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Hegemonic, Dominant or Party of Power?

Parties in semi-authoritarian regimes

Categorizing United Russia

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Introduction

How should we classify parties in authoritarian regimes? In democracies, researchers base their classification on two indicators: the size of the parties and the amount of parties. However, in electoral-authoritarian¹ regimes these indicators do not give all the information needed to classify the party system. The party systems depend on the type of parties the regime has. About these party types a lot of confusion exists. It seems that classifying a party is not that straightforward. In the scholarly literature the terms dominant party, hegemonic party and party of power are all used to categorize United Russia. In order to clarify this phenomenon this thesis will focus on the question how do these different concepts of political parties differ and how does United Russia fit into this?

The party types differ in their influence, bargaining power and their creation. Next to the hegemonic party, dominant party and party of power, some scholars also use the concept of cartel party to classify United Russia. Therefore this thesis will briefly take this party type into account. The dominant party has more influence on legislation than the party of power has, and is not created by executive forces. The party of power has no influence of its own and is the extending organ of the executive force. The hegemonic party is the closest to an authoritarian regime, this party tolerates the least opposition, and the true power of the party is in the party itself and not in the executive force.

Categorizing parties in electoral-autocracies is more difficult than in democracies, because the size and amount of other competing parties do not give an adequate picture of the political landscape. In electoral-autocracies rulers use parties and elections to consolidate their power. Parties provide rulers legitimacy and help them distribute resources to loyal elite. The parties are set-up with the support of the regime in order to establish loyal parties. Rulers

¹ Electoral authoritarian regime is a regime that has the institutional landscape of a representative democracy, but violates the democratic and liberal principles to such a degree that opposition does not have a chance of winning (Levitsky and Way 2002).

might set-up more than one party in order to gain more legitimacy or a more certain support. Therefore size and amount of parties give an inadequate picture about the possibilities of power return and are unrelated to the level playing field. Nor does the size of a party indicate the amount of influence and bargaining power a party might have.

Classifying United Russia, the party in Russia that has the majority of seats in parliament since 2000, proves a challenge. United Russia is called a hegemonic party, a dominant party and sometimes a party of power. Some authors even use the three concepts for United Russia in the same article (Bader 2011, Hutcheson 2012). For example, Hutcheson uses all three concepts in the same article: “Russia’s dominant party: United Russia, the hegemonic party of power” (2012, 2-4). Currently, United Russia is addressed as a party of power by many scholars (Roberts 2013, Krastev and Holmes 2012, Oversloot and Verheul 2006). However, just as many authors consider United Russia to be a dominant party (Reuters and Gandhi 2010, Remington 2008). Only a few authors call United Russia a cartel party (Hutcheson 2012, White 2012).

This indicates that the definitions used to classify parties might not be clear or that the concepts are very close to each other. All three concepts are used differently in the literature and there are not always clear boundaries between these different concepts. Most complicated seems to be the concept of a party of power. Therefore the focus of this thesis will be on the party of power. Some authors use the term party of power and dominant party interchangeably (Sakwa 2012).

What does this mean? Is there confusion about the role of United Russia or lays the confusion in the differences between party types? Is there a clear understanding of what the differences are between a party of power and a dominant party, and what the differences are between a party of power and a hegemonic party? Furthermore, do all the authors use the same type in the same way? A type should be used as a clarification of the characteristics of a

party. In the case of United Russia authors use different party types to point to the same elements of the party. The opposite does also occur, authors who use the same party type, but point to different traits of the party. It seems that the party types are used superfluously and have a different meaning when used by different authors.

The proliferation of different terms does not help in clarifying the categorization of United Russia. The categorization of a party type does no longer give an indication of its traits. Maybe some characteristics overlap between party types or authors focus on some elements of United Russia, but seem to forget factors that are of greater importance in their role in Russian politics. Therefore, they could wrongly classify United Russia as, for example, a dominant or hegemonic party while it should be classified as a party of power. Wrong categorization of the party type means that the classification of Russia as a regime type could also be wrongly assessed. When United Russia is categorized as a hegemonic party, then the Russian regime could be more easily classified as authoritarian, on the other hand a dominant party can also be found in democratic regimes.

This thesis will test the party types on their sustainability and will investigate whether there are true differences between the party types or that there is a proliferation of types. Authors use these concepts in a way that they often overlap and the indicators and boundaries are not always clearly defined, concepts are mixed together or given different indicators. This raises the question whether these concepts are a contribution in classifying the parties in semi-authoritarian regimes² or if the terms cause more confusion rather than clarification. By misusing a concept readers might think that the party has some particular features while in fact it has not. And as most authors do not define the concepts they use, they are bound to lead to different interpretations.

² Regime will be considered the interrelationship of executives, legislatures and judiciaries within constitutional framework. It describes a wider perspective, taking methods and values underlying citizens' relationships that make the difference between authoritarian and democratic regime (Bealey 1999, 259).

This shows the importance of clear classification, because now it is unclear whether a dominant party is something different from a hegemonic party or a party of power. Moreover, the party type has implications for the regime type the party is in. A wrongly categorized party type could lead to a wrongly categorized regime type. The examples will show how difficult it is to make a clear distinction between the party types. Bader (2011) is defining indicators of a hegemonic party, although most of his indicators would generally be used to define a dominant party or the party of power.

The concept of a party of power is mostly used in Russia, although many other party types are used as well. Clear categorization of the party types and their contribution could help explaining the distinctive factors in Russian politics. As the examples show, Russia poses a particular challenge in classifying parties. This thesis will focus on United Russia, the largest and most popular party in Russia. Since the term party of power is the newest term and less used in political science outside of Russia, this thesis will explore the contribution in categorization of this term by comparing it to the hegemonic party and dominant party. Due to the scale and focus of this research this thesis can contribute less to theory building than studies that include more cases. However, the question how party types in semi-authoritarian regimes should be defined and what their empirical contribution is can best be examined by a theoretical comparison between the different concepts. Data used in this thesis will mostly come from scholarly literature using existing definitions about the different party types. This information will be used to compare the different types to each other and to compare the types to United Russia in order to make a clear categorization of United Russia. A possible problem is that contradictory information will have to be interpreted by the researcher.

First, this research will give background information about United Russia, after this the theory about semi-authoritarian regimes and parties will be described, following an overview of the different party types in semi-authoritarian regimes will be given. A chapter

about the possible overlap and differences between the different party types will follow. After this the different concepts and indicators will be applied to United Russia. This is done in order to show the practical usefulness of the indicators used.

United Russia's rise and decline

Before identifying the different party types, background information about United Russia and Russia's party system will be given, to aid the understanding of the nuanced differences between the different party types.

Russia is an electoral-autocracy. An electoral-autocracy is defined as a regime that has the institutional landscape of a representative democracy, in order to do so it sets up constitutions, elections, parliament, courts, local government, sub-national legislatures and agencies of accountability (Donno and Roussias 2012, 578). There are attributes of democratic life, there is a certain level of independent civil society and regular elections, but there is limited space for opposition, poor representation of citizen's interests, low level of political participation, abuse of law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy and low level of public confidence in institutions (White 2012, 212). The violations done by the regime are broad and systematic enough to seriously impede democratic challenges to incumbent governments. These violations fundamentally alter the playing field between government and opposition (Levitsky and Way 2002, 53).

Democratic norms may be violated in electoral authoritarianism, but the regime is unable to eliminate democratic rules entirely. It plays the game of multiparty elections, but violates liberal and democratic principles (White 2012, 214). In Russia a framework of democratic institutions is preserved, but there is a steadily elimination of competition from the political area. Elections have a more predicted outcome, civil society exists, but within restricted limits. Furthermore, individual rights are honored as long as they do not conflict with the state³ (Remington 2012, 10). In the case of Russia, Amnesty International claims that

³ A state is a territory defined by borders and a central authority that has to be obeyed (Bealey 1999, 308).

after the protests of 2011 the restrictions on individual liberties have gone even further⁴. There are clear violations of political and liberal rights, but there are also multi party elections, therefore Russia will be considered an electoral-autocracy.

The Russian political system creates coordination problems between the executive and legislative branch, which is heightened by the semi-presidential nature. The dual executive characteristic of semi-presidential system with the Prime Minister responsible for legislation creates number of potential conflicting power centers⁵. For example, the President does not necessarily have the support in the State Duma. He only has power to the fullest extent when he rests on a parliamentary majority. However, the President has the possibility to bypass the legislature and rule by decree, as long as it does not violate existing laws (Roberts 2012, 234). In the Russian system the President appoints the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers (Remington 2012, 60). Putin consolidated his position by rewarding supporters with lucrative posts in ministries, state corporations and eliminating opposition at the centers of power (Remington 2012, 5). In addition, Putin strengthened the state by concentrating state power in the executive branch and placing it under his control. He did this by reducing the autonomy of other centers of political power with legislation. Other centers of power being: the parliament, parties, regional government, mass media and civil society (Roberts 2012, 234). In order to make this support even more certain, a party that supports the regime was established (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2010, 62).

A party supported by the executive force⁶ provides potential mechanisms for coordination within the parliament and between the executive and legislative branches. It gives a mechanism to reconcile the conflict between electoral and legislative incentives

⁴ <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2664/Nieuws/article/detail/3431001/2013/04/24/Rapport-Amnesty-Poetin-is-op-heksenjacht.dhtml> accessed 24 April 2013

⁵ In this thesis the concepts of executive forces, presidential administration, the Kremlin will be used interchangeably. These terms indicate the people in the government and ministries, the President and its close associates (Hale 2010, 90)

⁶ Executive forces are the government and presidential administration

inherent in the presidential system (Smyth 2002, 558). The party gives an imbalance between the legislative and executive force, because the legislative force is no longer independent but becomes in service of the executive force. This imbalance began under Yeltsin's Constitution of the Victorians, although this was not as structured as it is now and the President did not always get his way. Under Yelstin (1996-1999) 69 percent of the legislation passed, under Putin (2003-2011) 90 percent of the legislation passed (Remington 2011, 53). Under Yeltsin, the Kremlin used individual bargains with powerful elites to perpetuate its rule, not a strong pro-presidential party. Attempts to create a durable executive supported party proved unsuccessful in the 1990s, this was largely due to the personalist nature of the regime (White 2012, 216). Under Putin and Putin-Medvedev this power imbalance became more structured and institutionalized.

