Political Institutions of Russia

Navya Voleti
Nabilah Kamal
Sao Mir
Aqeel Mohamed
Do Now

What is a political institution? Give some examples of political institutions from the countries that we have previously studied.

"Political institutions are organizations which create, enforce, and apply laws; that mediate conflict; make (governmental) policy on the economy and social systems; and otherwise provide representation for the populous. Examples of such political institutions include political parties, trade unions, and the (legal) courts. The term 'Political Institutions' may also refer to the recognized structure of rules and principles within which the above organizations operate, including such concepts as the right to vote, responsible government, and accountability."
Political Institutions of Russia (background)

- highly authoritarian regime
- federal government structure
  - 89 regions
  - 21 are ethnically non-Russian by majority
  - Most of these regions are called republics because under Yeltsin, the government was not strong, so many ruled themselves almost independently
  - Asymmetric Federalism
    - some regions are much stronger than others; power is devolved unequally across the country
Putin "cracked down on regional autonomy"

- Creation of super-districts
  - 7 federal districts created that was headed by a presidential appointee, how supervises the local authorities
- Removal of governors who do not subject the local law to the national constitution
- Instead of direct elections, governors were nominated then chosen by regional legislatures
- Elimination of SMDP seats in the Duma.
  - changed to purely proportional representation
"That one I stuffed myself!..."
Linkage institutions

What are they?

● groups that link citizens to government
  ○ ex) political parties

● Russian political parties were highly unstable in the 90s
  ○ Media has come under government control even more
  ○ Private organizations are weak
Federal Assembly: Russia's bicameral parliament
Upper House (The Federation Council): 178 seats
General information of Russia's Bicameral Parliament (Federal Assembly- The Duma)

Lower House (The Duma): 450 seats, all selected by proportional representation (four-year terms)

- The Duma is the lower house of the legislature created by the Constitution of 1993 in efforts to balance power between the president and legislature as well as reconstruct the country's power base.
- The Duma has existed under the tsars of the late 19th century, namely Nicholas the II.
General information of Russia's Bicameral Parliament (Federal Assembly- The Duma)

- The Duma can pass bills, approve the budget, and confirm the president's political appointments.
- The Duma only needs a two-thirds vote to pass a law, regardless of a Federal Council or presidential opposition.
- These powers are very limited since the president may rule by decree/the president's party is the majority party, and the Duma's attempts to reject prime ministers have failed.
- If the Duma rejects a presidential prime minister appointment up to three consecutive times, the Duma may be dissolved.
- Duma can call a vote of no confidence on prime minister and his government.
The Upper House (The Federation Council): 178 members (two members from each of the 89 federal administrative units) to represent regions, not population as it is (four-year terms)

- (Since 2002) One member is selected by the governor of each region and another by the regional legislature.
- Has the power to delay legislation (however even if the Federal Council rejects legislation, the Duma may override the council with a two-thirds vote), change boundaries among the republics, ratify the use of armed forces outside the country (declare war/an invasion), and appoints and removes judges.
  - though the council has these powers, they have yet to be put in use.
  - the Federation Council has little to no power; the Federation merely confirms the president's judicial choices.
How much influence does Putin have over the Duma?

- Putin has a pretty tight grasp over the Duma: his party (United Russia) has the most seats.
- Regardless of the power Putin has over the Duma, the Duma still has some power in drafting legislation.
  - The Duma debates bills that must pass the deputies' votes before they become laws.
- Under the Yeltsin administration, the majority of the legislation originated in the Duma. Under Putin, that power generally resided/resides under himself and whoever is prime minister/president.
Distribution of seats in Russia’s new State Duma

Preliminary data of the distribution of seats in the lower house of parliament.
How is the rule of law used in Russia?

- The Russian government operates under a guise of cacophony.
- Putin accuses other groups of committing the same crimes he commits and avoids persecution in the confusion.
- In Russia the conviction rate is 99.7% (Trials aren't really trials).
- "But there is not enough law with a capital L in Russia. There is not, for the most part, a legal culture."
- Medvedev has been quoted saying
Next question...

Mr Prime Minister... you have hinted that you may run for president in 2012...

If you run and win... your time ruling Russia would extend to 24 years!!

All that power in one man... is that healthy for Russian democracy?

That is an arresting question

Thank you

Yes, sir?

Arrest that man

Kevin KAL Kallaugher, The Economist, September 9, 2010
How powerful is the Constitutional Court in Russia?

Formed under Gorbachev's reforms in the late Soviet Union. 19 members, confirmed by president and federal council. Power of abstract and concrete review.

Putin Administration: "dictatorship of law"
Medvedev "legal nihilism"

2008: Moved to St.Petersburg
What are oligarchs?

- **Oligarch**: A very rich businessman with a great deal of political influence
  - Power in an oligarchy rests in the hands of a small group of people
- In Russia, the oligarchs can be defined loosely as an interest group because they have been a major influence on the policymaking process during the years of the Russian Federation
What is the power of oligarchs in Russia?

- Only members of the Communist Party were allowed to vote or hold office in the Soviet Union.
- Privately owned Russia-based multinational corporations, including producers of petroleum, natural gas, and metal, have, in the view of some analysts, become oligarchs after the downfall of the Soviet Union.
- Power of oligarchs greatly decreased under Putin.
The power of oligarchs in Russia

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r40K73mrmDg

up to 1:00
Boris Berezovsky

- One of the best-known oligarchs
- In 1997, he admitted that he and 6 others controlled over half of the Russian GNP.
- Had holdings in the oil industry and in media
  - Used the media to insure Yeltsin's reelection
- Putin was not a big fan of oligarchs
  - Berezovsky ended up in exile, and any other oligarchs that looked for power were put down, and Putin was left in charge, with the power
Roustam Tariko

- one of Russia's most successful businessmen
- creator of Russian Standard Vodka
- Owner of Russian Standard Bank,
- rare case of an oligarch in that he did not get rich by capturing state assets during privatization, but created his empire completely from scratch.
References

- http://africanhistory.about.com/od/glossaryp/g/def-Political-Institutions.htm
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16276956
- Cases in Comparative Politics (Third edition) Fields, O'Neil, Share. (pgs 263-264)
- AP Comparative and Politics, Ethel Wood.