been at the heart of the creation of classic Putinism. In the end the option of intra-systemic reform was scuppered by the constraints of the tandem arrangements, which did not allow the reformist programme to take political form to challenge the power of the *siloviki* and other defenders of the administrative regime. The swelling counter-movement to Medvedev's liberalising aspirations was provoked in no small part by concerns over the perceived unlimited geopolitical ambitions of the West in the wake of interventions in Iraq and Libya and the precipitate demonization of Bashar al-Assad in Syria as the insurgency began there in spring 2011.

The fourth phase is what I call 'developed Putinism', by analogy with the 'developed socialism' proclaimed during the mature phase of the Brezhnev era in the 1970s. The differences between the four stages should not obscure the elements of continuity, just as there are some profound continuities between Yeltsin's regime of the 1990s and Putin's rule in the 2000s. Neither the Yeltsin nor Putinite systems of rule were autocracies, but both share elements of authoritarianism in the management of political processes. Both sought to manage competing demands, with pressure for political participation and social welfare, the fragmentation of post-Soviet Eurasia, and new security challenges at the international level.

## Developed Putinism

A single regime has perpetuated itself since 1991, with elections a secondary, legitimating, practice. Elections are not determinative of government, let alone of the regime. Elections do send a signal to the regime, and are thus not entirely nugatory. But the regime discredits its operative legitimating mechanisms, which becomes evident when there is a divergence between popular attitudes and electoral outcomes. Elections do not regulate social tensions but only exacerbate them, as was seen so vividly in the protest movement from December 2011.

As the dust from the succession crisis settled, the system of developed Putinism found new forms of political management. Four strategies were central: to coerce, constrain, co-opt and convince. Selective coercion was applied against leading figures in the opposition, notably in the persecution of those allegedly involved in the Bolotnaya Square disturbances of 6 May 2012 and the trial of Alexei Navalny. Constraints were imposed on non-official political engagement, with hefty fines imposed for infringements of regulations concerning demonstrations. There were also constraints imposed on the regime's elites, including their rights to hold shares and accounts abroad. The main co-optation mechanism is through the Popular Front. As for convincing, this comes through a range of ideological initiatives, including an accentuated anti-Westernism, closer links with the Orthodox Church, and the espousal of conservative cultural and family values.

Nevertheless, the opposition movement will live on. Suppression can only be an 'emergency' procedure, however long it may last. A systemic crisis occurs when the channels for systemic renewal become blocked. The various disciplinary techniques imposed upon Just Russia are a sign of a system in which control exceeds the ability to incorporate ideas for the perpetuation of the system itself. Medvedevism was always immanent in classical Putinism, but late Putinism suppresses the potential of this tendency. As the system of developed Putinism

becomes consolidated the scope for regime reconfiguration is evident, for example in the creation of the Popular Front, the decline of United Russia, the 'nationalisation of the elites', and reideologisation to accompany continuing strategies of depoliticisation. This only accentuates the difference between 'classic Putinism' and its developed variant. If the earlier version sought to reshape the classic instruments of democratic political representation, such as parties and parliament, the developed model is no longer satisfied simply with colonisation but experiments with more corporatist and populist instruments, as part of its broader reorientation towards a more nativist stance.

## Conclusion

The Putinite system has become locked in a stalemate. Putin created a loyal pro-regime party (United Russia) that dominated parliament, but attempts to find new ways to manage political life when the old instruments have become discredited only reveals the limited range of options available within the narrow confines of developed Putinism. Medvedevism has become marginalised, at the cost of eroding political pluralism and the quality of governance overall. Political opposition as a political practice has been contained, but this allows only a bureaucratic managerial style to predominate. In the absence of an open public sphere and accessible mass media, corruption proliferates. The erosion of open politics forces conflicts to turn inwards and encourages the further growth of intra-regime factionalism. The stalemate in Russia will only be transcended by a broadening of the political options available to the administration. This could inaugurate a fifth and more pluralistic phase—Putin without Putinism; although this would entail dismantling the Putinite system from within. To achieve this, sustained pressure from democratic movements would be required accompanied by the reactivation of the constitutional state. The alternative is revolution and collapse.

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## Vladimir Putin's Civilizational Turn

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### Abstract

Vladimir Putin's arrival to power was accompanied by the new rhetoric of Russia as a distinct system of cultural values or civilization. Although the new civilizational discourse has not replaced that of globalization and national interests, it is increasingly deployed to shape and frame Russia's domestic and international priorities. Historically subject to Western and Islamic influences, Russia now seeks to position itself as a power capable of synthesizing these influences and assisting the world in managing global cultural diversity.

### The Rise of Civilizational Discourse

In the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, the mainstream language was that of adjustment to the international community and protecting national interests. The vision of Russia as a civilization in the world of competitive cultural visions was advocated only by conservative critics of the Kremlin from communists to neo-Eurasianists and imperial nationalists.

In 2008, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov became the first official to argue that "competition is becoming truly global and acquiring a civilizational dimension; that is, the subject of competition now includes values and development models." Since his election campaign, Vladimir Putin too has adopted the discourse of Russia's distinctiveness and national values even though throughout the 2000s, he was commonly dismissive of calls for a "Russian idea" by instead filling his speeches with indicators of Russia's economic and political successes. In his 2007 address to the Federation Council, Putin even ridiculed searches for a national idea as a Russian "old-style entertainment" (*starinnaya russkaya zabava*) by comparing them to searches for a meaning of life. By contrast, in his 2012 address to Russia's parliament, Putin's spoke of new demographic and moral threats that must be overcome if the nation is to "preserve and reproduce itself." He further stated that "In the 21st century amid a new balance of economic, civilizational and military forces Russia must be a sovereign and influential country... We must be and remain Russia."