Only in 1999 did the circle of Yeltsin assemble a party to compete in the elections, although regional elites still posed substantial autonomy (Reuters and Remington 2009, 502). The party could build on the foundations of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU left behind significant networks, resources and reputation that proved building blocks for new parties (Hale 2010, 90). In 2000 Yeltsin became ill, and this created an elite spilt (March 2009, 513). Regional members tried to set-up their own party (Fatherland All Russia) and this indicated the necessity for the Kremlin to set-up a more influential party (Unity) (March 2009, 513). Putin was appointed by Yeltsin and was dedicated to establish a party to challenge Primakove (Fatherland All Russia). Moreover, Unity was also set-up in order to replace the electorally de-functioning Our Home is Russia-party (Robinson 2012, 300). To make Unity successful the Kremlin drew on techniques as backroom politics and successful broadcast campaigning. Putin used his previous position as head of auditing agency of the Kremlin administration to gain more support. In previous positions in the anti-corruption campaign he collected a considerable amount of compromising materials. He used this

information to bring the regional leaders back into the party, and was further helped with the dependence of the regional leaders on financial support of the centre (Robertson 2010, 133)

The first step was to create a formal organization and reputation in order to make the party more appealing for regional governors and independents to join Unity (Hale 2010, 93). This was a strategic move by the Kremlin to defeat outside challenges, like the regional elite (Fatherland All Russia), to remain in power. Unity was not a true party, because it lacked a distinct ideology, policy agenda, organizational form or philosophy (Robinson 2012, 300). Lack of ideology means that the party had no collection of ideas concerned with universal applications, there were no characteristic ideas that were systematic enough to be recognizable to voters and groups (Bealey 1999, 157).

Putin's ability to capitalize Russia's natural resources and wealth, like oil and gas, gave the Kremlin the opportunity to support Unity (Moraski 2013, 3). The arrest of the oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky further helped the dominance of Putin in state resources. In 2000 Unity's popularity rose further during the war in Chechnya, because voters felt that Putin was the powerful man needed and Unity was the party to support him. During this election Unity came second, but with the addition of single mandate races the balance of power in the State Duma was Pro-Putin. This marked the beginning of the Kremlin's dominance over national electoral politics (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2010, 69-71). This process was further enforced by several laws. The most influential law is the law "On Political Parties" in 2001 that forced parties to merge together. This law was meant to create some order in the political system, with fewer, more enduring and transparent parties (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 387).

In 2001 Unity and Fatherland-All Russia were pushed together to become one party: United Russia. The success of Unity made it easier for the elite that originally supported Fatherland all Russia to co-opt instead of to resist (Robinson 2012, 300). Regional elites

incentive to organize themselves and collectively challenge the incumbent authorities was reduced. They were stripped from their autonomy, actions against the influence of oligarchs were taken and the President would nominate sub national candidates for elections (Hale 2010, 93). Putin became the chairman of this party, but not a party member (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2010, 65).

United Russia became the most successful party in Russia's history after the fall of the Soviet. In 2003 it won 222 of the 450 seats in the State Duma, in 2007 it won 315 seats, and in 2008 it had seats in all regional legislatures controlling over at least a third of the seats in every region (Roberts 2012, 226). Despite its dominance in the State Duma United Russia did have to deal with disappointing results. In 2005 United Russia was seen as electorally impotent by the Kremlin, polling consistently far short of Putin's personal rating. The disciplined voting in the State Duma made the bureaucracy and the complete paralysis of political life too public. The obedience made it more difficult for Putin to distance himself of the party that he had disciplined so well.⁷ It became clear that the center-right profile was inadequate to appeal to moderate leftist voters who supported Putin personally, but not it's government (March 2009, 514). Therefore, it Putin had to align more closely to United Russia as abandoning the party was not an option. In September 2007, Putin decided to head the United Russia party list. The Kremlin had decided to avoid all risks and combine the popularity of Putin with United Russia (March 2009, 522). Moreover, during the succession of Medvedev in 2008, it became apparent how big the influence of the President is. The Kremlin used state-controlled media, regional governors, big businesses and election commissions to get the results they wanted (Remington 2012, 1).

The party was further helped with legislation; in the period 2002 to 2010 laws were set-up that provided a legitimate basis for controlling the opposition (Roberts 2012, 229). The

⁷ Dr. J. Oversloot, Interview, 16 April 2013 at Leiden University

most important laws are: On Political Parties (2001), On Opposing Extremism (2001), On Election of Deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of Russian Federation (2005) (Roberts 2012, 229). The party was also supported with institutional changes, for example: the abolishment of a mixed system and the raising of the threshold (Remington 2012, 176). Russia's competitive elections restricted the freedom of association and speech, and monopolized media, and employed unfair electoral practices to the extent that they deprive elections of their primary function of political choice and elite circulation, and reduces them to a mere tool of legitimization and mobilization of support (Golosov 2011, 623). In 2004 changes were made that posed strict regulations on what it meant to be a political party, their rights and obligations. These regulations gave access to the political arena and state funding, and depend on membership and territorial diffusion (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 388).

There is permanent state funding for parties that obtain three percent of the list vote in the State Duma elections. Other sources of income are membership dues, donations by sympathetic outsiders and entrepreneurial activity (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 388). In 2012, parties had to have 500 members in half of the constituencies and 50.000 members in total (White 2012, 214). Furthermore, parties have to update the Russian Ministry of Justice regarding their whereabouts, activities candidate nominations and number of members. The Ministry can verify whether a party still exists, and decide in some cases it does not (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 388).

In 2010 United Russia did not get the desired results. They only won 35 percent of the regional votes. In 2011 the party failed to recreate its constitutional majority from the previous Fifth Duma Convocation, collecting 49,3 percent of the votes, although it gained a majority in the State Duma with 238 seats of the 450 and will remain in force for the sixth Duma Convocation from 2012 to 2017 (Roberts 2012, 227). The decline in popularity continued in 2011 and 2012 (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 3). In addition, United Russia

possibly is threatened by the rise of a new party. After last disappointing elections Putin set-up a new party, whose role is not entirely clear yet. It's called Popular Front and should be a broad basis for business and ministers to be a non-bureaucratic party. Although, Putin has stated that Popular Front should be used for United Russia to renew itself. Medvedev was forced to support United Russia⁸. With the rise of Popular Front it is to be seen how much power consolidation United Russia is able to maintain. Therefore, it remains to see what the role of United Russia will be in the future and whether other parties will be able to replace United Russia. In the next part attention will be given to the different party types, the life span of United Russia also has a consequence for the categorization.

⁸ Author unknown (2013). "Putin says United Russia needs Popular Front to renew itself." *Russian Politics* <http://rt.com/politics/putin-party-front-pskov/>, accessed 11 May 2013
Andy Potts (2011). "Not such a Popular Front." *The Moscow News*, <http://themoscownews.com/politics/20110510/188652416.html>, accessed 11 May 2013

Political Parties in semi-authoritarian regimes

The following part will give an explanation why parties are important for semi-authoritarian leaders. This will be done in order to place the differences between party types in semi-authoritarian countries in the right perspective. The benefits that the electoral-authoritarian party types offer for the regime are in the same in general, although implications and cause-effect might differ among the different types. In this part first a description of an electoral-authoritarian regime will be given and after this the benefits and use of a party will be described.

Electoral authoritarianism appears to be democratic, because it has established all the institutional facades of a democracy. They have regular multiparty elections in order to conceal and reproduce authoritarian governance (Schedler 2009, 381). However, access to power is shut off from electoral pressure, which means that the influential positions are not open for contest; these are elections without choice (Schedler 2009, 383). Elites find it more beneficial to co-opt with the authoritarian ruler, which enforces him in its power. Thus personal networks or clientelistic relationships are formed around the President. This network becomes the main source and channel of reward for network members (Robinson 2012, 299). Parties can be used as a channel for rewards and bind elites to them.

Moreover, semi-authoritarian leaders need parties to mobilize voters and a state to control the elections in order to govern through controlled multiparty elections. Most of the time electoral authoritarian regimes do not rest upon single parties (Schedler 2009, 384). Elections have the benefit that they create an opportunity for distributive patronage, settling disputes, reinforcing the ruling coalitions, but also mobilize threats of dissidence and scission (Schedler 2009, 384). Furthermore, elections are used as a legitimization tool for the current regime. Therefore, parties are an important factor in competitive authoritarian regimes. They

are needed to ensure election outcomes and support for the executive power. They are used as a legitimization of the current regime and as a test for the support of the elite (Donno and Roussias 2012, 575-580). As a result, regimes with a ruling party survive longer than their counterparts who have not invested interest in a ruling party (Bader 2011, 189).

An important factor is that the rulers can abuse the non-consolidated party system. Since transitional regimes do not have a consolidated party system, authoritarian rulers may take the opportunity of this fluid situation by manipulating the number and nature of recently formed opposition actors. This is done by restricting free formation of electoral alternatives by excluding opposition parties, fragmenting them or controlling them from it (Schedler 2009, 383). The non-consolidation after the fall of the Soviet regime provided an opportunity for the executive forces in Russia to create parties. True parties from the ranks of society did not have time to set-up. Russia did not have a consolidated party regime after the fall of the Soviet Republic. The executive forces benefited from this opportunity to set-up their own parties.

The executive forces were already in power before the transitional period came. They used this opportunity to set-up parties that would support them in the legislative branch to fully employ their power. Besides the creation and support of these parties they may also use the non-consolidation of party regimes to manipulate the number and nature of parties. In order to achieve this they prevent voters of acquiring fair knowledge about available choices (Schedler 2009, 387). This can be done through the creation of official opposition parties, to which they assign convenient ideological positions or they may exclude uncomfortable opposition parties (Donno and Roussias 2012, 575-580). Parties were built from the parliament top-down, strengthening parties in parliament by increasing party discipline and cohesion in the legislature as a means to stabilize parties by the executive forces through legislation (Reilly 2008, 15). Parties had to engage in party competition before they could

fully develop their party organization what makes the weight of the executive office even heavier (Biezen 2000, 398). This process was further enforced by the regime that put parties under pressure by putting their activities under regulations and state laws, that govern their external activities or determine the way in which their internal organization may function (Biezen 2008, 27). As a consequence, contest of elections is often based on appeals of individual leaders rather than substantive ideological differences between competing parties (Biezen 2008, 26).

In this part the importance of political parties for semi-authoritarian regimes was explained. Parties are more than an institutional façade, they are also tools to reward loyal elite and get legitimization of citizens. In sum, parties in a electoral-authoritarian regime are used for attracting elite support, create legislation in order to strengthen the power of the party, control and distribute resources to bolster support for the party, resolve leadership succession to minimize the threat of elite split within the party (Roberts 2012, 228). Between the different party types there are degrees in which the regime uses the party. All the party levels differ in their decision-making power or their power to bargain. There can be different degrees in which the party is used by the regime and on what subjects it is used. The role and influence of the parties might be different among the different types, this can have consequences for the regime type. In the next part the different party types will be defined.

Party Types

In order to compare the different party types and determine their usefulness, this part will analyze the meaning of the concepts and how they are applied. First, an analysis of the hegemonic party will be given. After this the party of power will be described and then the dominant party.

The hegemonic party

The hegemonic party is the party closest to the authoritarian regime, because it entrenches all aspects of public and social life. Therefore, the hegemonic party can be found in authoritarian regimes with elections, where the civil and political liberties are violated to such a degree that the regime is considered to be authoritarian. In this regime type there are no clear divisions between the state and the party, and the parties have few to no links with civil society. Opposition parties are allowed, but under strict control of the hegemonic party with whom they cannot compete for control over the government (Caramani 2011, 244). The hegemonic party neither allows formal nor a *de facto* competition for power. Other parties are permitted to exist, but as second class, licensed parties, as they are not permitted to compete with the hegemonic party in opposing terms or on an equal basis. Not only does alternation of power not occur, it cannot occur since the possibility of a rotation in power is not envisaged (Sartori 2005). So, in the classic definition of Sartori there is no possibility of a regime change through elections. However, this is disputed by Reuters and Gandhi who claim that when the economy declines elections pose a threat to the regime, as elites have reasons to defect (Reuters and Gandhi 2010). In general the possibility of a regime change is not very likely.

In the hegemonic regime legislation is fully controlled and that gives bigger confidence of long-term regime survival (Bader 2011, 190). This is important, because long-term survival makes it possible for elites to merge with the regime, as it is unlikely that in the

future their loyalty will become a handicap. This consolidation process is further stimulated with the depression of political competition, because there is no true opposition and there are also no alternative elite groups (Bader 2011, 190).

The hegemonic party regimes are non-democratic regimes that rule with the aid of a dominant party and hold multi-party elections. The defining institutions of a hegemonic party are elections and a single dominant party which serve the regime to distribute patronage, gather information, co-opt elites and bind supporters to the regime (Reuters and Gandhi 2010, 83). In the definition of Gandhi and Reuters there seems to be more room for the opposition as they can win elections during (economic) crisis, although they argue that the hegemonic party is the party that controls access to most important political offices, shares powers over policy and patronage and uses privileged access to state resources or extra constitutional measures (Reuters and Gandhi 2010, 87). By this definition the role of the opposition is effectively marginalized, the degree wherein regimes will use legislation will differ among regimes, but the opposition does not have a level playing field. Opposition might not be fully controlled, but the use of legislation, patronage, and privileged access will marginalize the opposition.

The hegemonic party exists in authoritarian regimes, where members of legislature are chosen in multi-party elections and the ruling party controls the absolute majority in the primary legislative chamber (Reuters and Gandhi 2010, 87). It seems that this definition of a hegemonic regime uses a dominant party, however the main difference is that a hegemonic party exists within an authoritarian regime, where opposition parties are marginalized by definition, and state and party are as one. While in a dominant party regime this does not have to be the case, as the party can also exist in democracies without violating political or civil liberties. Hegemonic regimes use dominant parties to consolidate their power, but entrench a larger aspect of political and social life than the dominant party does.

Hegemonic regimes hold elections, because these offer certain benefits. For example, multiparty elections give the hegemonic regime legitimacy and this lowers the cost of total oppression. Furthermore, other benefits of the hegemonic party are that it offers low-level party cadres alternative career paths and thus limits the risk of defections from the regime. This career opportunity lowers the chances of elites becoming frustrated, which lowers the threat of a lower-elite supported party that could compete with the hegemonic party (Bader 2011, 190). In addition, the hegemonic party offers more people the opportunity to share the spoils of office, which gives less people a reason to defect. Reason for this is that the party deflects frustration among talented cadres' outsiders, because it offers an opportunity to become part of the elite (Bader 2011, 190).

Another benefit of the hegemonic party is that it provides the party the opportunity to become more vital through the recruitment of new people. Recruitment increases the number of people who are interested in regime survival (Bader 2011, 190). Also, the party is able to stimulate mass popular involvement through the use of regime institutions. The party is able to do so because it spans every aspect of political space, the party is attached to every public organization and enjoys genuine popular support. This support makes the regime more legitimate and gives it an image of invincibility, which makes it even more difficult for the opposition to gain a bargaining position (Bader 2011, 190). At the same time opposition's elites are pushed into regime-sanctioned activities and this marginalizes extra systemic opposition. Overall, the hegemonic party bolsters regime stability by reducing unpredictable, hard-wiring competitiveness and responsiveness, and combining openness and control. Therefore, the hegemonic party systems are the most durable form of authoritarianism (March 2009, 507).

In order to explain the characteristics of the hegemonic party a classical example of a hegemonic party will be provided for. Many scholars claim that the CPSU is an example of

a hegemonic party (White and Mcallister 1996, Luther 1998, Lane and Ross 1995). However, just as is the case for United Russia, there are also authors who consider the CPSU to be a dominant party (Reuters and Remington 2009, Kramer 1999). This shows that the differences between the concepts are not that clear-cut, a possible explanation could be that a hegemonic party can also be a dominant party depending on the level of analysis. Then a hegemonic regime would have a dominant party with dominant bargaining power, a majority of seats in the parliament for a substantial amount of time. However, the influence of the hegemonic party goes beyond the government, while for a party to be dominant party it has to be dominant in parliament and government. Therefore, a dominant party is not per se a hegemonic party because a hegemonic party can only be found in authoritarian regimes. While, on the contrast, a dominant party can be found in all regime types. For this reason the CPSU will be considered as a hegemonic party that was dominant in parliament.

In the Soviet Union the old Communist party (1917-1991) had an all-persuasive control over ideology and political processes (Remington 2012, 25). This means that the state and party overlapped. Decision making in all spheres of life was in effect done within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and public offices were staffed through CPSU nomenclature (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 384). There was no pluralistic diversity, and differences in political interest within the party were kept behind scenes and there was no protection of individual rights (Remington 2012, 25).

Moreover, the ruling ideology did not allow alternative ideological frameworks and was intolerant of open competition in the political system (Bielasiak 1997, 31). In order to achieve minimal competition the party took up all the space between the individual and the state through a monopolistic organizational structure. Furthermore, other intermediary associations, political parties, and social movements outside the domain of party-state were illegal. Political space was filled with cultural, social, and economic organizations meant to

bind the citizens into the official structure of power (Bielasiak 1997, 32). This ban on opposition is what makes the party hegemonic; it's an authoritarian system with elections, but no true opposition. The party had the ability to mobilize mass members, because it penetrated in every aspect of social life.

The party had its roots in cadre configurations and not in mass organizations. Electoral and parliamentary activities served as a filter for the management of political space, acting as a screening device that elevated some political contenders in prominent roles, marginalizing other party formations and eliminating altogether aspiring parties (Bielasiak 1997, 28-31). The party served as a hegemonic party, getting other elites involved which gave them less reason to deflect and made the system more secure.

In sum, the purposes of the hegemonic party are to eliminate political competition, which is done through cooptation of the spoils and an image of invincibility among the opposition. The party is the only party that has access to the financial resources of the state, as the state and party are one. This enforces the power of invincibility that deters possible opposition. Opposition will never have the same amount of media access, and media access gives the public the idea that the party is invincible. The use of a hegemonic party makes elections safer for semi-authoritarian regimes (Bader 2011, 190). This confidence is important for the elites to align with the regime in order to assure their position. Hegemonic parties control substantial majorities in national parliaments. These parties entrench every aspect of social life and are involved with tasks that are reserved for the executive branch of power in democracies. Hegemonic parties are indistinguishable from the state and exist only in authoritarian regimes (Bader 2011, 192). The party is successful in attracting elite groups, because it provides career opportunities. The party has the opportunity to mobilize large masses of people, and has a high level of popular support.

The party of power

In the previous part the hegemonic party was described. In the next part attention will be given to the party of power and its characteristics. It might seem that there is great overlap between the two concepts, which is true. However, there are some substantial differences as well. An extensive comparison between the two types will be made later. In order to describe the party of power it is useful to illustrate its traits with a case. The most logical case is United Russia and its predecessors, because the term originated from Russia and has not been regularly applied to other cases.

One of the main difficulties in conceptualizing the term party of power is that the term is used inconsistently across literature (Roberts 2012, 233). Reason for this is that the term “party of power” was first used by Russian media circles in the early 1990s. The term is used because it captures the abstract reality, rather than a proposition to make a clear-cut measurable concept (Roberts 2012, 233). Though there is one fundamental criterion: the party of power is created top-down. It’s designed to reinforce the ruling regime by fulfilling certain functional tasks, above all the mobilization of votes in regional and national elections and the organization of the pro-regime majority in legislative assembly (Sakwa 2012, 318).

The main distinctive point of a party of power is that powers outside the party are controlling the party instead of vice versa. The political power holders are the presidential administration, the President, federal ministers, federal service heads and their apparatuses (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 393). The state manages party politics and administrative elites keep politics out of the state (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 384). The aim of the party of power is to ensure legislative support for the present or future head of the executive branch and their team (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 397). A party of power does not act as an agent of society, but as a representative of state institutions. The party of power is set-up or co-opted by political power holders, who heavily sponsor the party. In some cases parties were

set-up, sponsored and staffed by the heads of executive branches (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 393).

These political power holders operate directly or indirectly by organizing support for the party by favored business leaders, who hope to receive a preferential treatment from the administration (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 393). The party is facilitating the consolidation of executive control in Russia's regions. Genuine institutional autonomy is not tolerated. The state has effectively colonized political parties. Parties lack any substantive autonomy whilst the regime has the means and the ability to curtail, manipulate and where necessary create parties (White 2012, 215).

The party of power has no power as such, but is supporting the true power: the executive force. The party is not the ruling party or in power, but subsidized, organized and set-up by these powers. It does not have to be the same party over and over again, because when the support for the party of power declines, the current party of power is abolished and a new party is set-up (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 394). This is done through changing support of the elite, changing financial resources and party legislation. In addition the executive forces can spread their support among different parties of power, in order to spread their chances and gain more legitimacy in elections.