The new civilizational language of the Kremlin prompted some observers to speculate that Russia is turning in an anti-Western and hardline nationalist direction. In support of the view, they point to Russia's opposition to the West's international policies, including those on the missile defense system and the Middle East's stabilization, as well the Kremlin's visibly hardened stance on non-governmental organizations and political protesters at home, as signs of Russia's hardline nationalism. Such interpretation of Russia's civilizational turn is premature because the Kremlin is yet to deviate from the standard line of preserving strong relations with Europe and the United States in a global

world. Importantly, the recent Foreign Policy Concept signed by Putin into law in February 2013 describes the world in terms of "rivalry of values and development models within the framework of the universal principles of democracy and the market economy."

To further understand the meaning of the new civilizational language, let us examine the context in which it has risen to prominence.

### The Three Contexts of Russia's Civilizational Turn

Russia's new turn to the language of a locally distinct civilization should be explained by several inter-related global, regional, and domestic developments. Globally, Russia confronts the ongoing efforts by the United States to spread democratization across the world and present Western values as superior to those of the rest of the world. The Kremlin increasingly views the language of democracy and human rights as a form of cultural pressure from those who seek to justify the legitimacy of hegemonic and military actions toward others from the former-Yugoslavia to Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Russia supported the United States in its war with terrorism after 9/11 but advocated a measured response within the United Nations' jurisdiction. The Kremlin supported the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan but not in Iraq. Instead of engaging moderate Muslims, U.S. policies tended to isolate them, which played into the hands of Islamic radicals.

Regionally, Russia is threatened by the fear of radical and militant Islam. Russian analysts and politicians often speak of special relations with Muslims but differentiate between moderate and radical Islamists. Putin on numerous occasions expressed his respect for traditional Islam as integral to Russia's religious, cultural and social fabric by separating such Islam from "all forms of religious intolerance and extremism." In the post-9/11 context, the latter are frequently strengthened by the West's tendency to use force for solving regional crises, rather than engaging moderate Muslims. From Russia's point of view, what began as a counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan with relatively broad international

support turned into a “war of civilizations,” or a U.S. crusade against Muslims. As a result, the Westernist and radical Islamist trends collided and spread violence and instability across the world. This explains Russia’s fear of regime change in the Middle East from Egypt to Syria, which the Kremlin sees as the recipe for radicalizing global Islam.

The global and regional trends are reinforced at home. The growing influence of Islamist ideologies, rising immigration from Muslim-dominated former Soviet republics and desolation in the North Caucasus have created a dangerous environment. Previously contained in Chechnya, Islamist terrorism has spread to Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. For Russia—a country with 20 million to 25 million Muslims—supporting the West in its “war of civilizations” would mean inviting fire into its own home. Russia has traditionally addressed the issue of ethnic/religious diversity by introducing a trans-national idea, or an idea with a cross-cultural appeal. Initially, this was the Eastern Christian idea that provided various Slavic tribes with social unity and justice. At a later stage of the Russian empire’s existence, Russians had to learn to coexist with Islam and supported those Muslim authorities who were willing to submit to the empire’s general directions. Under the Soviet system, the state sought to further integrate Muslim communities by introducing the secular communist ideology as a new trans-national idea. However, the collapse of the Soviet state ended the appeal of the communist trans-national idea and created a vacuum of values. Following the 1991 dissolution, Russians have lacked an idea of unity and justice, as well as the state capacity to enforce unified rules across the nation.

Throughout the 2000s, the state unity was further threatened—in part due to Russia’s economic success relative to some of its neighbors—by the uncontrolled flow of migrants of non-Slavic nationalities. Multiple inter-ethnic riots have taken place, and Russians have developed a strong resentment toward immigrants from Central Asia, Caucasus, and China. A particularly strong expression of tensions between ethnic Russians and non-Russians from the Caucasus was the riot of 5,000 Russian nationalists and football fans on Manezh Square, Moscow on December 11, 2010 against the release of five men from Northern Caucasus, from police custody, suspected of murdering Russian football fan Yegor Sviridov. As the government was failing to integrate labor immigrants, nationalist politicians advocated imposing tight restrictions on immigration. While some of them argued for re-unification of ethnic Russians, another, a more isolationist group that included the blogger Alexei Navalny emerged to challenge both the Kremlin and the

imperial nationalists. The group members were often supportive of tighter restrictions on immigration, but they were especially critical of the Kremlin’s subsidies for the republics of Northern Caucasus, which they linked to crime, corruption, and disorder in the country. At the end of 2011, the nationalist-isolationist organizations joined the wave of public protests against falsified elections to the Duma and became regular critics of the government’s policies as non-democratic and disrespectful of demands by ethnic Russians.