For this reason, the party is not a true party. The party of power is a group of people, who manifest themselves as the support group of the President or the executive forces. It is not a true party in its structure or goals, because it's a group of people with no other reason for organizing themselves than to support the incumbent powers (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 385). In Russia Presidents have used parties as support vehicles to create workable majorities, but the power basis of the President lies elsewhere and not within the party as would be the case in the dominant or hegemonic party (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 385). For example, United Russia has no ideology except for supporting the President's decisions.

Officially it has adopted a conservative ideology in 2009, but in practice they follow the President's decisions. In this way the party has the ability to appeal to a broad range of people. The party of power is never a ruling party, the actual loyalties and dependencies of its members are not within the party. The party of power does not have a life of its own, because it is neither ruling nor much of a party at all (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 396). Therefore, it is argued that the party of power should be renamed into a "party of the powers" (Sakwa 2012, 318). This would indicate that the party is different from a dominant or hegemonic party, because the power holders are not within the party.

In addition, the role of the party is further marginalized by its limited role in appointing people to government or state bureaucracy. Appointments to and careers in the executive government and state bureaucracy based on party affiliation are an exception rather than a rule. In general it is the President who selects and appoints members of the government (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 385). President Putin has admitted that he wants the legislative force to be professional instead of political (Sakwa 2012, 324). There is no relation between the distribution of party force in the Duma and political balance of the government. United Russia has almost no presence in the government, despite its dominance in the State Duma. The government exists out of career managers and administrators. The government's composition reflects the President's calculations about how to balance considerations such as personal loyalty, professional competence and the relative strength of major bureaucratic factions (Remington 2012, 66). Parliamentary approval is necessary for the Prime Minister, however blocking three consecutive nominations leads to dissolution of the State Duma and this process has never occurred (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 385).

Nevertheless, United Russia has government ministers within its ranks, although their appointment and position in the government was never dependent on the party. For example, In 2002 Boris Gryzloc, the Minister of Internal Affairs, led United Russia. However his

position did not depend on party support (Roberts 2012, 231). The same happened in 2007 when Putin became party leader, but not a party member. United Russia has minimal party control over the highest executive office, which is the President of the Russian Federation.

The President is a non-partisan of the party, and although Medvedev expressed sympathy with United Russia, he ruled out that he would join the party (Roberts 2012, 232). The parliament is inferior to the President: it's more like a rubber stamp approving the President's initiatives (Roberts 2012, 232).

Still, the State Duma is not without purpose, it gives parties the possibility to lobby for their own interest and it is a place for public debate (Remington 2012, 68). The Duma has the right to originate legislation and has the possibility to override the President's veto, but under Putin both chambers of parliament firmly support every initiative submitted by the President or government (Remington 2012, 69). With the help of a party of power Putin made the parliament ceremonial, ineffective, and increased the executive control over legislation. In order to achieve this Putin used informal, extra-constitutional instruments of power to strip other institutions off the ability to resist presidential authority (Remington 2012, 71). Party members of United Russia acknowledge their marginal role they have in parliament describing themselves as Kremlin servants (Sakwa 2012, 315).

What marginalizes the role of the party even further is that the Russian law creates the possibility for candidates to self-nominate if they want to run for presidency. Therefore, presidential nominations do not depend on party support, although it can be beneficial to align with a party as they have the logistics of collecting signatures, and they have greater allocation of agents to help campaigning. However, decisions of United Russia to support candidates like Putin and Medvedev are more like a rubber stamp, as the decision to support the candidates is made outside of the party (Roberts 2012, 232). Parties of power gain their

position with the support of the President, turning on its head the normative notion of the President that is gaining position via the support of a party (White 2012, 215).

In true multiparty systems political parties select and train their candidates for elected public office. Parties bring forward candidates for state leadership, offices, Prime Minister or President. Furthermore, ruling parties have a longer life span than the people who lead them, making parties real institutions. This is different in the case of the party of power, where many of the top candidates presented by the party never took place in the legislative branch, it is the government and the administration that defines the ruling party (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 400).

Moreover, the parliamentary party faction has been strictly managed by the presidential administration. This managing is openly acknowledged by members of United Russia, who claim that, all policy and decision making is decided externally (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 6). This is enforced by the fact that United Russia has the privileges to represent the government on influential commissions on legislative activity and so called zero-readings. In zero-readings budget and financial bills are considered and discussed prior to their formal introduction to the parliament. This means that the debate has moved out of legislature into government territory and behind closed doors. This accelerated the adoption of legislation and expanded the influence of executive forces on legislation (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 6).

Benefits of a party of power are that it can reduce the number of legislative veto players and increase the extent of executive control over the legislative agenda. Therefore, the party of power is mostly beneficial for incumbent power. It diminishes the individual legislation capacity to mobilize against reform. The party of power is very important for the executive branch in order to be certain of support in the parliament. During election periods they use administrative resources to mobilize voters, financial supporters and other political

elite in order to gain support for the party of power (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 398). The first and foremost goal of the party of power is to ensure political support in the legislative branch for the present or future head of executive power (Oversloot and Verheul 2006, 394). Next to these specific benefits it is not unlikely that the party of power also shares resembling benefits with the hegemonic party, for example absorbing lower elites in order to make them less willing to defect, mobilizing mass support, marginalizing opposition and giving legitimacy to the regime. United Russia has high levels of party membership and has the ability to mobilize large numbers of people and enjoys a high level of popular support.

In sum, the characteristics of the party of power include the absence of ideology, the lack of decision-making power. The power-basis of the party lies outside the party and the party itself has no autonomy or access to resources. Although, it can be the largest party in the legislative branch, it has no influence on policy making nor does it bring ministers to the government, or propose a President. The main aim of the party is to support the (coming) President and its administration in every way possible. Furthermore, the President and other high officials do not link themselves to the party. The party relies on support from outside, this can be financial, through legislation or with elite support. The party of power does not have access to financial resources other than party membership, sponsoring of donors, and state subsidy. However, most financial resources come from administrative resources that are allocated by the executive elite. The executive elite are the people appointed by the President in government or presidential administration. Furthermore, the party of power is created by the executive forces and was not created independently.

The dominant party

The hegemonic party and the party of power are closely linked to semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes with elections. Civil liberties and political rights are violated in different degrees. They differ in their power basis and level of autonomy, the hegemonic party is independent and the party of power is depended on executive forces. This is different for the dominant party that will be described in the next part. The dominant party can be found in democratic, transitional and semi-authoritarian regimes. It appears to be a broader concept than the hegemonic party or the party of power.

As will be discussed the dominant party has four important traits, it has to have dominance in number, a dominant bargaining position, should be dominant for a substantial amount of time and should be dominant governmentally. It should be said that the hegemonic and dominant party show great resemblance, although the penetration of social life is different. Where the hegemonic party entrenches all aspects of the state, the dominant party does not necessarily, it depends on the regime type the party is in. Furthermore, the hegemonic party only exists in authoritarian regimes, while the dominant party can be found in all sorts of systems. The comparison between the dominant party and the party of power will be made in the next chapter, in this part the use and different characteristics of the dominant party will be discussed.

The dominant party type is a type that can be found in semi-authoritarian regimes, but also in democratic states and transitional states. Bogaards makes a distinction between dominant party and dominant authoritarian system, this distinction is based on differences in civil and political liberties (Bogaards 2004, 178). Reuters and Remington claim that differences between democratic and authoritarian regimes lie in the methods used to keep the dominant party in power. These methods used in authoritarian regimes also imply a violation in civil and political liberties (Reuters and Remington 2009). Intuitively the dominant party

framework does have some appeal to United Russia, as it has some resemblance with Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which held power from 1919 to 2000 (White 2012, 216). The party dominated the parliament, won every presidential election, and also won most governorship in 31 states (Sakwa 2012, 320).

In order to be called a dominant party it should be dominant in number, only a party receiving plurality can be seen as dominant. In addition, a party should enjoy a dominant bargaining position. In order to stay in power the party must be in the strategic position to bargain effectively with other parties. Furthermore, a party should be dominant governmentally, have a majority of ministers in government that shape the public policy agenda (White 2012, 216). Finally, a party should be dominant chronologically, meaning that the party has to be in power for a substantial period of time without interruptions (White 2012, 216). Longevity is a key characteristic of a dominant party, Japanese Liberal Democratic party stayed in power continuity from 1955-2009, Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party did so from 1919-2000 (White 2012, 659).

However, the importance of chronological dominance is disputed, as the "substantial" amount of time is a relative concept and says nothing about the level of power penetration the party is able to make (Dunleavy 2010, 41). Dominant parties' agents manipulate institutions to consolidate their hold on power. Party dominance should be measured in terms of chances of getting into the government instead of the ex-post observation of the actual government composition. Meaning that a party can change names, but still consist of the same people. Therefore, the chances of people getting into the government should be used in order to measure the dominance of the party. Currently, chronological dominance is measured by using the party name as indication. In the case of Russia this might mean that it puts too much emphasis on the party names and not on the resemblance despite the different names. Parties might dissolve, but party leaders might start a resembling party under a different name. Now

party dominance is measured quantitatively, which is unmanageable and less sensitive to variation (Dumont and Caulier 2010, 51). These indicators do not take the history of the party into account, while the creation of the party is important, because it can show the power basis of the party. How the party is created gives an indication of its loyalty, is the party created top-down by executive forces or bottom up with many links to society. Studying party dominance through time requires the identification of the largest party and confirmation of whether this party has changed or not (Dumont and Caulier 2010, 51).

A party that dominates the electorate, other political parties, the formation of governments and the public policy agenda can be seen as a dominant party. Dominant parties function as distributive mechanisms, channeling resources to increase their share of votes or to maintain supporter loyalty. In opposition to the party of power the dominant party has control over executive office and institutions, allocating resources which allow the formation of patron-client networks which gives consistent support and electoral success (Roberts 2012, 229). This opposed to the party of power, which is controlled by executive forces and does not have access to resources. Therefore, in order to be categorized as a dominant party it also has to be the ruling party (Roberts 2012, 233). There should be a distinction between genuine and nominal ruling parties. Genuine ruling parties are the parties that have the power to make legislation. While nominal ruling parties are dominant in number, but are still depended on other powers as the government, the President or other parties. Measured by the extend to which the party exercises control over chief executive, the selection of officials, organizes the distribution of benefits to supporters and mobilizes citizens to vote or show support for party leaders. In order to have a dominant bargaining position, the party should have control over the government and executive powers (Roberts 2012, 233).

Furthermore, the dominant party determines the access to most political offices. Dominant parties are generally found in parliamentary systems (White 2011, 661). It shares

some powers over policymaking, patronage distribution and political appointments and uses privileged access to the public financing and public policy to maintain in power. The party ensures that election outcomes are never threatening for rulers (Reuters and Remington 2009, 502). Authoritarian leaders choose to co-opt and form inclusive dominant parties; they might use the party as an organizational weapon. In order for this to be effective support of the dominant elite is necessary (Reuters and Remington 2009, 503). A party might help the President to become more authoritative, although the party could conflict with President's personal power, because it's likely to develop an interest of its own (Reuters and Remington 2009, 509). In comparison with the party of power, the dominant power has a higher level of autonomy and bargaining position, in addition a dominant party chooses to co-opt with the President and not the other way around.

Therefore, the dominant party is independent from executive forces or the regime, because it occupies the state. The party has access to state resources and a President might align with the party, although he did not found the party (Reuters and Remington 2009, 509). The level of autonomy is disputed among scholars, as Reuters and Remington claim that a dominant party can take power away from the political leader, indicating that the President is the most influential force. "Most dominant parties take some autonomy, rents and political control away from the leader. The party itself may grow so strong and potentially independent that it comes to usurp policy, rents and office from the rulers" (Reuters and Remington 2009, 509). However, to measure the dominance the party already has to be influential in high offices and executive forces. So, in order to become categorized as a dominant party, the party takes power away from the President by definition. The dominant party is the most powerful organ in the system, it has a majority of seats, a bargaining position, ability to access resources and is in power for a substantial amount of time.

Another distinctive trait, next to the level of autonomy and power penetration, is the

perception of the voters of the effectiveness of the party. A positive perception of effectiveness makes it for the opposition even harder to gain votes and authoritarian leaders might manipulate this view by using media access, boosting the achievements of the party. This view of effectiveness is further stimulated with its protected area of ideological space, meaning that the dominant party is the only party in a certain ideological area. An ideological area is a bundle of ideas wherein no other party can compete, because it is viewed as extremely efficient in a certain area and voters finding that certain ideology important will automatically vote for this party. Voters do not view other parties effective in the same ideological space (Dunleavy 2010, 39).

White disputes that the dominant party has an ideological core; he claims that dominant parties are flexible in order to gain as many votes as possible. Over time new issues and new social groups arise. In periods of mobilization the dominant party builds a cohesive support base and develops a committed body of activists around a set of common goals, however over time the dominant party is faced with tensions between being sufficiently rigid in terms of policy and goals to retain its core support and being sufficiently flexible to attract new and potentially more political important support. Therefore, White claims that the dominant party does not have an ideological core (White 2011, 655). Though White claims that the dominant party has the ability to mobilize key socio-economic groups. This could mean that dominant parties use ideology in order to appeal to large socio-economic groups, in that case ideology is a mere tool in appealing to groups instead of a intrinsic felt collection of ideas. Other researchers also identify ideology as a tool that provides the possibility to link itself with major socio-economic groups (Reuters and Remington 2009, 509). In this definition ideology is a means to appeal to large socio-economic groups instead of a thoroughly felt bundle of ideas that gives the party its identity.

Dominant parties are attractive for elites, because they have the ability to access state resources and monopolize key media resources to strengthen their hold on power. Media access is important for the party to marginalize opposition and boost their own appeal. Moreover, it has the ability to selectively mobilize key socio-economic groups. It cannot make promises to every group, therefore it concentrates on key socio-economic groups that will give maximum pay-off for minimum effort. Furthermore, the marginalization of opposition is central to maintain one-party dominance (White 2011, 660). In this way the ideology of the party is not truly felt, but more a tactical ideology to appeal to as many people as possible.

Benefits of a dominant party are that they coordinate electoral expectations, ensure reliable legislative majorities, co-opt potential opponents, and manage political recruitment (Reuters and Remington 2009, 505). The dominant party can link itself to major religious organizations or to a large hegemonic social movement and therefore appeal to large socio-groups (Dunleavy 2010, 40). The dominant party is seen as extremely efficient and opposition parties face the difficulty of challenging this view. Because of the durability of the dominant power it is easier for elites to co-opt with the dominant party. In sum, the distinctive features of the dominant party are that has a majority of seats in the parliament, in bargaining position, dominant in government and chronologically dominant, according to Duverger (Duverger 1956).

What this overview shows is that the dominant party and hegemonic resemble in their majority in parliament and government. The party of power does not necessarily have a majority of seats, as Unity and Just Russia never gained a majority of seats. The fact that United Russia does is more a coincidence and proves the success of the party, but is not a distinctive trait in characterizing the party. Its predecessors have the same dynamics as United Russia, but never gained a majority of seats, and were still called parties of power.

What all the three party types have in common is that they are depended on state resources. All of the described party types gain their majority of financial resources out of state resources, although they might have other financial resources, like party membership, but this is not a substantial amount. What is different is their ability to independently access the state resources. As the hegemonic party and the state are the same and there is no clear division between the two, the hegemonic party has the ability to independently access the state resources as they deem necessary. On the other hand the party of power is depended on other organs to gain access to the financial resources. The dominant party also has greater independence from the state, because it also controls the government. The party has to have a dominant bargaining position to be categorized as a dominant party, which goes beyond a majority of seats, what indicates that the party has power to access financial resources independent.

Another difference is that the party of power takes the creation of the party into account. In order to be classified as a party of power the party has to be created top-down. The dominant party does not take the history in account, only in so far that the party has to be dominant for a prolonged period and even this is disputed. The hegemonic party does not take the beginning of the party into account. Although, the beginning of the party is important because it shows who is in charge of the party. Not all the party types take this into account. A party could be created by executive forces, but could also be a result of mass social movements. In that case it is to be expected that the party has closer ties with society, than with the state. Therefore, the history and arisen of the party is also important to classify a party.

The differences between the three party types indicate that the purposes of the party types differ in electoral authoritarian regimes. Where the hegemonic party is one with the state, they represent its own interest. This interest is the same of the state and the party,

because they are one. The purpose of the party of power is not its own survival, but the survival of the regime. Decisions the party makes are dictated by the executive forces, therefore the power basis of the party lays outside the party and in the executive powers. For this reason the party can make decisions that are unbeneficial for the powerbases of the part, but beneficial for the regime. The dominant party in democracies can also represent the interest of society and not only of the state. This means that the functions of the parties are different as well, whose interests they serve depend on the power basis of the party.

Before a complete comparison between the party of power and the hegemonic and dominant party are made, first another party type will be discussed. This is the cartel party that is different from the previous discussed party types. However, there are some authors who call United Russia also a cartel party (Hutcheson, 2012). For this reason this thesis will also include an overview of the cartel party.

The cartel party

The next party type that is discussed can originally be found in Western democracies. This type of party is called a cartel party, and shares some resemblance with the party types discussed before. The most resembling feature with the party of power is the role and influence of the state. In the cartel parties join forces and become agents of the state, they employ resources of the state to ensure collective survival (Katz 2011, 227). The cartel party lacks links with civil society and is closer to the state. For this reason some authors claim that the cartel party is a typical post-communist party model (White 2012, 212).

In this construction linkage between a party and civil society is undermined, and the role of the parties has become less evident. The parties that have the power and opportunity will form a cartel, in order to protect themselves from electoral risks. They do this by shifting responsibilities away from politically accountable agencies, meaning that tasks that were first part of accountable agencies will be transported to less visible agencies like ministries, so that they cannot be held accountable and minimize the differences between parties in rewards for electoral benefits. The ideology of these parties becomes less clear and more diffuse. The parties are seeking protection in public policy in order to be able to satisfy the short-term demands of pragmatic consumers (Katz 2009, 758).

Cartel parties limit competition among the including parties, but are unable to suppress political opposition. New opposition parties will fill the gap that cartel parties left behind, but also old opposition parties that were not powerful enough to join the cartel. Cartel parties consider politics as a profession, not a way to achieve social reform (Katz 2011, 228). Parties reduce the relevance of their role of representation. They do this in favor of their role as governors, defending the policy of the state. In this case the state is the administrators, the ministries and president. The consequence of this is that bureaucrats make policy and parties become agents of the state instead of society (Katz 2011, 227-228).

The state institutionalizes the structure of support and parties are being absorbed into the state. Consequently, parties become semi-state agencies. Parties will become so dependent on resources outside its own control, that they lose their independence. Parties that are excluded from the government are also excluded from resources (Katz 1995, 16-21).

Many of these indicators are the same as a party of power: limited competition, the reliance on financing of the state and an unclear ideology. However, there are also important differences. A cartel exists out of more than one party. Furthermore, a cartel arises in a consolidated regime. In theory a cartel arises after catch-all parties had to deal with declining party membership. In order to assure their own survival they make a closer connection with the state.

Hutcheson argues that United Russia is part of a cartel, because the party replacement⁹ fell from 9,9 percent in 2007 to 0.6 percent in 2011. He claims that the Communist party has made a cartel with the Kremlin friendly parties in order to gain financial resources. He also bases his argument on the low membership level of the parties in Russia, which is a trait of a cartel. In Russia the party membership is low; on average 2.8 percent of the people has a party membership. Although, United Russia has twice as many members than all other parties combined, it still takes one percent of the total income comes out of membership fees. In addition to this argument, Hutcheson points to the political agreement United Russia and Just Russia made in 2010 for collective actions on several policy areas (Hutcheson 2012).

Sakwa argues that there are fewer parties, but their rights are more consolidated. After the second elections in 1995, 43 parties arose, now there are 7 parties left (White 2012, 216). Parties in Russia have not been able to exploit the state. The history of the parties is different than the parties in a cartel. The parties in Russia were created top-down, while cartel parties are the product of mass-parties and catch-all parties that had to deal with declining

⁹ Percentage of votes that went to parties that had not competed in previous elections

membership. The parties in Russia play no role in creating the government. A cartel can only arise in a mature party system, because it is the result from progression from mass ideological parties to catch all and then cartel party (Sakwa 2012, 319). Russia still is a constant changing scene that has not reached this stage yet. Hutcheson stresses the element of collusion between the within system opposition parties and regime. However, there is no evidence for mass ideological party to broader electorate for a catch-all model (Sakwa 2012, 319).