In this context Putin articulated the idea of state-civilization by recognizing ethnic Russians as “the core (*sterzhen*)” that binds the fabric” of Russia as a culture and a state. Although some analysts saw the idea as paving the way for Russian nationalism, Putin also argued against “attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian ‘national’, mono-ethnic state” as “contrary to our entire thousand-year history” and expressed concern with state ineffectiveness, “corruption”, and “flaws of the law enforcement system” as the root causes of ethnic violence. Along these lines, the new official nationalities strategy until 2025 signed by Putin in December 2012 re-introduced Russia as a “unique socio-cultural civilizational entity formed of the multi-people Russian nation” and, under pressures of Muslim constituencies, removed the reference to ethnic Russians as the core of the state.

### **A Future Direction: a Fortress or a Bridge?**

The new civilizational discourse has the potential to serve as a blueprint for foreign policy. Its support groups abroad may include those who gravitate to Russia due to a common historical experience, rather than merely ethnic bonds. The new motivation behind Russia’s actions abroad is to rebuild relationships in post-Soviet Eurasia by using what Putin once referred to as “the historical credits of trust and friendship.” In the summer of 2012, he instructed Russia’s ambassadors to be more active in influencing international relations by relying on tools of lobbyism and soft power. In response to those critical of the government for lacking a “civilizational mission” or an “image of a future”, the Kremlin proposed to build the Eurasian Union as a new cross-ethnic community with an eye on the European Union, on the one hand, and China, on the other. In addition to considerations of economic development and balance of power, Russia’s emphasis on building the Eurasian Union, resistance to Western interventions in the Middle East, or turn to Asia-Pacific region are likely to be shaped by the new vision of Russia as a state-civilization.

Is Russia hardening as an anti-Western and nationalist power or does it merely seek to contribute to the management of global cultural diversity? So far, most

evidence points in the direction of the latter, rather than the former. In the absence of additional powerful pressures from abroad, Russia is likely to stay the course by trying to manage external and internal cultural diversity and positioning itself as a voice in favor of tolerance and dialogue.

At the same time, Russia's civilizational turn is far from complete and will be further shaped by the above-identified factors. The cumulative influence of Western pressures and a growing instability in the Middle East may push the Kremlin in the more isolationist and nationalist direction. The civilizational identity of a global cultural bridge may then yield to that of a fortress. Actions by outside powers, especially the Western ones, are of a legitimizing nature. A nation must act in a particular context and with an eye to whether its policies generate support or criticism abroad. If outside developments provide the sought external support, the Kremlin is less likely to engage in anti-Western rhetoric/actions and its civilizational claims are less likely to obtain the nationalist overtones, all others being equal. Alternatively, if Russia's claims to its interests and values are denied, the Kremlin is more likely to act and speak in a confrontational manner thereby inviting Russia–West relations to reach a degree of cultural hostility. For instance, should destabilization in the Middle East spread to Iran and Afghanistan, it will threaten to seriously undermine

Central Asia and Russia's Northern Caucasus, thereby strengthening the traditionally nationalist defense and security establishment inside the country. Actions by the West is another factor. The policy of leveraging human rights in Russia, as demonstrated by the Magnitsky Act crisis, is not going to bring any short-term dividends to the Western side and has a strong potential to derail the relationship further. If European countries adopt their own versions of the Magnitsky Act or if President Barak Obama agrees to expand the Magnitsky list to include senior Russian officials, the crisis in relations with Russia has the potential to escalate into a greater confrontation.

Russia's domestic confidence is another important factor to consider. Russia remains domestically vulnerable to potential spikes of ethno-nationalism and economic instability. In the context of its external vulnerability, factors such as a strong economic performance or other successes at home and abroad may serve to encourage the regime to be receptive to advice from hardline civilizationists. Even when the regime's domestic legitimacy is in decline, it may still resort to the discourse of civilization to compensate for political weakness. Western criticisms will then be viewed as validating Russia's claims to its distinctiveness and cultural self-standing (*samobytnost'*) thereby empowering more nationalist voices within the civilizational milieu.

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## The Impact of Party Primaries and the All-Russian Popular Front on the Composition of United Russia's Majority in the Sixth Duma

Paul Chaisty, Oxford

### Abstract

Duma scandals involving members of United Russia—notably the Vladimir Pekhtin affair—have further undermined the credibility of Russia's parliamentary elite over the last year. This is despite measures that were taken before the 2011 parliamentary elections to clean up the ruling party: party primaries and the creation of the All-Russian Popular Front. This article examines the impact of these initiatives on the composition of United Russia's parliamentary majority, and it considers the problems that will face attempts by party leaders to improve its image.

### Introduction

Since the early 2000s, the centre of legislative decision making has moved to the ruling parliamentary organs of United Russia, and successful legislative initiatives by opposition parties and rank-and-file members rely to a large extent on the support of the party of power. Although the reduction in the size of United Russia's majority to just twelve seats has weakened this dominance in a number of respects—not least within parliamentary committees—the party retains the upper hand in legislative decision-making.

But, to what extent did the 2011 election change the characteristics of United Russia's majority in the lower house? This article presents data on the new United Russia majority and considers whether efforts by the Kremlin to revive the party's appeal—through measures such as the holding of party primaries and the inclusion of social activists in candidate selection (in the form of the All Russian Popular Front)—have introduced a new cohort of deputies into the lower house. It will also discuss whether these new members are likely to revive the party's image.