In conclusion, Russia does not have a cartel party because the parties are not powerful enough to invade the state. Also, their history and background is different from cartel parties that can be found in Western democracies. They lack the development that parties made from ideological mass parties to catch-all parties and cartel parties. Most importantly, the decision-making power is not within the party but within the executive forces. The parties are not part of government and have no say in leadership succession. Furthermore, the party system in Russia is not consolidated. The decline of United Russia's popularity and the rise of Popular Front are indications of this.

In the last part the party types were discussed and briefly compared. Also, the cartel party was taken into account. Since, there only is one author who considers United Russia part of a cartel this will not be further developed in comparison to United Russia. As the term cartel party is not used together or interchangeably with the dominant party, hegemonic party or a party of power.

Comparing the different types:

In this part a comparison between the different party types will be made. First, a comparison between the hegemonic party and the party of power will be provided for. After this the dominant party will be compared with the party of power. These comparisons will be made in order to explore whether the different party types are distinctly different or whether they overlap on a majority of characteristics. Would they overlap on a majority of characteristics the question would be whether the differences are desirable to maintain using and whether the different party types give enough clarification. When the party types are too detailed a proliferation of terms arises, this does not contribute to the clarification for the readers. I will show that despite the similarities there are distinct differences between the party types, what means that not all the party types can be applied to United Russia. In the next part I will make a comparison and explain why not all party types apply for United Russia.

Comparing the hegemonic party and the party of power

The differences between the hegemonic party and the party of power are perhaps not that straightforward, but when applying the indicators to cases distinct differences appear. The main differences are that the hegemonic party has the control, independence and power to bargain, while the party of power has not, because it does not actually have any bargaining power outside the Duma.

The first and foremost important difference lies in the level of independence, autonomy and self-rule. The party of power is set-up and financed by the powers of the state. In Russia these are the powers around the President, the executive forces, and government appointed by the President. Where the main interest of the party of power is to support the powers around the President, the main interest of the hegemonic power is to serve its own

interest and survival. In order to achieve this, the party penetrates every institution of political and social life.

Another, more subtle, difference is the regime type in which the parties operate. The hegemonic party is closer to an authoritarian regime, because violations against human and political liberties are more severe and broader. In the party of power there are also violations made by the regime and there is no level playing field between the parties, however there is a possibility of regime change and the regime does not want to risk the cost of true repression.

What both parties have in common is that they are dependent on state resources, but their ability to grant access and distribute is different. The party of power is reliant on the support of the President and its executive forces in order to gain and distribute resources among its supporters. The supporters that are rewarded by the party of power are not necessarily supporters of the party, but can also be supporters of the President. Members of the party use their bargaining position to gain personal popularity in the region of their support and are willing to hand in power of the party in order to achieve this (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 6). Despite the similarity in the dependence on state resources, the ability to access these resources is the complete opposite. The hegemonic party is not reliant on any other organ than its own party to access the state resources. It has effectively penetrated every level of the state, government, and society. Furthermore, because of the life span of the party, which is longer than that of the party of power, the hegemonic party has the opportunity to consolidate its power. In addition, the hegemonic party is not dependent on the support of the President, but the President comes from the party or seeks support of the party instead of vice versa.

Another difference is the time period in which the party rules. The party of power can exist for longer periods, but in general it exists as long as it has the support of the President; the party is not used for leadership succession of the President. Therefore, the need of a more

durable party declines. In addition when the party exists for too long it can pose a threat to for the President, because the party could gain popular support of its own and consolidate a power basis of its own. Furthermore, when support of the party declines it is the easiest way to strip the party of its resources and start a new 'fresh' party, perhaps with the same people but under a different name. In this way the regime is assured of popular support from the citizens. Moreover, it is possible that there are multiple parties of power during one election, because the regime is not able to unite all elites (as was the case in the election of Fatherland-all Russia and Unity in 2000) or because the elite wants to spread their changes, unsure of the support citizens will give. In addition, the party of power can have other parties that help them to gain power, these helper parties are also supported by the regime, but with specific goals such as keeping the opposition out or support the true party of power (Oversloot and Verheul 2006). On the contrary, the hegemonic party is more enduring than the party of power and uses this durability to gain control over the power bases. The hegemonic party cannot be abolished when popularity declines, only in times of (economic) crisis is the party at risk of regime change.

In the hegemonic system the degree and form of competitiveness are perfectly clear to the players. The elections and other democratic institutions are largely facades, yet provide some space for opposition, although independent media and social organizations do not seriously critique or challenge the regime (Diamond 2002, 26). In a system that is characterized by a party of power, the restrictions on opposition are less severe than in an authoritarian regime. There is still the possibility that the opposition might win the elections, despite the lack of level playing field.

Considering that in Russia there is limited space for multiple parties, one could argue that United Russia is a hegemonic party since the Ministry of Justice controls the existence of parties and its decisions are non-disputable. Still, other than regime-supported parties are

allowed to compete and elections are not fraudulent on large scale. What is distinctive about United Russia is the link with the President and the personalized role of the party. In both regime types true opposition parties might find it very hard to exist, there are strict rules and regulations on becoming a party. Furthermore, in a regime with a party of power, executive forces might set-up opposition parties. These parties are not truly opposing the regime, but have mild criticism on the regime in order to appeal to the public. The hegemonic party might focus solely on party regulation and state resources in order to consolidate their position further. In a hegemonic system a dictator would buy off opposition through a limited degree of power-sharing and voluntary diminution of the centre of its own power to ensure stability. This is the opposite of what is happening in Russia, here the President concentrates the power around him instead of sharing it with the opposition, it is more a process of consolidation than disintegration (Hutcheson 2012, 5).

The purpose of both parties might be the same: the allocation of resources, ability to mobilize mass people, and an opportunity for lower elites to climb the ranks. However, the party of power uses these benefits for people outside the party, while the hegemonic party uses them for its own purposes. The hegemonic party needs the benefits for its own regime survival, while the party of power uses these benefits for the consolidation of powers that lay outside the party. The party of power is in no sense a ruling party, but an instrument used by the President and the presidential forces to consolidate their power. The influence of the presidential administration in the party of power reaches very far, as the President presents and recommends its candidates. Although in the case of Russia, the President is not a party member.

The hegemonic party has effectively penetrated every aspect of political and social life. While on the surface it may seem that United Russia has done the same, with its high level of membership and a majority of governors, it has no other power than the power that is

given to them by the President and executive forces. Furthermore, what makes United Russia a party of power are its origins and connection with the President. The party is created internally by power holders opposed to external power challengers (Roberts 2012, 234). Furthermore, United Russia is inextricably tied to the personalistic leadership of Russia. The party thanks its popularity to its connection with Putin, when he became head of the party list in 2007 (March 2009, 514). Russia's party system is shaped from above and the regime has invested in building a personalist dominant party. In order to achieve this, executive forces used formal means like electoral legislation and laws on political parties and informal practices, political technologies and selective prosecution to diminish the competitiveness of elections and maximize party's dominance. United Russia is a party that lacks an agency, this means that the party has no degree of freedom and is constrained in shaping the party and wider social processes (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 5).

United Russia is seen as the first successful and durable party of power of Russia (White 2012, 211). The party was set-up as a throw-away party, which means that when popularity declined the executive forces were able to abolish the party and set-up a new party, this was done through making legislation, the support of elites and financial support. However, the lasting popularity of United Russia made this difficult and it was also too docile for the President to distance himself from the party without damaging himself. They had supported him too much for the President to abolish them without contradicting himself¹⁰.

In addition the party possesses no autonomy in policy making. Moreover, the President and presidential forces established the party as an organization to support their leadership in key-national and regional institutions. The fact that United Russia has no other ideology or program separate from the President further indicates this process (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 5). United Russia has no separate identity other than what rubs off from the

¹⁰ In conversation with Dr. J. Oversloot 18 April 2013

President and Prime Minister. United Russia is used to boost the popularity of people outside the party, but also uses these people to boost their own popularity. They boost the popularity of people outside the party with the use of laws. For example, Kremlin staff uses United Russia to test the public opinion; it did so when United Russia proposed a ban on protests invented by the Kremlin and the Kremlin used this to test whether tougher legislation would be accepted (Roberts 2012, 234). United Russia used the President's popularity to boost its own popularity.

Officially, the party adopted a center-conservative ideology in 2009, in reality the party simply adopts the ideological output from presidential administration. The suggestion is that the party is used as a tool to propagandize the federal executive branch, using the party infrastructure and media time to put a positive spin on their paymasters. An example of this can be found in 2009, when the party had the task to advertise the efforts of the federal executive branch in combating the effects of the global financial crisis that impacted Russian economy in late 2008. Their role was to explain to ordinary Russians the effort the government and President had made to resolve this problem (Roberts 2012, 235).

The President is not only using the party to consolidate his power, but also in preventing other forces from setting-up a party this indicates that the regime might become more authoritarian, making United Russia more hegemonic. However, the power is with the President and not the parliament. Putin actively tries to prevent other influential and powerful people to set-up a true opposition party. For example, Putin attacked the power of oligarchs, by prosecuting two prominent oligarchs. The oligarchs controlled Russia's natural resources, manufactures, financial and media companies and exercised disproportional influence over the government (Remington 2012, 9). Putin also weakened the independence of chief executives of the country's regions, the governors, with the establishment of new federal districts overseen by presidentially appointed representatives (Remington 2012, 9). In

addition, Putin surrounded himself with loyal people from his past, in the government and presidential administration. He further secured power through the possibility to dismissing governors for violations of the law and removing them from the upper chamber of parliament (Remington 2012, 9). Because of the influential role of Putin, the hegemonic role of United Russia can be overstated. Its role in securing leadership succession and distributing resources in strategic economic areas is limited. Membership of the party is a formality rather than a basis of power, an example of this can be found in the executive led formation (Hutcheson 2012, 5).

The function of United Russia shows that it is not a hegemonic party, because United Russia supports power-holders that are residing outside the party, notably within the federal executive branch. United Russia is set-up by the presidential forces and is created top-down, it has no ideological foundation or support of the citizens. Nor does United Russia have any true power, besides some marginal bargaining power. The party is used to test laws and to secure support during elections. Other functions of the party are: rationalizing executive and legislative relations, increasing law-making efficiency, it is also an extra layer of administration across the regions, and provides a medium for elite socialization. The party is a carrier of ideas as well as a tester of ideas (Roberts 2012).