### Selecting Candidates for 2011

By recent Russia standards, 2011 was a bad year for United Russia. According to most pollsters, the party's support fell during that year and it struggled to shake off its association with privilege and corruption. This negative connotation was captured to damaging effect by opposition blogger Alexey Navalny's moniker of the party of "crooks and thieves", and party managers took several measures to revive United Russia's appeal. Over the course of 2011, the party sought the cooptation of social activists through the formation of a coalition of public organisations—the All Russian Popular Front—which had the power to select candidates for the party, and internal party primaries were used on a scale far greater than in previous elections. Both measures were aimed at attracting new people to United Russia.

The process of selecting candidates for the new Duma began in earnest in the summer of 2011. Primaries had been used by United Russia in the 2007 parliamentary contest, but they did not become part of the party's statute until 2009, when the XI Party Congress ruled that internal party voting could be used to select candidates. The formation of the All-Russian Popular Front in May 2011 added a further dimension to the process of candidate selection. Half of the 200, 000 or so individuals who were chosen to vote in the primaries—in rather unclear circumstances—were representatives of organisations that comprised the All-Russian Popular Front. Vladimir Putin also announced that one-third of all candidates included in the final list would be members of the Front (see *gazeta.ru*, September 5, 2011), even if they had not previously been members of the party. As the leader of United Russia at that time, Putin was responsible for compiling the final list of candidates that was submitted to party's Congress in September 2011.

Over 4700 candidates participated in the primary process (see *lenta.ru*, July 27, 2011). This number included a large number of independents and representatives of public organisations, and this fact was heralded by the party leadership as an important step towards the creation of a more representative party elite. Speaking to an inter-regional conference in North Western Russia in September, Putin called for the renewal of more than half of the membership of United Russia's parliamentary faction, and announced that the party's list would include representatives of many different professional and social groups: "doctors, teachers, engineers, workers, farmers, military personnel and entrepreneurs, pensioners and the young" (see *obshchaya gazeta.ru*, September 5, 2011).

The primary process drew supportive commentary from some unlikely quarters. While acknowledging their shortcomings, the analysts Nikolai Petrov and Boris Makarenko—both known for their critical reporting of the authorities—argued that the primaries were an

improvement on previous practice and had the potential to weaken the power of regional governors over candidate selection (see *Kommersant*, August 15, 2011; *Moscow Times*, August 16, 2011). However the primary process was also flawed in many respects and drew sharp criticism from other commentators. Despite the party's stated aim to increase intra-party democracy, attention was drawn to the lack of openness and genuine discussion during the primaries (see *lenta.ru*, July 27, 2011). This led to a number of high-profile scandals. The former governor and Duma deputy Alexei Lebed questioned the transparency of the process and refused to take part (see *Moscow Times*, September 5, 2011), and there were other examples of politicians who declined the opportunity to participate. Moreover, analysis at the time suggested that the results of the primaries were not decisive in terms of the drafting of the final party list. The newspaper *Izvestiya* conducted an analysis of the candidates selected for the final list and found large inconsistencies with the results of the primaries (*Izvestiya*, September 25, 2011). According to the newspaper, of the 80 regions analysed the final list matched the results of United Russia's primaries in only eight cases. They uncovered particularly large discrepancies in Permskii Krai, Primor'ye and Stavropol. For instance, in the case of the Permskii Krai, the researchers found that just one of the top ten candidates from the party's primaries was included in the final regional party list. Rather, it seems that key decisions over the final party lists were not taken until the eve of the party's Congress in September, and the protracted deliberations did not make for more consistent reasoning when it came to the exclusion or inclusion of candidates. In terms of increasing the number of Popular Front candidates, the results of the process were ambiguous. In some cases the final decision benefitted Front candidates, in others it worked against them.

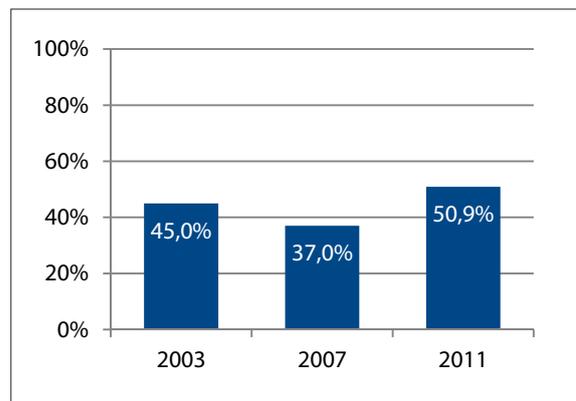
Therefore to what extent did the widespread use of primaries and the inclusion of the Popular Front transform the parliamentary party cadre? Has the composition of United Russia changed in significant ways from previous parliaments?

### The New Duma

The December elections did result in the election of a large number of candidates from the All-Russian Popular Front. Consistent with Putin's declared aim before the December ballot to select one-third of the party's candidates from the Front, eighty deputies were chosen via this route. Yet, data compiled from the biographies of United Russia deputies in the Fourth (2003–07), Fifth (2007–11) and current Dumas suggest that the representativeness of United Russia's parliamentary party has not been radically transformed.

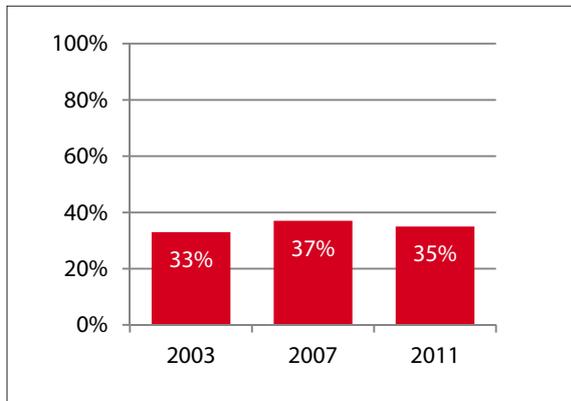
Despite Putin's pledge that there would be a significant turnover of parliamentary personnel, the proportion of returning deputies actually increased in December's 2011 elections (see Figure 1). Around half of the United Russia members who took up seats in December 2011 had served in a previous parliament; this compares with around one-third in the previous Duma. While a number of long-serving and influential deputies like Pavel Medvedev and Valerii Draganov were denied places in the final list in rather controversial circumstances during the primary process, many familiar faces returned. Influential economic lobbyists from previous parliaments like Valerii Yazev (the energy sector), Vladislav Reznik (finance) and Gennadi Kulik (agriculture) all held on to their seats. Furthermore, the primary process enabled a number of established Duma deputies to gain seats in other regions. This led to criticism from local social activists that the primary process actually benefitted party insiders (see *politcom.ru*, August 15, 2011).

Figure 1: Percentage of United Russia Deputies Who Served in Previous Parliaments, Fourth–Sixth Dumas



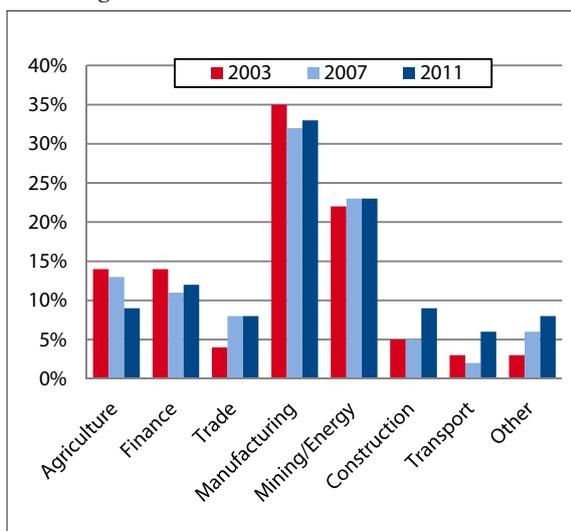
Nor has the new parliament significantly changed in terms of the professional characteristics of those deputies who make up the parliamentary majority. The proportion of deputies who held senior business careers before their election to parliament, or held a leading position in a trade or business association remains broadly consistent with previous Dumas (see Figure 2 overleaf). In the last three Dumas, around one-third of United Russia deputies have entered the parliament from business backgrounds. Moreover, notwithstanding the public campaign to rid the party of its association with wealth and privilege, the 2011 election contest continued to reveal the party's financial reliance on private business candidates. During the contest it was widely reported that business candidates were expected to fund regional campaigns to the cost of five million Euros (see *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, October 4, 2011).

Figure 2: Percentage of United Russia Deputies with Business Backgrounds, Fourth–Sixth Dumas



The sectoral ties of business candidates are consistent with previous parliaments, too. Of all the deputies with business ties, the manufacturing and energy/mining sectors continue to supply the largest proportion of candidates from the business world. Other patterns of sectoral representation are also consistent with what was observed in earlier parliaments (see Figure 3). The proportion of candidates with backgrounds in agriculture continues to fall, and there are increasing numbers of deputies with ties to the construction and retail sectors. This pattern reflects the changing nature of Russia’s political economy over the last decade.

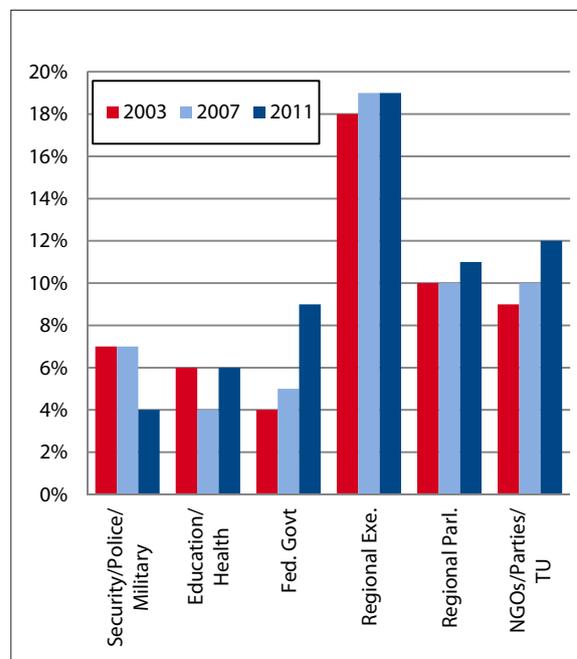
Figure 3: The Sectoral Ties of Duma Deputies from Business Backgrounds, Fourth–Sixth Dumas



Equally revealing are data on the representation of non-business professions. Efforts to revitalise United Russia ahead of the parliamentary contest were primarily aimed at co-opting deputies from professions with

a good standing in local communities, notably teachers and doctors. This was evident in the final party list, where the proportion of educational and healthcare professionals in the top three hundred candidates increased significantly. However, many of these candidates did not make it into the parliament. As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of deputies who were finally elected from these professions was in fact consistent with previous parliaments. There was however a fall in the proportion of deputies from military/security and law enforcement backgrounds, and the December 2011 elections did produce a significant increase in the number of candidates from social organisations. The latter development is consistent with the involvement of the All-Russian Popular Front in the process of candidate selection. Nevertheless, these data also show that the main recruiting ground for United Russia deputies remains regional government, and in particular executive organs at the local level. This fact continues to highlight the importance of the regional elite within the political coalition that supports the rule of Vladimir Putin. The increase in the proportion of deputies from federal government also highlights the need to accommodate particular bureaucratic elites.