To summarize, although United Russia shares some characteristics with the hegemonic party this definition does not fit United Russia because the true power bases are with the President and its allies and not with the parliament. Nor is United Russia penetrating other political institutions, like for example the executive branch. On the contrary United Russia has a very bad power return when looked at the amount of party members in government. United Russia is in power since 2000, and its popularity is declining. With the rise of Popular Front it remains to be seen how much power consolidation United Russia is able to maintain. Using the definition of hegemonic party would only take into consideration

the amount of seats the party has in the State Duma, and pays no attention to the political situation in Russia. This means that there are clear distinctions between the two party types. Therefore both party types contribute to political science since they do not overlap on a majority on characteristics. However, this also means that there is no such thing as a hegemonic party of power (Hutcheson 2012, White 2012, Bader 2011) and that United Russia cannot be considered as a hegemonic party.

Comparing the dominant party to the party of power

In the next part the concepts of the party of power and the dominant party will be compared and applied to United Russia. In the literature United Russia is called both a dominant party and a party of power by different authors, although both concepts mean substantially different things. As this part will show, the dominant party and the hegemonic party are more closely related than the party of power is. Because both the hegemonic party and the dominant party have to have the majority of seats, and have a dominant bargaining position. The power of the parties lies within the party itself and not in the executive forces. The confusion between the dominant party and the party of power has to do with the level of analyses.

The simultaneous use of both terms can be explained as a matter of perception in the classification of United Russia. As United Russia is dominant in number in the State Duma, it could be argued that United Russia is a dominant party. When looking at the amount of seats the party controls in the parliament, United Russia constitutes a dominant party, but important features of the party are not taken into account. For example, United Russia is the most powerful party of the parliament, however the parliament is not a powerful organ in Russia. In 2010 Luzkov, a founding member of United Russia, claimed that the parliament was not a place for discussion, and United Russia was not a party for discussion. It's a Kremlin's servant, with one mission: supporting the government (Sakwa 2012, 315). In addition, the parliaments role is further marginalized with the establishment of the Public Chamber. The

Public Chamber takes away some responsibilities of the State Duma. It was set-up by Putin in 2004 as a platform for extensive dialogue, where citizens' initiatives could be presented and discussed in detail. A third of the people are appointed by Putin, who themselves appointed the rest of the Chamber (Evans 2010, 103). Furthermore, United Russia is not dominant governmentally, although this is a necessary condition to be classified as a dominant party.

The dominant role of United Russia is achieved through its ability to grant access to the corridors of power. Politicians across Russia saw that they had better chances of enjoying the spoils of office by affiliating with the ruling party instead of using separate political machines (Moraski 2013, 2). However, this ability does not lie within the party, as United Russia has no say in the allocation of resources. Even if United Russia is dominant in the parliament, it has no dominant bargaining position. Their ability to allocate resources and access support is depending on the executive branch. This lack of resources makes United Russia not a dominant party, although Russia itself may have a dominant party system. The dominant party is able to gain access to financial resources and elite support, without the support of the President. This means that the dominant party has a higher level of independence. It takes some power towards itself, while the party of power is merely performing the wishes of the executive forces. It never controls nor distributes financial resources. The biggest problem for categorizing United Russia as a dominant party is the bargaining position of the party, which flaws the dominant party framework for conceptualizing United Russia's role. Bargaining is not done from United Russia, but is done within the presidential administration. Its size, electoral success and general dominance over the party system does not signify the strength of the party, but reflect the strength of power holders in and around the federal executive branch (Roberts 2012, 66).

In addition, United Russia has little, if any, control over the real centers of power (Roberts 2012, 230). The parliament is a relatively weak organ in the institutional structure of

Russia. The President is legally superior and possesses independence and freedom to maneuver without the influence of parliament. Decision making initiatives come from the presidential administration. Moreover, the President directs these appointments and supervises the Prime Minister and other ministers (Remington 2010, 28). The parliament is not the source of political legitimacy and authority for the state in Russia, but on the other hand it is more than a mere form of window-dressing, The parliament remains the place where the bargaining and deal making among organized interests over distribution of benefits and liabilities take place, while providing the President and Prime Minister support for the legislative agenda (Remington 2010, 43).

Furthermore, for a party to be a dominant party it has to be the only dominant party in the system and has to enjoy a dominant bargaining position for a prolonged period of time. This points to another difference between the dominant party and the party of power, the durability of the party. In general the dominant party's strength and influence is measured by the amount of time that the party has enjoyed the majority of seats, while a party of power can be more fluid being a different party in every election. That means that politicians can change places between parties very quickly and parties of powers can be dissolved and set-up as needed.

United Russia has the majority in the parliament from 2000 onwards, although its popularity is declining and its dominance has been threatened during the elections of 2011. Considering that the first democratic elections were held in 1993 and United Russia only came into being since 2000, United Russia has been able to win the majority of elections since it was established. One could argue that United Russia has been part of the regime for a substantial amount of time given the period that elections are held in Russia. However, it is still a short period compared to the 81-year dominance of the PRI in Mexico. Especially since it's popularity started to decline since 2008 and continued during last elections. In the

elections of 2008, United Russia only survived with the support of President Putin. It remains to be seen whether Putin will also support United Russia during next elections. In order for United Russia to be able to penetrate the power and consolidate their basis, they would need a larger amount of time with the majority of seats in the State Duma.

This is unlikely to happen as the popularity rate of United Russia is declining. In 2011 Putin kept his distance from the party and put Medvedev forward as head of the party list. Medvedev had intended to run for a second term as President, but was forced to resign by Putin (Sakwa 2012, 320). Moreover, Putin did not sponsor United Russia, but set-up Russia's Popular Front (RPF), although this party did not compete in the elections of 2011. The RPF acted as the main campaigning body for Putin, despite the fact that United Russia had nominated Putin. United Russia was losing its popularity and other parties and campaigners attacked the party, calling it a party of thieves and swindlers (Sakwa 2012, 320). Compared to previous election, United Russia lost 15 percent of the votes. Some think that there is a possibility of cleansing or rebranding the party (Sakwa 2012, 324). This dynamic shows that United Russia is abolished and attacked on the moment its popularity flaws. This is an indication that United Russia is a true party of power, set-up by the presidential forces when needed and used to marginalize true opposition forces and when the party cannot fulfill its purposes it will be abolished.

United Russia has a veneer of power only because individuals in and around the federal executive branch who do hold power support it. United Russia cannot distribute nor control resources of the significant state resources, because the party does not control the institutions that can, namely the government (Robertson 2012, 230). The party has no significant influence over federal government and presidential administration; although since 2004 ministers are allowed to keep their seats in political parties. This could potential mean that there could be a party-government. However, in 2008 only a handful of ministers came

out of the ranks of the party. Moreover, there was little evidence that the party had any substantial say in making these appointments. The sliding popularity of United Russia makes it even less likely that there will be a party government soon (Roberts 2012, 231). In general the party has a poor power return when looked at the size and the positions they occupy. The regional parliament in Ul'Yanovsk has experimented with creating a party government, as a result the governor and 9 ministers joined the party and the remaining ministers followed later, what meant that United Russia was unable to place any candidates they might have wanted (Roberts 2012, 231).

However, United Russia does have some influence on the legislation made. This is illustrated with the principal of zero-reading, what means that before the government formally introduces the budget bill, it will meet with the United Russia faction. In order for the government to gain the support of United Russia, the party negotiates resources that reward their friends and supporters. Remington argues that this way of negotiation illustrates the dynamics of a dominant party. The relation between the executive force and the dominant party is based on rules to control political process and give politicians the opportunity to build a political career (Remington 2010, 58). However, the power balance between the two is clearly on the executive side. When United Russia loses its purpose for the executive force it will lose all its bargaining power.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to dismiss United Russia as a party that is only an administrative product with no ideas, and no genuine popular support. The party enjoys genuine support, although much of this support derives from association with Putin (Hale 2010, 95). Furthermore, United Russia was never only a clientelist organization, with the only goal rewarding Putin's friends and ally's, although the party remains subordinate to the administrative regime in terms of distributing patronage. This means that the executive forces have a decisive say in how to allocate and distribute resources. However, United Russia

genuinely competed with Just Russia, this proves that United Russia has a bigger role than distributing resources, because Just Russia was also supported by the regime. If the only goal of the party were to allocate resources one party would be enough. The two parties also provided legitimacy for the regime, because there was true competition between the parties, the support of the government did not undermine democratic legitimacy. The fundamental level of competitiveness was due to the shifting and uncertain tactics of the administrative regime. This shifting had a purpose, because excessive support for one party by the administrative regime would undermine the legitimacy of the elections (Sakwa 2012, 313). Furthermore, United Russia has a mobilizing and representing function. So, despite the constraints posed on the party, the party serves a true and genuine purpose for the regime. The difficulty is that United Russia mainly serves the purposes of people that are outside their party.

The dominant party's popularity is not constituted in the popularity of the President or the executive forces. This means that the party has greater independence and is less reliant on outside actors compared to the party of power. The dominant party has an own level of popular support because it can make connections with social movements, social groups and interest groups and in this way establish a link with civil society. The party of power is a mere instrument for the presidential power. Furthermore, both have the support of the authoritarian leader, but the party of power is set-up by the authoritarian leaders and the leader appoints its members to key positions, whereas the President seeks connection with the dominant party, and the dominant party plays the main role in allocating resources and positions. The only goal of the party of power is the regime's survival, while the dominant party has an interest of its own and also pursues its own survival while supporting the regime.

United Russia shares some of the characteristics of a dominant party. It is clearly dominant in number: controlling both the federal and the majority of regional legislatures.

However, the party system is presidential and not parliamentary, as is the case in Japan and Mexico (White 2012, 656). Furthermore, the party is not dominant governmentally, as the power basis of United Russia in the government has been very limited.

United Russia does not hold power in the political system and is an atypical case in the dominant party framework (Roberts 2012, 230). Although, the party may pass laws that bolster its position, and has the ceremonial function of putting forward the presidential candidates, it only has some party leaders in prominent positions. Furthermore, United Russia has little, if any, control over the real centers of power (Roberts 2012, 230). As explained before, the parliament is a relatively weak organ in the institutional structure of Russia. The President is legally superior and possesses independence and freedom to maneuver without the influence of parliament. United Russia has a veneer of power only because individuals in and around the federal executive branch who do hold power support it. United Russia cannot distribute nor control resources of the significant state resources, because the party does not control the institutions that can, namely the government (Roberts 2012, 230).