Figure 4: Non-Business Occupational Backgrounds of Deputies, Fourth–Sixth Dumas



Therefore, the composition of United Russia’s new majority does not differ profoundly from that of previous parliaments. It appears that efforts to renew the party have not significantly changed the characteristics

of its Duma members. But is the same also true of those eighty members of the party who were elected with the backing of the All-Russian Popular Front?

### The All-Russian Popular Front: An Alternative to United Russia?

The involvement of the Popular Front has brought new people into parliament. As Figure 5 shows, a lower proportion of returning deputies was backed by the Popular Front. However, a number of well-known Front candidates had served in previous parliaments, too. This number includes such senior United Russia figures as Andrei Isaev, first deputy secretary of the presiding body of United Russia's General Council, and Vladimir Pliugin, General Council member, co-ordinator of the party's liberal platform, and Duma committee chairman. The Front also provided a way of co-opting senior politicians from other parties into United Russia. This is best illustrated by the inclusion of Aleksandr Babakov, one of the founders of the Just Russia party.

Figure 5: Parliamentary and Business Experience of United Russia Deputies at the Sixth Duma

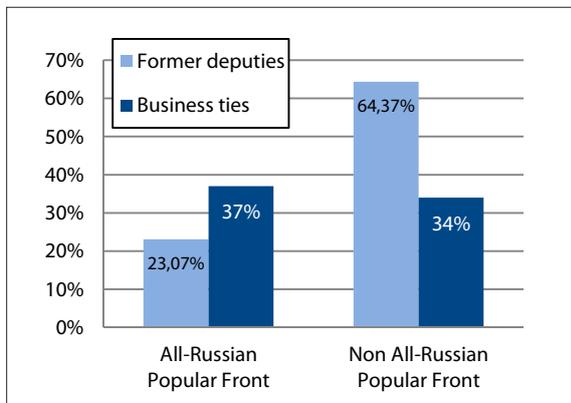
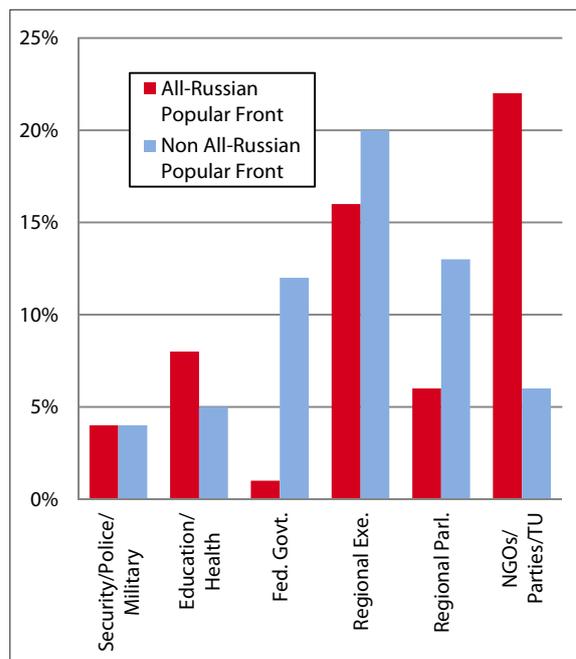


Figure 5 also shows that the involvement of the Popular Front in the process of candidate selection did little to reduce the number of business candidates. In fact, the proportion of candidates from a business background is slightly greater for Front deputies. The cohort of business candidates selected by the Popular Front includes individuals like Aleksandr Il'tyakov, the owner of a large meat processing empire who was selected to head the United Russia list in Kurgan oblast; Nadezhda Shkolnikina, a former head of the Council for the Development of the Tobacco Industry, a lobbying organisation that represents the interests of tobacco corporations (see *Novaya gazeta*, April 22, 2009); and Mikhail Slipenchuk, who is estimated to be one of Russia's wealthiest businessmen (see *Finans*, 14–20 February, 2011).

At the same time there was a notable increase in deputies from social organisations amongst Front candidates, and the number of deputies from health and educational backgrounds was greater than it was for those candidates who were not selected by the Front (see Figure 6). The Front's involvement in candidate selection resulted in the election of deputies with ties to organisations representing youth and pensioner groups, the disabled, trade unions and popular local pressure groups. There were also fewer Front candidates with backgrounds in governmental institutions at the federal and regional level. In this respect, the Front achieved some progress in extending United Russia's representation beyond those key elite groups that were integral to the party's foundation in the early 2000s.

Figure 6: Non-Business Backgrounds of United Russia Deputies at the Sixth Duma



### Whither the Popular Front?

The cooptation of social activists by the party of power did prove advantageous for Vladimir Putin in the run up to the presidential election. The Popular Front was effective at mobilising support for pro-Putin rallies that were held in early 2012. These rallies were organised to counter opposition protests that grew after the December elections. However, the Front has not transformed the parliamentary majority in the ways that were originally stated. This is largely because powerful regional and financial elites continue to crowd out other social forces; a situation that will be difficult to change. Since its inception, United Russia has provided a mechanism

for galvanising elite regional support for the regime, and this constituency remains vitally important for the Kremlin; the December parliamentary elections also highlighted the continued reliance of the party on fund-

ing from big business. These factors will present a significant obstacle to plans by United Russia's new leader Dmitry Medvedev to radically transform the party and its membership.

#### *About the Author*

Paul Chaisty is the University Lecturer in Russian Government at St Antony's College, Oxford University. His publications include *Legislative Politics and Economic Power in Russia* (Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2006), as well as articles in journals such as *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Government and Opposition*, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Party Politics*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*. He is currently researching the phenomenon of coalitional presidentialism in the former Soviet Union, Africa and Latin America.

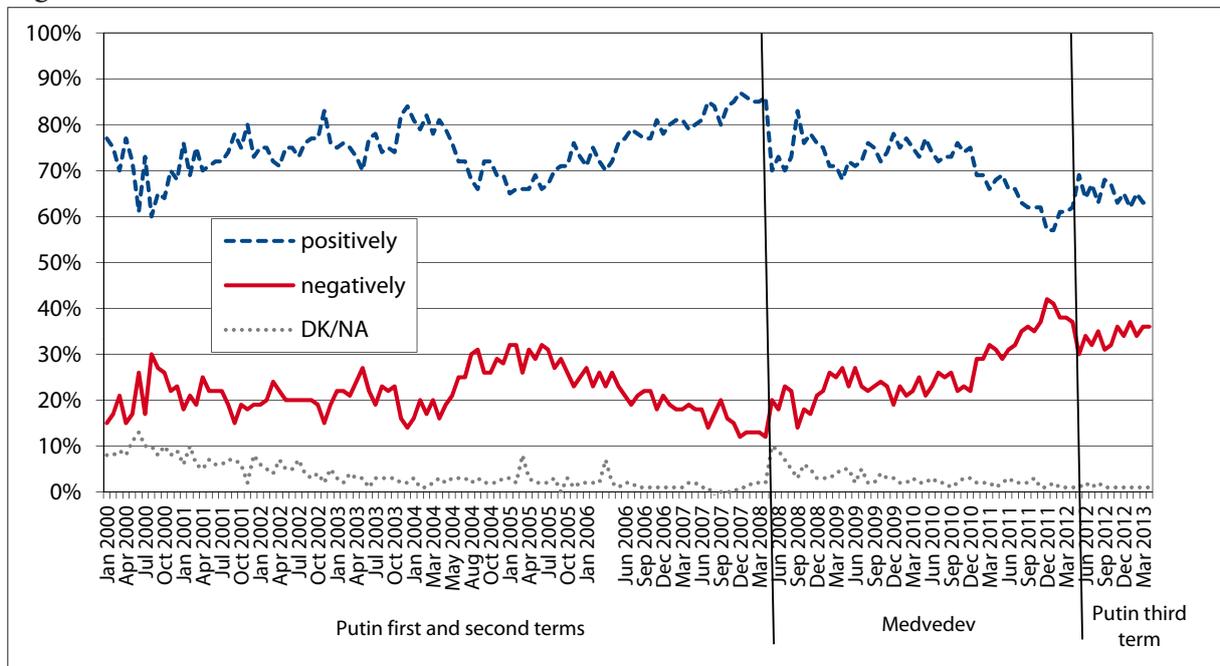
#### *Recommended Readings*

- Paul Chaisty (2013), 'The Preponderance and Effects of Sectoral Ties in the State Duma', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:4
- Paul Chaisty (2012) 'Business Representation in the State Duma', in Lena Jonson and Stephen White, (eds.) *Waiting For Reform Under Putin and Medvedev* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

## OPINION POLL

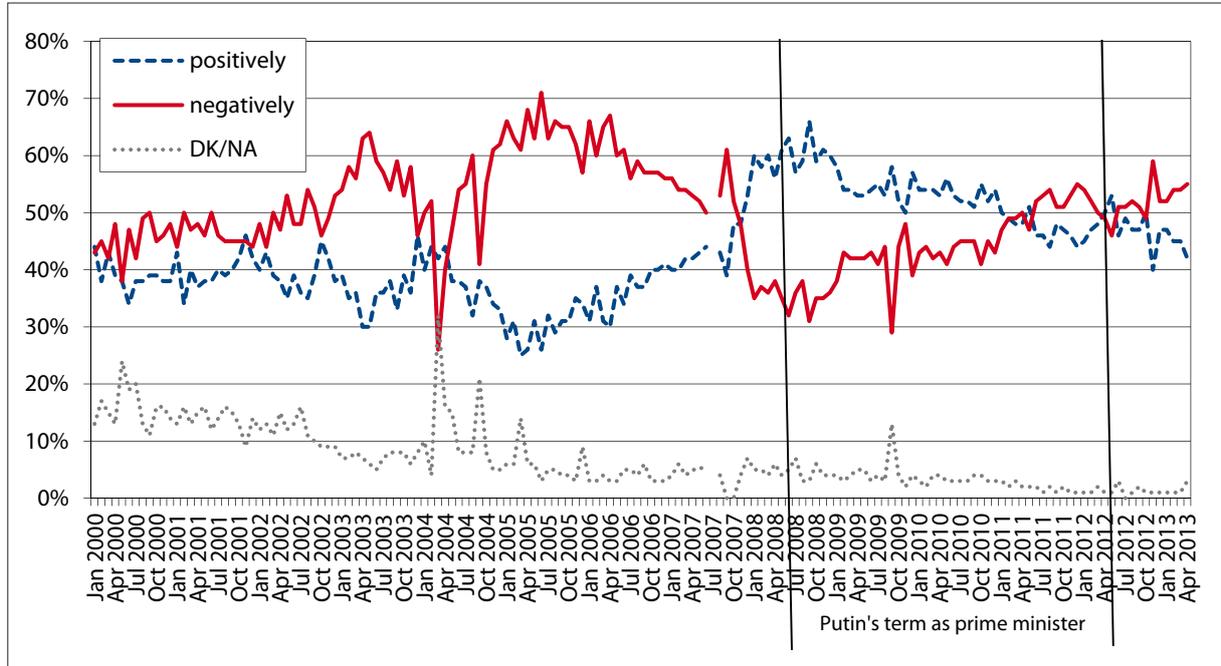
### Ratings of President and Government and Trust in Politicians 2000–2013