This means that United Russia might be a dominant party, but it is not a ruling party (Roberts 2012, 231). The president appoints regional heads with the approval of regional parliament, although the party has no decisive input in this process. Medvedev said at the party congress in 2008 that there should be no illusion that the party has a final say (Roberts 2012, 232). Russia has a dominant power system, rule is exercised by a strong state based on the political regime. United Russia is only dominant in relation to other parties and over legislature, but has little control over the regime (Sakwa 2012, 311).

The party is a mechanism for ensuring political elites, particular regional governors and oligarchs to remain loyal to the regime. The creation and development of United Russia was a long term strategic project and part of Putin's drive to re-assert central power. Yeltsin's *ad hoc* approach created fragmented elite, which threatened the regime (White 2012, 217).

The challenge posed on the regime with the creation of Fatherland-All Russia was recognized as the necessity to provide a long-term basis for the stability of the new regime (White 2012, 217). United Russia is an agent of power performing a vital role in maintaining the stability of the regime and underpinning the authoritarian system itself.

Putin's United Russia represents a distinctive type of dominant party due to its personalistic nature and dependence on their presidential patron (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 1). Because of the personalistic nature of the party, it is deprived from the possibility to perform key roles of what is typically expected of dominant parties, such as resource distribution, policy making and mobilizing mass support for the regime. Instead United Russia has contributed to authoritarian consolidation by securing the President's legislative agenda, stabilizing elites to ensure their patrons hold on to power, and assisting in perpetuating a discourse around the national leader.

In general dominant parties in authoritarian regimes act to support autocratic rule by distributing resources and benefits among opposition elites and the wider public to build support for the regime. Moreover, their dominant position in the legislature enables them to offer policy concessions to co-opt potential rivals into the regime through power-sharing deals (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 1). Furthermore, dominant parties promote the survival of non-democratic regimes by encouraging power sharing and cooperation among ruling elite in an effort to deter rebellion. Dominant parties are assumed to have the power to allocate rents, make economic transfers, and access resources. The aim is by performing these roles the party creates regime loyalty and stability. To perform these roles successfully a party needs to maximize its monopoly of state resources and politicization of public resources. To offer policy concessions to potential rival elite, the dominant party elite has to be actively involved in making policy. However, United Russia lacks the agency to reproduce itself, entrench its position, and play more than a supportive role in regime consolidation (Isaacs and Whitmore

2013, 1). These competencies lay outside the control of the party and inside the purview of the state and the key actors (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 2). This is due to the fact that in the Post-Soviet political space regime-centered political parties have monopolized legislative and electoral arenas. Therefore these parties represent the interest of the ruling elite. Shallow organizational structures and weak societal linkages characterize the party (Isaacs and Whitmore 2013, 2). Moreover, United Russia does not possess the power to construct policy and distribute resources. United Russia lacks influence of personnel and policy to be a true dominant party (Isaacs, Whitmore 2013, 3). In 2008 United Russia tried to consolidate its power and transform into a ruling party. They tried to gain greater influence in the representation of government. The Kremlin stopped this, as it did not want United Russia to become an independent political force. Autonomous forces within the party were stifled. United Russia remained an instrument of the regime, unable to develop into an independent agency of popular representation (Sakwa 2012, 319).

In sum, the creation of United Russia shows that it is distinctly different from a dominant party. It was set-up for and by the executive forces in order to consolidate the power of the President. As Whitmore and Isaacs show the party does not perform the roles that a dominant party generally has. It does not have the power to independently access financial resources and distribute them. The party performs these tasks in order to support the incumbent powers, but not to its own survival. United Russia is therefore not a dominant party, because it cannot independently perform the tasks generally ascribed to a dominant party. The life span and ability to mobilize state resources indicate that United Russia is not a dominant party, but a party of power. Furthermore, the history of the party and the connection with the President is so extensive that the party should be seen as a party of power.

The dominant party and the party of power can be used simultaneously, but mean different things. In the case of United Russia it can only be a dominant party when the focus

of analysis is on the parliament. In the parliament United Russia enjoys a majority of seats for a prolonged period of time and a dominant bargaining position compared to other parties. However, the parliament is not an influential organ in Russian politics and the power of United Russia does not go beyond the parliament, as it is not dominant governmentally. Even the power in the parliament itself is doubtful as it follows the order of the executive forces. It has no independent access to state resources and the bargaining power outside the State Duma is marginal. The party does not even control its internal decision-making policy, as decisions can be forced from outside.

Conclusion

The role and influence of United Russia has changed over time, there were periods that the party was more powerful and there was the possibility of a party government (2008). However, now its popularity is declining and with this its influence also declines. If United Russia had been able to gain more seats in the government, its role as a dominant party would be more apparent. In that case then United Russia would be able to penetrate the true forces of power, the executive forces, and therefore would have had access to financial resources. However, this process did not continue and United Russia still lacks the power that is necessary to be called a hegemonic or dominant party. Currently, the government mostly exists out of professionals appointed by Putin. This appointment is not affiliated with party membership.

The confusion surrounding the categorization of United Russia is partly caused by the amount of seats United Russia has been able to win for a prolonged period of time. Since its existence in 2000 it never won less than the majority of seats in the State Duma. For this reason United Russia is called a dominant party. Scholars who call United Russia a hegemonic party perhaps focus too much on the fact that state owned media is in favor of United Russia. However, United Russia has no true influence on media coverage. The true influence on media is in the presidential administration. Furthermore, the amount of seats in the State Duma does not give the complete picture. The true decision making power does not lie within the party. This makes United Russia a party of power, whose only interest is to support the survival of the regime.

The amount of seats is irrelevant to be categorized as a party of power. The categorization of a party of power says something about the dynamics of the party and not about the electoral success. United Russia's predecessors Unity and Fatherland All Russia

were also created by a top-down movement of the elite. The merger between Unity and Fatherland All Russia was also forced upon the parties. The fact that United Russia has a majority of seats shows that this is a successful party of power, but this is not a condition to be categorized as a party of power. The amount of seats might also explain why there is so much confusion in categorizing United Russia, because the party has a majority of seats it falls into the category of a dominant party. Unity and Fatherland All Russia were never called a dominant party or a hegemonic party, while the dynamics and purposes of the party were the same as United Russia.

The level of autonomy and linkage to the state has implications for the party type classification of United Russia. It is the most durable, successful party since the elections of 1993. However, their amount of power is not in proportion with their electoral success. The amount of seats United Russia occupies in the State Duma, says nothing about the internal decision-making and the level of influence they actually possess. The true influential forces lay outside the party. United Russia has no say in their internal party politics, as its party chairman is appointed from outside. Party leaders are not members of the party. The government that is responsible for the implementation of policy does not consist of United Russia members. The benefit that United Russia has in policy making compared to other parties is that it has the possibility of a zero reading before the budget bill passes the parliament where it can negotiate over policy. This example shows that to classify United Russia, one should be aware that the amount of seats is not sufficient to measure United Russia's influence. The bargaining power that United Russia displays in the State Duma is only dominant compared to the other parties and it might be following orders from executive forces. Therefore, the bargaining power they display might not be their own bargaining position, but that of the executive forces. This means that depending on the level of analysis (parliamentary or the regime) one could have different classifications of the same party.

I argue that the level of analysis chosen leads to the confusion between the different authors when categorizing United Russia. When looked at the parliamentary history of the party, the party is the most durable party in the State Duma, it has substantial amount of resources (although they cannot independently access them), and it has a majority of seats. Would the analysis stop here, then United Russia should be classified as a dominant party. However, when the analysis is taken a step higher and includes the entire dynamics of party politics in Russia, it becomes clear that United Russia has no bargaining power and its only goal is to support the incumbent powers.

The concept of the party of power looks beyond the role the party has in the State Duma. The concept also takes the role of other forces like the presidential administration and executive forces into account. Furthermore, this concept focuses on financing, lack of ideology and the role of influential forces that are not party members. The main trait of the party of power is that it is created top-down and is designed to reinforce the ruling regime by fulfilling certain functional tasks, like the mobilization of votes and the organization of a pro-regime majority in the legislative assembly. Authors have suggested to change the name of the party type into “party of the powers” this name would give a clearer image of the dynamics within the party, because the party is not a ruling party, but a party of the ruling forces (Sakwa 2012, White 2011, Robinson 2012).

The only purpose of a party of power is to support the incumbent President or the coming President. This is a substantial difference between the dominant party and the hegemonic party that represent their own interests. In addition to this, the hegemonic party and the dominant party are used for leadership succession, while the party of power will support the upcoming President but it has no say in its appointment.

Another important difference between the party types is that the hegemonic party rests in an authoritarian regime, and there is the possibility for regime change in times of severe

(economic) crisis. During an economic crisis the loyalty of elites becomes doubtful, because they are no longer financially rewarded for their loyalty. In the concept of the party of power financial resources are also used to win the support of the elites, however there remains a threat that the party of power will not win the majority of seats. Therefore the position of the party and President is less certain, in times when the popularity of the party declines the party might be abolished and replaced with a new party of power.

In theory it is possible for United Russia to be a dominant party and a party of power, because this depends on the level of analysis chosen. United Russia does have a bargaining power in the parliament, and even in the zero-readings executive forces exchange policy for support. When United Russia is classified as a dominant party of power, this would mean that the power basis of the part lies elsewhere, but that it's dominant in the amount of seats and bargaining position. It is however, impossible to be a hegemonic party and a party of power. This is because they have contradicting elements; the hegemonic party is very powerful and provides leadership succession, while the party of power is a mere helper party of the people in power.

To come back to the question posed in the beginning of this thesis, all three party types have distinctive elements in which they differ from each other and help clarify different party types. However, the application of all these three party types on United Russia is not possible. Although this depends on the level of analysis chosen, in the parliament United Russia is dominant compared to other parties. However, it is not a hegemonic party, because it lacks the power and influence on society that a hegemonic party should have. The concept of the party of power takes more elements into account than the dominant party. The dominant party type and the hegemonic party type are concepts broadly used for parties in authoritarian regimes. The party of power, however, is specifically applied to United Russia and it is not frequently applied to parties in other states. Some, however not frequently, think

of Ukraine or Kazakhstan as an example of another state with a party of power (Kuzio 2005, Isaacs and Whitmore 2013).

New research is needed to see whether the concept party of power can travel among different post-Communist states in order to see whether the party type can be applied elsewhere. This is especially interesting for post-Communist parties, because the Soviet system did not allow other parties than the Communist party. Therefore, after the fall of the Soviet Republic the party system had to be build from scratch. Parties were created top-down, with the effect that from the beginning parties had a closer connection to the state than to citizens.

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