Figure 1: How Do You Rate the Work of Putin and Medvedev as Russian President?



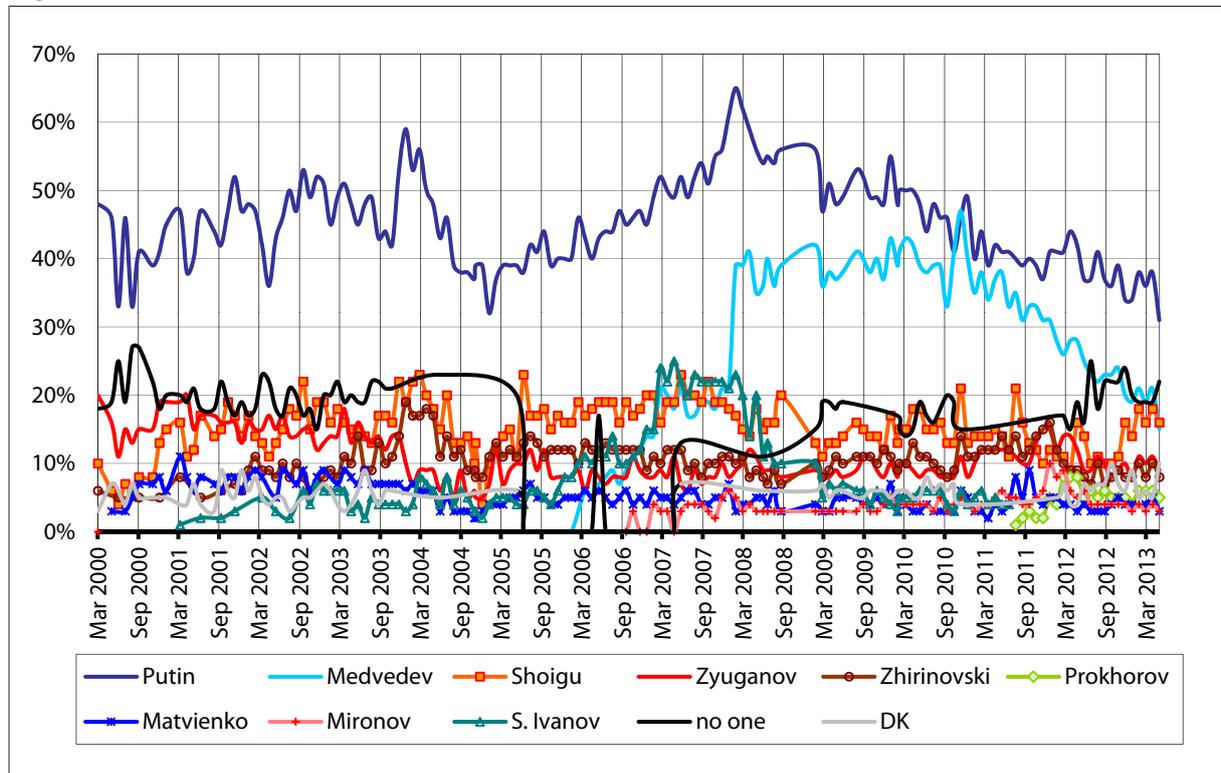
Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center January 2000 – April 2013, [www.levada.ru](http://www.levada.ru)

Figure 2: How Do You Rate the Work of the Russian Government?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center January 2000 – April 2013, [www.levada.ru](http://www.levada.ru)

Figure 3: Which Politician Do You Trust?



Source: representative opinion polls by Levada Center March 2000 – April 2013, [www.levada.ru](http://www.levada.ru)

## ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ANALYTICAL DIGEST

Editors: Stephen Aris, Matthias Neumann, Robert Ortting, Jeronim Perović, Heiko Pleines, Hans-Henning Schröder, Aglaya Snetkov

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](http://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de)), the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), the Resource Security Institute, the Institute of History at the University of Zurich (<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/>) and the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at The George Washington University. It is supported by the German Association for East European Studies (DGO). The Digest draws on contributions to the German-language Russland-Analysen ([www.laender-analysen.de/russland](http://www.laender-analysen.de/russland)), the CSS analytical network on Russia and Eurasia ([www.css.ethz.ch/rad](http://www.css.ethz.ch/rad)), 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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